

**Except The
Lord
Build The
House**

God's Keys For Abundant
Marriage & Family Life

Robert & Angeline Tucker

*“Except the Lord build the House: God’s Keys for
Abundant Marriage & Family Life”*

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All Scripture quotations in this book are taken from the
King James Version Bible unless otherwise stated.

Revised in May 2014 and reprinted in the

United States of America

Version 1.2

ISBN 1-890381-26-8

For more information, please contact:

Zion Christian Publishers

A *Zion Fellowship*® Ministry

P.O. Box 70

Waverly, New York 14892

Phone: 607-565-2801

Toll free: 1-877-768-7466

Fax: 607-565-3329

www.zcpublishers.com

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Editorial team: Mary Humphreys, Anne McDougall, and Leslie Sigsby.

We wish to extend our thanks to these dear ones for without their many hours of invaluable assistance, this book would not have been possible. We are truly grateful for their diligence, creativity, and excellence in the compilation of this book for the glory of God.

PREFACE

When Angeline and I were married in 1965 we were aware of very little teaching and written material concerning marriage and family life. Since that time, volumes have been written on many different aspects of this vast and vital subject and seminars abound. I have, at times, asked the Lord if another writing was necessary. The information in this book is presented from a different perspective than other books on this topic. We have approached this subject from God-established scriptural order, giving each member of the family practical application for daily living in their God appointed responsibilities. We have personally worked through and lived the principles that are presented. We know God's ways are right and will work in every generation. Having shared these concepts in leadership training seminars in many countries, we also know that God's Word transcends every culture and answers basic problems in marriage and family life for all people groups.

May you find what we have shared from our experience with God's Word a blessing in your own marriage and family life. "*Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it*" (Psalm 127:1). May your family be constructed according to the pattern God has given that they can be strong, endure to the end, and be effective witnesses to the world that God's ways are perfect and right.

Robert A. Tucker

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But as for me and my house,
we will serve the Lord.

Joshua 24:15

INTRODUCTION

Built According to the Pattern

Angeline:

There it was exactly as I had seen it in my dreams: “SURGERY.” Everything was happening to me as I had dreamt time and again for over a year. In the dream, I was being transported on a gurney to surgery when a voice spoke: “If you had sought me, you would not be here.”

Now everything was happening in reality. More than a year earlier the doctor had diagnosed my need for surgery. We had waited, seeking the Lord for His intervention by a miracle of healing. Through the counsel of those over us, God made it clear that He was choosing surgery rather than His touch of healing. Somehow it seemed impossible that God would choose such a pathway now. He had ministered miraculous healing in our lives before. We assumed that He would always do the same for us. Obviously, that was not to be this time.

But now, as I was being taken to surgery, doubts flooded my mind. As I saw the sign on the door, “SURGERY,” the voice which had spoken to me in the dream echoed again in my mind: “If you had sought me, you would not be here.” Then the voice of the Lord spoke clearly and answered the turmoil of my mind: “Because you have sought Me, I have chosen this for you and brought you to this place.” The peace of God filled my mind and spirit.

Neither of us understood God’s purpose in our situation until several years later. As we were able to reflect on that

situation, we realized that the doctor had indeed done surgery, but more importantly, the Lord Himself had begun a surgical work with that event. His surgery was not on the physical body but rather on our marriage and family structure.

Although married for seven years, we had received very little instruction concerning marriage. We were unaware of how much our relationship was out of God's order and how quickly we were speeding toward disaster in our family life. In His great mercy, God began a specific work in our marriage with this event. He began to instruct us in His ways and to reveal His order for a husband, wife, and children.

You will find that this book comes from a different perspective than many other books on this subject. Most of the lessons shared within were understood and worked in our lives experientially as our loving Heavenly Father led us on a specific pathway to instruct us. These lessons were often received in valleys of sorrow and misunderstanding. We would not want to pass through those valleys again, but we are so thankful for the treasures that were gathered there. Our study centers on the order that He has ordained for the marriage relationship and family order.

Now that our children are married to wonderful mates and we witness how they are leading our grandchildren, we can declare boldly to you from experience: **GOD'S WAYS ARE PERFECT AND RIGHT!**

We hope you will be encouraged to put your complete trust in the Lord and seek His ways. We live in the midst of a world where family relationships are falling apart. Many homes are like houses in a violent earthquake being reduced to rubble. If we will seek God to help us build according to His Word

and His ways, our households can stand intact on the solid Rock, Christ Jesus. “*Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it*” (Psalms 127:1). If you discover that your marriage or family life is not functioning properly, refuse discouragement. Allow the Holy Spirit to be your guide to put everything as God meant it to be. This may take more time than you initially expect, but the results are well worth it.

Therefore shall ye lay up these My words in your heart and in your soul, and bind them for a sign upon your hand, that they may be as frontlets between your eyes.

And ye shall teach them your children, speaking of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.

And thou shalt write them upon the door posts of thine house, and upon thy gates:

That your days may be multiplied, and the days of your children, in the land which the Lord sware unto your fathers to give them, as the days of heaven upon the earth.

CHAPTER 1

Reasons for God's Order

Homes Filled with His Glory

God's purpose is to bring tremendous revival in these last days that He might manifest His glorious nature and character through His people. God has ordained an order for all that He created. When that order is established, His glory settles in the midst of the situation.

We see this principle illustrated in Exodus chapters 25-30, where God meticulously outlined for Moses the pattern for a tabernacle in the wilderness. These plans for building the tabernacle were followed explicitly, as is recorded in Exodus 36-40. We see what followed: *“So Moses finished the work, then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle”* (Exodus 40:33b-34). When everything was set into order according to the pattern God had given, then the glory of God was manifested in the tabernacle.

About 450 years later, God gave David a pattern for the temple to be built in Jerusalem, along with an expanded order of worship. When everything was completed, including the order for the priests and Levites to worship the Lord as one voice and one symphony of instruments, *“then the house was filled with a cloud, even the house of the Lord; so that the priests could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud: for the glory of the Lord had filled the house of God”* (2 Chronicles 5:13-14). Again, once everything was done in God's order, He filled the house with His glory.

Before Jesus' ascension, He told the disciples to wait in Jerusalem for the promise of the Father (Acts 1:4-5). They had a ten day prayer meeting in the upper room (Acts 1:13-14). Certainly during that prayer meeting many things must have been set into God's order in that house. Surely all the disciples were repenting because they had forsaken Jesus at His trial. Peter must have humbled himself for his denial of Christ. James and John must certainly have had a change of heart about who should be the greatest.

Act 2:1 tells us, "*And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.*" God had done a work to establish them according to His pattern. Then they were all filled with the Holy Ghost and the whole house was filled with the glory of God.

God wants to fill the church with His glory in this day. He wants to fill our households with His glory, but we must be built up according to the pattern which He has established for us. The church will not come together in God's order unless individual families become established in the way God ordained.

He has a definite pattern for marriage and family life. Psalm 127:1 tells us, "*Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it.*" God reveals to each member of the family his or her place of responsibility. As each one embraces God's purpose and receives grace to function that way in daily life, God will then fill that household with His glory.

Angeline:

A very natural application of this is spring cleaning. It is the time when a house is purified of accumulated dirt and purged of clutter. In the process of this cleaning, things

always look much worse than at the start. Everything is taken apart. The ultimate goal has to be kept in mind or a tremendous amount of discouragement occurs. I always have the vision of the completed work before me, and it gives me strength to press through the job at hand. I only tackle a room a day so that we will not be totally overwhelmed. But going through this process is always hard on the entire family.

The same is true in our spiritual lives. When God does a spring cleaning, we sometimes feel torn apart and in a state of chaos. It is God's ultimate purpose to clean us up and set things in order in our lives. We go through this many times in our own private lives, but God also does this in a marriage and in a family. His whole purpose is not to destroy us but to cleanse us of the leaven that so easily comes into our lives through living in a polluted world and a perverse generation.

Remember when your children would come in from outside and be filthy dirty? Even though you loved them dearly, it was much easier to cuddle with them once they had the benefit of the cleansing power of the bathtub. So it is with God in our lives. We must submit ourselves to Him to cleanse us. First He deals with us as individuals, then He wants to deal with our marriage and family life. His desire is to have all areas of our lives in order so that He can fill our lives and homes with His glory that we may be His witnesses.

The Last Day Revival

Revival must come in these last days before the return of the Lord Jesus. However, there must first be a preparation in our

marriages and families. Malachi prophesied of the problems that had to be corrected in the hearts of the people before the initial coming of the Lord. The first issue he addressed was their attitude toward God.

The very next problem he identified was their attitude toward their wives. God made it clear that the treacherous way a man dealt with his wife and the abominable practice of divorce were affecting their children (Malachi 2:13-16). Whenever the parents' marriage is not functioning properly, the children suffer greatly and often do not go on to follow the Lord. God wants a godly seed.

As we study the lives of some of the kings of Judah, we can see the impact of the fathers' lives upon the lives of their sons. King Jehoshaphat had a wonderful revival in his day. Many returned to the Lord. However, because his family was not in God's order, the effects of the revival did not continue on in his son, Jehoram.

Hezekiah was another Judaeen king who saw great revival in his day. There was a great cleansing in the land. God had done great things through Hezekiah. However, 2 Kings 20:17-19 shows that Hezekiah had no vision for the things God had done in his kingdom to continue in his children. His son, Manasseh, was one of the most wicked kings of Judah.

Again, we see King Josiah who had a similar visitation of the Lord during his reign (2 Chronicles 34-35). Yet his sons, Jehoahaz and Jehoiakim, went far away from the Lord. Revival itself failed to produce that "godly seed" of which Malachi spoke (Malachi 2:15). It is God's purpose to prepare the way in revival by establishing each family according to the pattern that He has ordained.

Angeline:

Not only is teaching by our words and communicating through our actions necessary for instructing our children in God's ways, but also it is imperative to pray for them. Years ago, we were in a meeting where the Spirit of the Lord was moving in a wonderful way of conviction. The pastor's wife was praying at the altar, and I felt that God wanted me to pray with her. At the time, her son, who was in his twenties was struggling in his walk with the Lord. As we were praying, her son came to the altar in great conviction, seeking to meet the Lord in a new way. She was not aware of what was happening.

The Lord gave me a vision of this woman in labor, getting ready to give birth. In this vision, I was like the midwife to her. I kept talking to her, encouraging her to let travail have its complete work. She continued in travailing prayer. I could tell that the time of the birthing was near. I said to her, "It is just about here; the birthing is happening." She continued to cry out in anguish.

Just when she felt that she could take no more, her son, who was at the altar praying, cried out in a loud voice. I said to her, "Look, you just birthed him in the Spirit into the kingdom of God. Hear him cry? It's a live birth." She started to rejoice as the spirit of travail lifted and she saw her son crying out to God. The next day she came back to me and told me that all night Satan had been telling her that her son was stillborn and that there was no life. I reassured her by saying, "You heard him cry as he was meeting with God."

When my own sixteen-year-old son was attending a youth camp, I knew that he needed a fresh meeting with God.

Because I knew the camp schedule, every day during the chapel meeting, I would go to his bedroom at home, lie across his bed, and cry out to God that my son would have a significant meeting with Him. As I was praying one day, I felt the travailing of prayer come upon me. Then there was a release, and great joy flooded my spirit. While that was happening to me, our son (who was about sixty miles away) was praying. At that time he had a real experience of furthering his commitment to the purposes of God.

I have always felt that after birthing our children in the natural, God also wanted me to experience the spiritual birthing of them. It is something I strongly teach the wives and mothers to involve themselves in—prayer to bring to birth the purposes of God in the lives of their children. The kings mentioned earlier did not have a concern that their children would have a vital meeting with God and walk in righteousness.

John the Baptist had a unique ministry as a forerunner to prepare the way in the hearts of the people for the first coming of the Lord Jesus Christ to this earth. He preached repentance. In Luke 2:11-14, John addressed such issues as covetousness, benevolence, honesty, violence, speaking the truth, and contentment. His message, according to Luke 3:4-6, was to prepare a highway—an expressway—through rough terrain so that many could move quickly into the things of God in the days of the revival which were coming. All flesh would see the salvation of God because of this work that was done in preparation.

Another aspect of John's message is found in Luke 1:17: *“And he shall go before Him in the Spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and*

the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.” Even for the revival that Jesus himself would bring, it was necessary for a work to be done in the family. While studying the Gospels and the book of Acts one cannot help but notice how often whole families were affected by the move of God. In the Old Testament, we see that Joseph was sent by God ahead of his brethren into Egypt to prepare a way for them to be preserved in the coming famine. God also wants to prepare families to show the glory of God and make His way plain for others who will be drawn to the Lord in the coming revival.

Preparation for Endtime Warfare

These days are certainly the “last days,” the “perilous times” described in 2 Timothy 3:1-8. All the signs that the scripture gives here are certainly manifest in fullness in our day. In Isaiah 60:1-2, the prophet describes what he foresaw in similar terms. In verse 2, he tells us that “*darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people.*” However, in verse 1 this hope is given in contrast to the darkness: “*Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee,*” and further in verse 2, “*But the Lord shall arise upon thee, and His glory shall be seen upon thee.*”

When we consider the various curses there are in the earth in these last days, we should also consider the importance of godly restoration of the home. “*Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord: And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers lest I come and smite the earth with a curse*” (Malachi 4:5-6). Many of these curses are directly or indirectly related to the forsaking of godly family order. God has established the

family to convey holiness, truth and righteousness from one generation to another. Unless God's ways are established in our families, we will greatly fall short of God's best in the coming revival of these last days.

In studying apocalyptic scriptures, we find it impossible to dismiss the fact that very intense and difficult times lie ahead. As we pursue God's best, we must give attention to the details of God's order. We read in 2 Timothy 2:5, "*And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned except he strive lawfully*" (according to God's pattern). Tremendous pressure has come against the family. God's ways make a family strong and able to stand against the attack of the kingdom of darkness. Satan's time is very short. He is doing all he can to destroy the home in order to detour people from God's purposes.

Angeline:

It is interesting to note in Matthew 24:43, in the context of Jesus' teaching on the last days of this age, that He warned about the thief breaking in and breaking up the house. God has much to say in this portion concerning the "house." In the Greek, it refers to the "domestic house," meaning our homes where our families abide. What goes on in our homes, how our children are raised and how they develop determines to a great extent who will be a part in His kingdom. Many times, we see this "house" as referring to the church, but it is clear in this passage that the house is the domestic house. Those who do well with their own households are those who watch so that no thief can penetrate or break through and rob them or their children of the things being taught to them. As parents, we must always be aware of where our children are and what they are involved in. We must be careful who their friends are so

that in no way are the truths stolen that we are planting in them. God is seeking for a godly seed (Malachi 2:15), but the kingdom of darkness is seeking to devour that which is godly (Revelation 12:4). Our homes must be like an ark of safety from the world and the devil. It ought to be the domestic policy of all parents to make their children feel that home is the happiest place in the world. If you want the world a better place, you must start with your own home.

Jesus uses another analogy in Matthew 7:24-27 at the conclusion of the Sermon on the Mount. He indicates that a storm is coming for everyone. How well we are established on the firm foundation of His truth will determine whether or not our household will stand through the intense pressure of the satanic storm coming at the end of this age.

We must establish firm foundations built on the Rock, Christ Jesus, in our family relationships. It is quicker and easier to build on sand. Firm foundations do not just happen without much effort in applying God's ways in our lives. However, the effort is well worth it. We can have foundations for our households that will insure that we will be able to stand firm against the deception of the Antichrist and even spoil the kingdom of darkness!

Possibility of Sparing Others

In Genesis 18 we see a beautiful picture of the relationship between Abraham and God. Because God knew Abraham (Genesis 18:16-22) He revealed to him His plans to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah. Abraham began to intercede until God agreed not to destroy these cities if there were ten righteous people found there. Like Abraham, only those who know God intimately can be effective intercessors.

Lot and his family lived in Sodom. God spoke of Lot as a righteous man who was delivered out of the wrath upon this city (2 Peter 2:6-8). Had Lot led his family in God's ways of righteousness, he could have spared the cities from the wrath of God. According to the warning given by the angel to Lot to get his family out of Sodom, there would have been at least ten of them (Genesis 19:12):

Mr. & Mrs. Lot	2
Sons	2 (at least)
Sons-in-law	2 (at least)
Married daughters	2 (at least)
Unmarried daughters	2
At least	10

These ten could have saved Sodom and Gomorrah had they been righteous. Lot was a righteous man, but he did not lead his family into God's righteousness. Rather, he allowed the lust of his eyes to lure him to Sodom where the hearts of his family were turned away from God. How often is this scene repeated in our day.

May we love the Lord and His righteousness and lead our families in His ways so that they will love Him and His righteousness. Perhaps God can use our households to turn many to righteousness and away from the wrath of God.

Promises Concerning Children in Old Testament Covenants

The covenants which God made with man often contained promises concerning the following generations. In the first covenant God made in the Garden of Eden, He spoke

concerning the seed of the woman bruising the head of the serpent (Genesis 3:15). Later, after the flood, God promised to Noah and his seed after him that He would never again cut off all flesh by the waters of a flood (Genesis 9:9-11).

God made promises to Abraham concerning his posterity. In Genesis 15:18, God gave him a land for an inheritance. God knew that Abraham would obey His voice and command his children and household in God's way. Because of Abraham's faithfulness to his family, God could fulfill the promises He gave to Abraham. *"For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment; that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him"* (Genesis 18:19). To David, God made promises concerning his children reigning on his throne and the mercy that He would show to them (Psalms 132:10-12; 89:28-34). Many of God's promises are tied to our posterity.

For this reason we must faithfully lead our children into God's purposes. It is true that every man shall receive a reward for his own deeds. It is also true that our inheritance is completed in our children and generations following. Investing our lives to lead our families in God's ways will have eternal rewards for our seed and ourselves. Isaiah 58:12 gives a wonderful promise of the potential of our seed "building old waste places" and bringing restoration to the ruins of past generations.

Angeline:

Through the years, we have heard of many who either wanted children or who were upset when they found out that they were going to have children. The ideal situation is to seek the Lord and ask Him about this, getting His

mind on the matter. When we found out that we were going to become parents, the Lord taught us through His Word how very important the time in the womb was. We can learn much from the many illustrations of pregnant women in the Bible.

Genesis 25:21-26 contains the account of Rebekah, pregnant with Esau and Jacob. First of all, Isaac entreated the Lord for his wife because she was barren. God answered and Rebekah conceived. There was a lot of commotion going on in the womb of Rebekah. It is described as a struggle going on within her. She sought the Lord, and He spoke to her that two nations were in her womb. What insight she was having as a mother! The clue to their lives was manifest even from the very beginning. This is what He told her: *“Two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels. The one people shall be stronger than the other people, and the elder shall serve the younger.”* Can you imagine the struggle she must have gone through not only in the pregnancy but also in seeing what was going to happen in her children’s lives? Rebekah needed grace from God to endure all that was ahead of her in raising them.

Another notable pregnancy was that of Elizabeth. In Luke 1:41-48, we read that the baby leaped in the womb of Elizabeth and she was filled with the Holy Ghost when she heard the salutation of Mary. Not only the babe, but also the mother carrying the child was affected. This illustrates that this is a time when a woman’s spirit can be very open and she must guard herself, watching her environment and her activities, not only for herself but also for her baby’s sake.

Marriage—an Example of Relationship Between Christ and the Church

The apostle Paul, directed by the Holy Spirit, uses the marriage relationship to demonstrate the relationship to be developed between Christ and His Bride, the church. If a husband and wife have difficulty relating to each other, they often have the same difficulty in their relationship with Christ. As marriage flows together in God's purposes, we have a picture of our relationship to Christ (Ephesians 5:31-32).

Children are greatly affected by their relationship to their parents, especially their relationship to their fathers. Children always seem to look for a hero to follow. Proverbs 17:6 tells us, "...the glory of children are their fathers." Children's concepts of God the Father are strongly influenced by their earthly fathers. In counseling people, it often is manifest that their present concepts and attitudes toward God have been formed, not by the true character and nature of God, but by their earthly fathers many years earlier.

A certain man was facing such difficulty in being able to trust God to supply his needs. The Holy Spirit revealed that this wrong concept of God was really a result of a father who was not diligent to provide for his family's needs. God took this person through a long series of events to teach him His faithfulness.

In another situation, a girl battled such bitterness and disappointment with God. This was because her alcoholic father had broken promises and disappointed her many times. A godly father has such positive influence by showing the true nature and character of God to his children.

In 1 Thessalonians 2, Paul shows the balance of influence a mother and father have in the lives of their children. Even though speaking of his varied ministry to the Thessalonians, Paul draws his example from a proper parental role. In verse 7, we read, *“But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children.”* This shows the special touch of a mother’s love.

In verse 11, we read, *“As you know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children.”* The leadership role of the father is put forth in this verse. As both parents fulfill their God-given responsibilities, the children have the very best opportunity to be established in God’s ways.

Family Leadership and Church Leadership

One factor in the local church is the strength of the leadership of that church. It is God’s purpose to have men who are like pillars in the house of God (Revelation 3:12). The pillars sustain the weight and structure of the building.

A man can never be a strong church leader if he is not a strong family leader. *“One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity (respect); For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?”* (1 Timothy 3:4-5). If a man cannot lead a small group of people properly, how will his leadership be effective with a larger group in the church? Church leadership begins right at home.

In Matthew 7:15-20, Jesus gives the test of true leaders: *“by their fruit ye shall know them.”* Certainly a man’s wife and

children are part of the fruit of his leadership. If his leadership cannot produce good results in his family, how will it ever be any different in the church? Many mighty men of God with great ministries have fallen because the foundations of their homes were not properly laid. One should not only listen to the message preached or taught but also look at the family life of leaders. Jesus warns us to prove true leadership because there are many false prophets.

Angeline:

Being a pastor's wife, I would always note the pastor's family when we visited elsewhere. I would always do a "fruit inspection." Were his wife and children sitting as a family? Were their countenances those of contentment, or were they just tolerating each other? If our lives became involved with these pastors, I was ready to receive further insight from their families' lives. I wanted to learn by example, but so many times the negative was what was most evident.

When my husband took his first pastorate, I was terrified that my children might turn out like the "PK's" (Preacher's Kids) or the "MK's" (Missionary's Kids) whom I had observed. I prayed and sought the Lord about this fear. I loved my babies and I did not want the same result as the many disasters I had seen. He assured me that if I read the recipe book, which was the Bible, and sought Him on issues, I would be happy with the results.

When we would meet a pastor's family that did have lovely, loving, well-behaved and godly children, I would listen as the pastor and his wife shared with us those things that they had learned and practiced to bring the desired results. We were not plastic people or a plastic family. We had real

life situations to work through. Our children had problems just like any other children. But God was faithful. He did give us answers.

Once an older lady said to me, “Just wait until your kids are teenagers; then you will know what rebellion is all about.” Our children were only two and five years old at the time. Our flock didn’t have much to judge us by. It was as if the Lord fixed us up so that our understanding would go far beyond our years.

God gave us other opportunities from which we could learn. We finished raising my husband’s two younger sisters. One moved in with us and finished high school, and a year later, the other moved in with us and got a job. Both of these girls were brought up in Sunday school but had never had a life-changing experience with the Lord. It was difficult because, in one sense, the mold had been cast. But God was faithful to help us in setting them on the pathway of life while giving us on-the-job training.

We also took in foster children. We wanted to be open for God to use us and to mature us in real life situations. He was faithful to give us answers and help us with some children who otherwise might not have been able to know the Lord. During the years of raising children, we grew up with them and learned many valuable lessons.

Becoming parents is on-the-job training. If we don’t have the Holy Spirit to help us, we can find ourselves in real trouble. Psalms 89:28-34 speaks of the covenant God made with David. God said He would work in the lives of his children and would bring corrections and expose and bring to light the hidden things that were done in secret.

In times when children are in denial of their actions or words, we can simply say, "We'll pray and ask the Holy Spirit to expose what is going on." He is so FAITHFUL. The Lord wants us to have success with our families so that our fruit can be good fruit, as in Isaiah 61:9: *"And their seed shall be known among the Gentiles, and their offspring among the people: all that see them shall acknowledge them, that they are the seed which the LORD hath blessed."* We do want to have seed that is blessed of the Lord. It is possible!

A threefold cord is not
quickly broken.

Ecclesiastes 4:12

CHAPTER 2

The Make-Up of Marriage

A Completing Union Established by God

Marriage was established by God. It was not man's idea. Genesis 2:18 says, *"And the Lord God said, 'It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an helpmeet for him.'"* God, in His infinite wisdom, brought Adam and Eve together that they might complete one another. Adam was to "cleave" to his wife, i.e., "be glued together" (Genesis 2:21-24).

When two pieces of wood are joined side by side, then glued and clamped together with pressure until the glue dries, a joint is formed which will not come apart. A proper glue joint cannot be broken apart. Usually the wood will split in a place other than where the joint is made. This is the picture God has given us of marriage. Jesus said, *"Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined (a strong glue joint) together, let not man put asunder"* (Matthew 19:6). Marriage is very serious and holy in the eyes of God. A couple should not take lightly what God has established. Satan's purpose is to belittle, berate, mock, and destroy what God has established to be pure, holy, enduring, and an honor to His name.

In John 17:20-23, Jesus prayed for those who follow Him. He prayed that we may be one with the Godhead as They are in complete unity. It is very difficult to understand how the Holy trinity are one. It is similar to the unity God brings between a husband and wife who are very different from

each other, yet are one. The members of the Godhead each function differently and yet are perfectly one.

A Melting Pot of Differences

Often after a couple is married for a while, they each begin to notice how many differences they have. Before marriage and during the honeymoon (however long that may last), they talk much about how alike they are! The fact that one is male and the other female should be a clue that there are major differences between them.

We saw an example of this in a show at Disney World in Orlando, Florida, many years ago. In a children's program called "Country Bear Jamboree," one scene showed an animated bear and octopus who are supposedly married to each other. They sing an old love song, "Two Different Worlds We Live In." Some couples may feel just as mismatched. At times, a couple may feel that their union is a mistake and that they will never find fulfillment together. God wants us to understand how we are to be glued together. He is able to work in each life so that a couple fulfills one another more than they ever dreamed possible.

Understanding that these differences are normal between a husband and wife helps. Sometimes you may feel that your marriage is the only one ever to have faced such differences. God has created these distinctions in a man and woman so that they can complete each other and not be at odds.

Men and women view situations and circumstances from totally different perspectives. Men tend to gather information or the facts from an incident and arrange

them in an order to form a logical conclusion. Women view the same situation through their emotions. They are not so much concerned with all the facts, but rather how they personally feel or how the circumstance may cause others to feel. This is why a wife may feel that her husband is insensitive or uncaring. Obviously both perspectives are very important.

How men and women tell stories reveals another interesting difference between the sexes. Men usually provide enough skeletal facts to give the general idea of what took place. Women tend to form a labyrinth of details and side stories, telling over and over how they feel about everything that happened. Men often find it tedious trying to sort out what happened as they endeavor to separate the necessary from the peripheral details when they listen to a woman tell of an event. Angeline always pumps me for more details when I am sharing with her. Women love details!

A shopping trip becomes a hunting expedition for a man—pursue it, bag it and go home. This would never do for a woman. Shopping is an experience, an event for a woman, to feel the atmosphere of the shops, touch the merchandise, muse over it and fill her senses. Angeline often returns from shopping telling me how much she has saved, when I only want to know how much she has spent.

Men are turned on sexually by what they see. Women respond more to what they hear. The Song of Solomon demonstrates how a husband can speak to his wife to provoke response in her (Song of Solomon 2:14; 4:1-7).

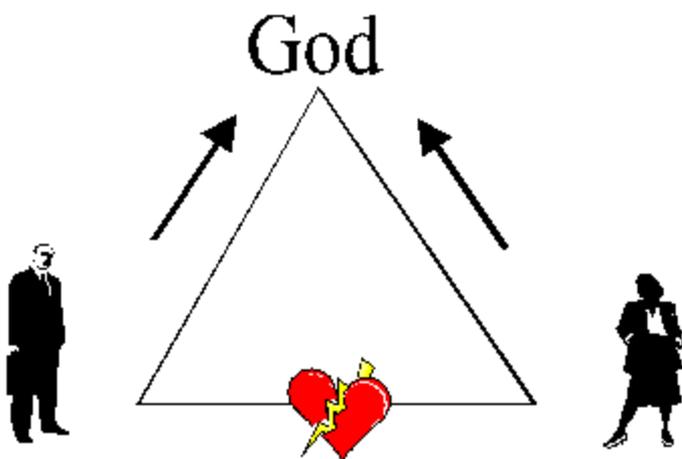
My wife enjoys assembling picture puzzles. This is a quiet time when God often speaks to her. At times, she becomes the “puzzled one,” beginning to believe that all the parts are

not there or that they were mixed with another puzzle. As she is patient, sometimes walking away and returning to the puzzle later, the pieces begin to fit together as they were made to do. Likewise, some differences in couples seem to be irreconcilable, but God can work so that their strengths and weaknesses complement one another perfectly, even as a difficult puzzle will finally fit together. It is true that if we try to work out these differences in our own strength, we will often become frustrated and discouraged. We must understand the importance of “*seeking first the kingdom of God and his righteousness*” (Matthew 6:33). He can cause what we perceive as irreconcilable differences to be worked out so that we complement each other perfectly.

Threefold Relationship

The marriage relationship is not just a two-way relationship. It is a three-way relationship. Ecclesiastes 4:12 says, “*A threefold cord is not quickly broken.*” As each individual draws closer to the Lord, the couple draws closer to one another and the differences are met by the Lord. As the Lord is placed first in each individual life and His divine order is sought, He can work out situations man deems impossible. We must understand that no circumstance or difference is an impossibility with God. Jesus said to the father with the demon possessed son, “*If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth*” (Mark 9:23). May we put our full trust in Him who is able to change us. Only Jesus can bring us to completeness and fulfillment.

As a husband and wife each seek God first, they are drawn closer to Him and to each other. If they seek to draw near to each other without God, they meet conflicts they often cannot resolve.



Looking to the Lord and Not Each Other

There are areas in our lives which God will fill with attributes that He has worked in our mate. However, many individuals are often looking to a spouse to fulfill certain areas of their lives. It is foolish and frustrating to have expectations of your mate that only God Himself can complete and fulfill. One woman testified of the terrible loneliness after the death of her husband of many years. After a time, she began to look to the Lord for help. She realized that He was fulfilling areas of her life that she had always expected her husband to fulfill. This woman became like *“the holy women in the old time also, who trusted in God”* (I Peter 3:5). Too often, the expectation and trust we have is in our mate when it should be in God.

Some of the differences in a couple are very complex, and they need time and grace to adjust to one another. It has been said, *“If both of us are exactly alike, one of us is unnecessary.”* The reason opposites attract is because we all need someone different from ourselves to help fill our areas of weakness or

lack. As we let the Holy Spirit mature us, these differences begin to fit together and we strengthen one another.

A Covenant Between Man and Woman Before God

A covenant is very different from a contract that people can make and break between themselves. A contract is negated if one party fails to keep the “terms of agreement.” When people make a covenant, they vow that they will perform certain duties. If the partner fails in his duties, the covenant is not to be broken. Each has vowed and will continue to be responsible to fulfill what has been vowed, no matter what failure may occur on the part of the other person. Our God is a covenant-making, covenant-keeping God. He establishes marriage between a man and a woman by the covenant made between them. *“Yet is she thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant”* (Malachi 2:14). There are no “ifs” in the marriage vows.

In marriage counseling, we remind each individual of the responsibility to fulfill his or her own vow. Rarely when someone comes for marriage counseling does he say, “I am not fulfilling what I promised to my mate. Will you give me direction that will help ME?” More often the counseling session begins with, “My spouse is failing in this and that. What can I do to change HIM/HER?” If we can focus on those promises that we vowed in our marriage covenant, God will pour out abundant grace (divine help) to help us fulfill our part.

Too often people are entering holy matrimony with a flippant attitude, that if it does not work out, they can easily abandon their commitment and start again. Notice this strong admonition from Ecclesiastes 5:4-6:

When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for He hath no pleasure in fools: pay that which thou hast vowed. Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay. Suffer not thy mouth to cause thy flesh to sin; neither say thou before the angel, that it was an error: wherefore should God be angry at thy voice, and destroy the work of thine hands?

How important it is to realize the seriousness of the vows that establish holy matrimony. The vows we make are not only to each other but also before God. Part of the vows we make at marriage say, “for better, for worse.” This is the scriptural concept of marital vows. The prophet Hosea married an unfaithful woman named Gomer. Even though Gomer broke the marriage covenant with adultery, Hosea was faithful to the vows which he had made. This prophet’s life was a message to Israel to show them the faithfulness of God toward them, even though they had not fulfilled their part of the covenant with Him. Hosea’s life and marriage are also an example to us that we may seek to keep the vows that led us into holy matrimony.

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, please give me the grace to realize the importance of my marriage vows. May I understand MY responsibility before You and my spouse, and obtain grace to fulfill those vows. Amen.

Giving Yourselves Totally to Each Other

“Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me: It is good for a man not to touch a woman. Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man

have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband. Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband. The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife. Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency” (1 Cor. 7:1-5)

Because of the volatility of the times in which they were living, Paul recommends that it was far better, for the sake of spreading the Gospel, to remain single than to be burdened with marriage and caring for a family. However, he makes it clear that those who were not called to the single state, and did not have the grace to be single should be married to avoid fornication.

God intended for sexual desires to be fulfilled solely within the boundaries of marriage. When a man and woman enter into the marriage covenant, they are committing to give themselves fully to each other, so that the right to their bodies belongs only to their mate. This is important because marital intimacy not only joins the couple physically, but also spiritually.

There should never be a situation in marriage where one spouse is facing sexual temptation because the other spouse has withheld the marital right. Paul warns married couples not to withhold themselves from each another except with mutual consent for a specified time of fasting and prayer, so that Satan would not have an opening to present temptation.

A New Authority Structure

“Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife” (Genesis 2:24). When a man and a woman are joined together in holy matrimony, a new authority covering is established. They become a separate unit that they might be “perfectly glued” to one another.

The man must take the responsibility of leadership and authority in the family. To have authority, one must be under authority. Before marriage, it is important that both of the individuals entering marriage are under the authority of their parents.

As the girl has learned to submit to her father and mother, so she will follow her husband’s leadership when her father gives her in marriage. As the boy has learned to obey under his father’s authority, when he marries, he will then have authority because he has been under authority. It is essential that he leave his father and mother so that he can cleave to his wife. He cannot remain under his father’s authority covering because he must form a new authority structure.

Wise, godly parents will fully release their children when it is God’s will for them to marry. They will not interfere in the marriage, but will pray that their children will be properly joined together in harmony with one another.

Every wise woman buildeth her
house: but the foolish
plucketh it down with
her hands.

Proverbs 14:1

CHAPTER 3

God's Design and Purpose for Wives

Understanding a God-Given Role

As we have previously considered, God is a God of order and perfect harmony. His greatest blessings flow to His people as we function according to His ways, order and plan. For a woman to find contentment and fulfillment, she must understand—and adapt her lifestyle—to the purpose for which she was created by God. What God has established is always perfect and right for every member of the family and cannot be improved upon. Happiness is found in staying in the place that God has appointed for each member of the family. Taking on others responsibility causes one to forsake responsibility that is their own and leads to chaotic disorder.

In Genesis 2:18, God declared that it is not good that man should be alone. God recognized that Adam was incomplete and needed someone to help him be fulfilled. God caused Adam to sleep and took out of him a rib from which He fashioned the woman. This woman God formed actually came forth from Adam and was a part of him.

Eve had not been created as an inferior being but was one flesh with Adam. Even though her function was very different from Adam's and she had been created to aid or help him, she was given a place of honor and esteem with

her husband. Adam quickly recognized her as an integral part of himself. *“And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh”* (Genesis 2:23-24).

Although Eve was formed from the rib taken from the man and was a part of the man, she was also very different from him. Adam did not need another model of himself. God structured Eve in spirit, soul, and body to fill those empty, lonely, needy areas of her husband. It is often said that opposites attract. More correctly it can be said that God seeks to bring a wife to a man that she may be what he is not, in order that he be completed.

First Peter 3:7 refers to the wife as the “weaker vessel.” As was previously stated, this does not mean that she is inferior, but rather that she has some vulnerable areas in which she needs the help of her husband. These weaknesses are necessary for her to be what her husband needs her to be. These very weaknesses can cause him to come into his place of leadership as he learns to help his wife.

We have observed for many years in various marriages that a wife is often the first to respond when God begins to draw and work in a family. This occurs because of an “open spirit” that is natural to many women. She has a more noticeable response to spiritual things. A wife generally possesses a certain sensitivity in situations that gives her a completely different perspective from that of her husband. He desperately needs this valuable input from her.

However, this open spirit also can cause her to be vulnerable. This difference in a woman is demonstrated in Genesis chapter 3, as the serpent came to deceive Eve. Because the serpent understood the difference he came to the woman rather than the man. Eve was open-spirited and in a dangerous situation without her husband to help her. This will be studied in greater depth later as we cover the topic of a wife following her husband's leadership.

In this role as a helpmeet or aid to her husband, a wife will find great fulfillment as she follows God's ways and seeks to please the Lord. Just as a husband should not seek to please himself but serve his wife, so also must the wife serve her husband. *"We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification"* (Romans 15:1-2).

A wife's fulfillment comes to perfect realization as she gives herself to help her husband fulfill the vision God has given him. She must not push him to be what she wants him to be, but rather help him to implement what the Lord has chosen for the family. This God-given responsibility for the wife is capsulized by the apostle Paul: *"She that is married careth for the things of the world, how she may please her husband"* (1 Corinthians 7:34). In flowing with her husband's goals by being an aid to him, she becomes a crown to her husband (Proverbs 12:4).

God-Arranged Leadership

"But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God" (1 Corinthians 11:3). God Himself

declares the order of leadership in a home. Christ reigns as the head over the man. The man is ordained and placed by God to be the leader of the wife. He is the leader because God created a man to be leader, not necessarily because he is mentally or physically superior. If a wife tries to assume the place of leadership, chaos ultimately results. When a man is a weak or inexperienced leader, a wife may be tempted to take matters into her own hands. We have seen that the consequences of this are not good. The authority structure established by God is presently being torn down in many places with long-term repercussions.

“Every wise woman buildeth her house: but the foolish plucketh it down with her hands” (Proverbs 14:1). As a wife understands her function in marriage and family life and seeks with all her heart to conform to God’s ways, she builds up her household. By her willingness to follow her husband, even though his leadership may be lacking, she becomes a strength to her husband and an excellent example to the children. If a man is prone to abdicate his responsibilities, his wife often willingly assumes them. When she is out of order in this way and becomes overbearing, the result is often sons who are weak and ineffective leaders and daughters who are domineering like their mother. In the end, everyone is unhappy and unfulfilled.

If a wife is willing to follow her husband even though his leadership may be lacking, she becomes a strength to him and a model to the children.

God has purposed to work through a husband’s leadership to do what is best for the wife. Even though some of a

husband's decisions may seem disastrous, God can turn the situation for good as a wife follows godly order. As a wife follows her husband, God intends to provide for her protection, provision, guidance, edification, and cherishing.

Becoming a Target for Satan

“For this cause ought the woman to have power [Greek meaning ‘authority’] on her head because of the angels” (1 Corinthians 11:10). Some have mistakenly believed that Paul is teaching that a woman must wear a cloth to cover her head to show she is submitted to her husband. However, the context shows that the husband's authority is the covering of protection from the “angels” or principalities and powers of darkness which seek to target the wife for destruction. A wife must be willing to remain under her husband's God-given authority or she will become vulnerable to spiritual powers that are seeking to destroy the family.

As a wife willingly remains under her husband's authority, God protects her from these destructive, unseen forces. When a wife becomes frustrated, bitter, and disobedient to her husband, not understanding God's ways and resisting God's protection under her husband's authority, she can be easily deceived by a seducing spirit (I Timothy 4:1). This can lead to divorce, resulting in the destruction of the whole family unit.

After a number of years of counseling those who had experienced divorce, I began to inquire who had initiated divorce dialogue. By wives' own testimonies, a conservative estimate would be that 75 percent of the time it was the wife who had begun the discussion. It has been reported that after divorce dialogue has begun, it is usually two years until

divorce is finalized. This is not to say that in these cases it was only the wife who was at fault. She may have been sorely provoked by her husband. But more often than not, it is the wife who introduces the thought of divorce.

I have come to believe that the reason is that each of these wives has come out from under her husband's authority and has been deceived by another spirit into believing that divorce is the only answer. If a wife ever begins to think of divorce as a solution to conflicts, she must check to see if she has left her husband's covering and has come under the influence of another spirit. This danger, among others, is a result of leaving the protection of godly authority. God hates divorce because it can destroy so many lives. These scriptures clearly show God's heart in the matter:

1 Corinthians 7:10 *“And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from her husband.”*

Jeremiah 3:20 *“Surely as a wife treacherously departeth from her husband, so have ye dealt treacherously with me, O house of Israel, saith the Lord.”*

Ezekiel 16:38 *“And I will judge thee, as women that break wedlock and shed blood are judged; and I will give thee blood in fury and jealousy.”*

Angeline:

Another devastating effect this has on the family is that it opens the door for all sorts of evil and devastating things to come into the home. The protection that is upon a family

begins to fade away. In one situation a father had become involved with another woman. The wife was so upset that she began divorce proceedings. It began to destroy the canopy of protection that heaven provides when we walk with the Lord. During this same time they had a child that was molested. *“For the wages of sin is death”* (Romans 6:23). If we give ourselves to sin, death will begin to work in our lives and in the lives of our family. We must be very careful to walk in godliness so that our family will have the protection that is needed.

If you are from a divorced home, you need to be aware that the seeds of that iniquity are planted in your life. You should guard yourself against hardness of heart because that is always the root issue of divorce. Once divorce enters a family situation, a person must be very sensitive to the Holy Spirit and obedient to His voice so that the seed of iniquity will not germinate in the soil of his heart and begin to sprout. God gives wonderful grace. Even in a marriage that seems to be made in heaven, constant maintenance is needed to keep it working and functioning properly.

Don't Try to Change Him

Often a girl engaged to be married dreams of her man. He is absolutely PERFECT—except, of course, for a few minor problems that she will work on after they are married. I have met some of these wives twenty years down the road of their attempts to transform these now less-than-perfect men. These wives are often boiling with frustration and believe that the husband is absolutely unchangeable. May I offer hope that he can be changed. However, a wife cannot do the work and should not try. Those under authority

should not try to change those over them in authority. It never works for the good. Christ is the head over the husband, and He has the ability to transform a man. A husband is God's responsibility, not the wife's. Let God do it His way.

Without realizing it, a wife may use nagging or subversive methods, such as withholding sex, to try to get what she wants from her husband. Ultimately, this kind of action will fail. God does not want her to control her husband. A wife desires her husband to be a strong, protecting leader who gives her a sense of security. Contrary to this, however, she also has a desire to control her husband. This problem in the heart of women is expressed in Genesis 3:16: *"thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee."* In the original Hebrew, this expression shows a conflict of desires. There is a longing to be led on the one hand, but an inner drive to control on the other. This problem in a woman is part of the result of the transgression of mankind against God's command. Jesus has paid the price so that a wife can overcome this conflict and cease to control or try to change her husband. His grace is available.

Another tendency for a wife with children is to "mother" her husband. All day long she has become accustomed to being a mother to the precious little ones. Continuing the same role when a husband arrives home is all too easy. My wife says, "If you mother your husband, you smother your man." Mothering a husband like one of the children may be convenient and pleasing at times, but in the end, the consequences are undesirable. A wife will not appreciate it when her husband loses those manly qualities that she desperately needs in him. He will not become the strong pillar of the house on which all else is built.

Angeline:

The “mothering” nature can come out in many different types of situations. When my husband first started to pastor the church, God made it very clear to me that I was neither the wife nor the mother of the church. I began to notice that the churches that were small and struggling usually had a pastor’s wife who was a mighty force in the church. She acted as the “wife of the church,” greatly mothering it. Many times men will not come into their places of leadership because a strong pastor’s wife or other women in the congregation are usurping their authority (1 Timothy 2:12).

In the Greek, usurp means “to dominate over a man.” Dominate means “to exercise control over; govern. To tower above; loom over. To rule over as in power.” It always amazes me that Jesus never chose a woman to be one of the twelve disciples. When a woman does promote herself to a position, many times she has to develop a harder nature than God intended her to possess. The pressures of ministering in areas God never intended can be very stressful.

Women have been given a wonderful position of teaching, as Titus 2:3-4 points out: *“The aged (a literal translation of that is “mature”) women likewise, that they be in behavior as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things. That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children.”* It is outlined here just what women should teach and be. There is such a lack of this kind of teaching in our world today—good manners, how to respond to our husbands, cleanliness—and the list goes on and on. This is what God wants His women to expound on in teaching.

One time as we were listening to a young man share his testimony on how God was working in his life, I could tell that he had been really hurt and had definite wounds in his life. I leaned over to my husband and said, “He is hurting so very much, my heart just goes out to him.” My husband whispered in my ear, “Your name is not Eve.” I looked at him questioningly. He said, “You are not the mother of all the living.” I laughed because he was right. That tendency is in many women. I have heard it said that a woman in a pastoring position usually ends up “mothering” instead of pastoring. Many times my husband will remind me, “I am the pastor—not you.” I have to grin and return to my place as his WIFE and the MOTHER of his children.

CHAPTER 4

The Act of Submission

Choosing to Submit

“Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing” (Ephesians 5:22-24). Each time this subject of submission is taught, there is the impression that submission has become an evil word in the minds of women. This occurs because there is such misunderstanding of this precious truth. Submission is totally for the good and protection of a wife.

Notice first of all that a husband is never commanded to bring his wife into submission. The command to submit is given by God directly to the wife. This responsibility is hers to fulfill. Many husbands misunderstand and are frustrated if their wives do not submit, but a husband must leave that responsibility before the Lord. A husband cannot change his wife, but God can. He can, however, create an atmosphere in which his wife desires to submit to his leadership

God requires this submission of a wife to her husband be done as unto the Lord. How a woman feels about God is being manifest in her responses and attitudes toward her husband. *“If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he*

hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" (1 John 4:20). Our relationship to God is represented in our daily relationship with family members. For this reason, a wife submits to her husband as unto the Lord. What is in her heart toward God will be shown by her responses to her husband.

The word "submit" in the original Greek is two words combined, meaning "to arrange in an orderly manner" and "to put beneath." In other words, a wife is to arrange her conduct in an orderly, godly manner under her husband's leadership. God's purpose for this is that the wife allow her husband to lead her and fulfill his God-given responsibilities toward her so that her needs can be fulfilled. She must be willing to be led by him. This is a decision she makes because she loves and honors God and His ways. She willingly subjects herself to her husband, or obeys his directives in leadership over her, "*in every thing*" (Ephesians 5:24).

I have counseled with many men who say, "My wife never really hears what I say to her." It seems as if it is very easy for a wife to dismiss her husband's requests and directives as minor or unimportant. I believe that the reason this happens is because a man and woman have such different priorities from one another. What is very important to a husband is often not important at all to his wife. For this reason, a wife must learn to listen very carefully to her husband's requests. Often, that which is insignificant to the wife is of major importance to the husband. A wife should be alert to what her husband is saying for her own benefit and protection.

Submit means to "arrange in an orderly manner" and "to put beneath."

Perhaps this example will help you to understand this concept.

A number of years ago, Angeline and our daughter Tamara were planning a shopping trip. Other than a concern for their safety and how much money they were going to save me with spectacular deals, I did not have a problem with their going shopping. However, on this occasion, without any logical reasoning behind it, I said, “Be certain to be home by 5 p.m.” I was working late at the office and returned home about 6 p.m. Not only was it very dark at that time, but an extremely dense fog had moved in, blanketing the area.

When I made the request to return from shopping by 5 p.m., I had no idea that this would be the situation. As I was driving home that night, I was hoping that, especially this time, my wife had obeyed this seemingly unimportant request. God had put that in my heart, not to hamper her joy in shopping, but rather to protect her in a potentially dangerous situation. She would have found driving in dark, foggy conditions a difficult, if not impossible, task. When I arrived home, there she was! She was on time as I had requested, and God had spared her great problems through her obedience to a minor request made by her husband. God’s ways provide the very best for a wife if she is willing to subject herself in obedience to her husband even without always understanding why it is important.

The Sharing Part of Submission

The concept of obedience prevails in most people’s minds when they think of submission. There is another very essential part to this matter. *“Obey them that have rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your*

souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you” (Hebrews 13:17). We see here that obedience is one word and submit is another word used to express a different concept. The word translated “submit” here means literally “to surrender.”

Angeline:

The word submit can also mean “to present for consideration, decision, or approval of others. To present as one’s opinion, suggestion. To give up or surrender. To be obedient.” Perhaps the following example will help to illustrate this aspect of submission.

My husband has never wanted me to pierce my ears, although it was fine for other women. This was a conflict because I wanted to wear pierced earrings. I obeyed him in this, but from time to time, I would ask to see if he had reconsidered. He always was firm in his decision about the matter. I would pray and ask God to change my husband’s heart so that I could do what I wanted to do. However, Bob remained firm.

One day I said, “Please release me to make my own decision about this matter.” He just kept looking at me. I said, “Please trust me in this and allow me to do this.” He finally said, “I release you from this request.” Then I said to him, “Bob, I now choose not to pierce my ears because I want to please you and I know that you really don’t want me to do this.” Something broke within me. I had obeyed, but now a greater thing had happened. I chose not to because I wanted to please him. Since that time, I have never had a desire to have my ears pierced. I came under the mighty power of love and not just obedience.

When a heart is right, there is an openness to share such as Adam and Eve with God. They wanted to meet with Him in fellowship and share their hearts. When they transgressed they hid and didn't want to share with Him.

Here is another practical application of this thought. When an employee has an idea which he thinks will save money for the company, we say he "submits" his idea to his employer. He is "surrendering" his idea for the consideration of those over him on his job.

Let's consider another example. The police are investigating an accident at which you were a witness. At this point, you must make a decision whether or not you will reveal what you have seen to assist in the investigation. You decide to "surrender" or "submit" what you saw to the police.

In the same manner, God wants a wife to submit herself to her husband by sharing with him the circumstances which she faces daily. This must penetrate even to the depths of her thoughts and feelings. She must share her whole heart with her husband so that he has complete information with which to make decisions that are best for her. If she keeps secrets and withholds information and the perspective that she has, he will be at a major disadvantage.

Some wives practice what might be called "selective submission," only telling their husbands what they want them to hear. Their hope is that their husband will give the decision they want to receive. This can be a dangerous practice. Submission does not mean that a wife must always agree with her husband's ideas or decisions, but she must keep a right attitude and respond correctly.

At times, a husband makes a decision that his wife thinks is utterly ridiculous. This may be in part because she has information that he does not possess and she has not submitted it to him. Often when he finally receives all the facts, he agrees that his decision was absurd, and changes the directive that he gives to the family. How can a husband give good and proper leadership if information is withheld?

Angeline:

For years I taught that submission and obedience were the same thing. It took a life situation for me to comprehend that there was a clear difference between these two very different words. In planning a particular trip overseas, we were going to go to many new nations where we had never been to conduct pastors' seminars. After flying into Frankfurt, Germany, from Delhi, India, we planned to take a trip by train through several European countries and then travel into Spain to visit missionaries. Our local church board and the ministerial organization with which my husband is affiliated had approved this trip.

My husband kept reviewing our travel plans with me, but every time he mentioned a certain country, I would cringe and get very upset. I always felt such anger arise in me. I would continually put those feelings down when he would ask, "Do you feel all right about these plans?" Being a good, obedient wife I would say, "Whatever you plan is fine, Honey." However, an anger of resistance would always be there concerning this certain country.

We started the trip, which progressed fine until we were in Germany. During the night, I woke up. Knowing that we would be going to the country with which I had a problem, I was upset again. Then I felt the Holy Spirit start to deal

with me about this whole issue. He spoke to my heart that I was a very obedient wife, just like a good old obedient dog. If my husband said, "Sit," I would sit; if he said, "Go," I would go, but I was not being submissive. He continued to speak to me that the things I had in my heart concerning that country were there because danger was there waiting to happen. This was His way of warning us.

My husband has always told me that I have a very noisy spirit. He could sense something was wrong and woke up. I began to share with him the fear I had about going into this certain country. He was very quiet and listened to me. He shared with me that he had checked out this trip with the church board and his authority, and all had peace about the plans. He finally said, "Let's pray and ask the Lord to cover and protect us as we travel into this country." After we finished praying, I was released from all my fear. I felt we were as one in this trip and I could hardly wait to see what God had for us in that country. I had submitted all that was in my heart. I laid all of the facts out before my husband as well as all the feelings I had in my heart. I was released to such wonderful freedom.

We did go into that country and there was trouble. We were almost robbed. We were directed to and boarded the wrong train. But God intervened in all of these situations. We were protected and His divine guidance was with us in such a wonderful way. I never once felt fear while all this was going on. I had perfect peace. My husband and I had such unity.

Our husbands need the input of our perspective. If we hold back facts and information from them, it could prevent

them from making a right decision. Here are several biblical references to consider:

Proverbs 1:5 “A wise man will hear, and will increase learning; and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels.”

Proverbs 15:22 “Without counsel purposes are disappointed; but in the multitude of counsellors they are established.” *Verse 32* “He that refuseth instruction despiseth his own soul; but he that heareth reproof getteth understanding.”

Proverbs 27:9 “Ointment and perfume rejoice the heart; so doth the sweetness of a man’s friend by hearty counsel.”

Proverbs 18:13 “He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him.” Another way of saying that is that a man is foolish if he makes a decision without all of the facts.

As a wife, you must share what you know as fact and what is in your heart concerning a matter so that your husband can make a decision based on the input that you have given to him. If you have shared your heart and you still feel your husband is making a wrong decision, you must trust God. He can even change your husband’s heart. There are times when I felt my husband was making a wrong decision, but God turned it and made it to benefit us instead of harm us. Romans 8:28 tells us, “*For we know that all things work together for good to them that love God and are the called*

according to His purpose.” We as wives must trust God. We cannot put our trust in our husbands—we must trust God. He can turn the king’s heart whither so ever it should go (Proverbs 21:1). The main thing to remember is to TRUST GOD.

Many years ago, Angeline and I were called to visit a lady in the hospital who was apparently having a problem with her heart. We were not there for five minutes when she began to tell us how she had charged several thousand dollars worth of goods without her husband’s knowledge of the matter. She had a job and was trying to pay the bills by herself, keeping the whole thing a secret from her husband. I was immediately quickened to encourage her that she must not keep this hidden from her husband any longer. Her husband was unsaved, making her all the more reticent to reveal her incident. She said, “My husband will kill me when he hears this.” I responded, “But you are here with physical problems, likely from the stress of this situation being hidden, and you could die if you don’t share it with him.” Later that same day, she opened her heart to her husband and found him to be very understanding and willing to help her take care of everything. Soon after, she was released from the hospital without further physical problems.

This wife had brought herself into a distressing situation. She needed her husband’s help to work through the debt and also to be protected from ever repeating the situation. By submitting to her husband, she came into victory in that area of her life with which she had struggled alone for so long. How very important it is that a wife fully shares her whole heart with her husband and keeps nothing hidden from him.

Passing Under the Rod

“And I will cause you to pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant: And I will purge out from among you the rebels, and them that transgress against me: I will bring them forth out of the country where they sojourn, the land of Israel: and ye shall know that I am the Lord” (Ezekiel 20:37-38). God is speaking of something that was very familiar to His people living in an agriculturally based society. In Psalm 23:4 we read, *“Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me.”* In shepherding sheep, the shepherd used a rod and a staff.

The rod, which is a symbol of authority, was used in counting the sheep and marking each tenth sheep for the tithe. Another function of the rod was for the inspection of the sheep for disease or injury. The sheep would be corralled into an area where the shepherd could allow them to pass, one at a time, under his rod while he made the inspection. God was using this picturesque example to inform Israel that He would remove from them rebellion and transgression as they were presented to Him and passed under the rod.

In the same way, God wants a wife to pass under the rod (her husband’s authority) by submitting herself in everything to her husband so that he might make an inspection and do what is best in leading her. There may be situations that are troubling her and affect her like a disease or injury would affect the little sheep. Many times, Angeline has been troubled with different matters that are released from her care as she shares them with me. In other situations, we have taken the matter to the Lord together and submitted it to Him so that it does not work like an unknown disease or injury in us.

Sometimes a wife tries to share her heart with her husband but does it in a way which makes it difficult for him to receive from her. Perhaps she tries to share when he has just arrived home from work and needs a few minutes or so to release the pressures of his day. Other times a wife may approach her husband with uncontrolled emotions which makes it hard for him to receive from her. A bad attitude or casting accusations at him is not conducive to good receptivity. Your husband can best receive what you need to share if you approach him with a meek and quiet spirit. No matter what the nature of the issue to be shared, the important thing is the manner in which it is presented. This can be crucial in your husband's being able to hear what you must share.

Years ago, Angeline would begin a conversation with, "I know you may think this is stupid, but I need to share it with you." Through the years, we have come to see how very important many of these things were that seemed to be "stupid" to her. What she has shared with me was often a small piece of a puzzle that had many other pieces. If my wife had not shared the part she had, everything else would have been incomplete.

Consider how different things might have been in Genesis chapter 3 if Eve had submitted everything to her husband before acting on her own. The serpent came to Eve reasoning with her until she was deceived into believing what he said. If, at that point, she had responded in the following manner, think how differently things might have turned out: "Snake, what you are telling me sounds good, but I always submit everything to my husband first before acting upon it. I'll get back to you later after I have shared your proposition with my husband." Scripture makes two things clear—Eve was deceived but Adam was not. Adam could have kept her from

partaking of the forbidden fruit if she had shared with him. After she had already partaken of the fruit, he ate with her because he did not want to be separated from her. However, if she had only brought the matter “under the rod” first, how different everything might have been. Adam should have submitted the matter to the Lord even after Eve ate the fruit, but he acted on his own as well. God can spare us many heartaches if we will do things His way.

Angeline:

A good balance to all of this is that, although we want to share our hearts with our husbands, we must be careful not to clutter our relationship with “idle” talk. Most men are annoyed with “frilly” details and do not appreciate a wife going over and over a situation which is weighing heavily on her mind. My husband will graciously tell me, “OK., you now have told me. Cast it off and don’t fret about this anymore.” Part of effective communication is learning to recognize when a “reminder” could become “hen pecking.” The Holy Spirit is wonderful in letting us know when to speak and when not to.

CHAPTER 5

Facilitating Change in Your Husband

Is There Hope for Change?

Previously we mentioned that a wife cannot change her husband. But what is she to do with some of those situations which seem impossible to bear? Is there any hope that it can ever be different? Yes, certainly there is much cause for hope that God can change a husband! A wife can actually be a great influence toward this change if she will respond to God, allowing Him to work in her own life. Letting God work in her own heart helps facilitate transformation in her husband. How does a wife let God do this work in her heart? We find help in the Apostle Peter's instruction to wives.

Peter's Word to Women

“Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; While they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear” (1 Peter 3:1-2). Peter begins by saying that a husband is greatly affected when his wife practices bringing herself under his leadership. This is true whether the husband is saved or not. If he is not doing things God's way (i.e., not obeying God's Word in everything to the fullest extent), his wife's subjection to his leadership greatly facilitates God's work in changing him.

Notice that in verse one that the word “conversation” should be translated “behavior,” as that is the meaning in the original Greek. It is not the wife’s preaching to him that brings good changes but rather her conduct. In verse 2 the word “fear” is mentioned. This is not a fear of her husband, but rather the fear of the Lord. Because she has the fear of the Lord, she subjects herself to her husband’s leadership and has respect for him as the God-appointed leader in the home.

We must also consider the first word of these verses: “Likewise.” What does likewise mean here? It means “in the same manner or in the same way as.” It is a conjunction connecting thoughts in chapter 2 with the first verses in chapter 3. At this point, we must refer to 1 Peter 2:13-23:

Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well. For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men: As free, and not using your liberty for a cloke of maliciousness, but as the servants of God. Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king. Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward. For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving

us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.

In this portion of scripture, God's instruction to the man is that, first of all, he must obey laws and governmental authorities with honor and respect for their God-given authority. Then, beginning in verse 18, he addresses the matter of his relationship to his employer. God says that a man is to obey his employer, not only if he is a good and gentle leader but also if he is a very evil employer and mistreats him. His point is that a man in this circumstance will receive a reward from God even if he is mistreated when he does what is right before God. He then gives Jesus as our example to follow. Jesus always did what was perfectly right before God and man, yet He suffered and was mistreated. He responded without sinning, reviling, or threatening, but committed the outcome to God who judges righteously. Men under these circumstances are to be patient and trust God to work everything for good as they remain under the authority over them.

This brings us back to the phrase, "*Likewise, ye wives.*" In the same way that a husband may not receive just treatment under an ungodly employer or governmental leader, a wife may be under the leadership of a husband, saved or unsaved, who does not do what is right toward her. If she will respond in God's way, God can change her husband and use the situation for her ultimate good. God will work through a husband's decisions for the ultimate good of the wife. This is true whether the husband is saved and honors God's ways or not.

Many years ago, a mother and her children who had been attending an Episcopal church, came to visit our church. After several visits, the woman came to me asking which church they should attend, ours or the Episcopalian. I felt that God was moving them to our church, but I also was sure that I could not make that decision for her. I suggested that she should ask her husband for direction in the matter, inasmuch as he was responsible before God for their spiritual well-being. Her husband was not saved and I assumed that he would give her little, if any, direction. However, when she approached him with a submissive attitude, he took the matter very seriously and visited both churches with the family. He then decisively directed her to attend our church, which is very different from an Episcopal Church. God worked through her unsaved husband to give her the direction she needed as she submitted the matter to him.

God will work everything for our good if we love Him and walk in obedience to Him, just as Romans 8:28 tells us: *“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.”* We either believe that God can work ALL things for our good or that He does not work anything for our good. A husband is under God’s control. God will use his decisions to work for the wife’s good if she will respond in God’s way. She can be assured that, *“The king’s heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will”* (Proverbs 21:1).

When we were young and new in the ministry, God was gracious to instruct us and teach us His way in these matters. One Sunday morning after our worship service, I was at the

door of the church greeting people as they were leaving. A woman, whose husband was not saved, approached me with a rather angry, challenging attitude. “Pastor, do you know what my husband told me? He said this morning that I cannot come to church anymore.”

I was grieved when I heard this, knowing that this lady needed the fellowship of other Christians and building up in the presence of God. How was I to answer her? I prayed within myself quickly and asked God for His answer in the situation. The Lord spoke to me that she was commanded by God’s Word to obey her husband. I shared this with her and encouraged her that we would pray much that God would change her husband’s heart. Now, as she walked away in disgust, her anger was turned away from her husband’s statements and was redirected toward her pastor—me!

On the following Thursday morning, after she had been fuming over my response, God began to speak to her, soften her heart, and show her how rebellious she was toward authority, whether husband or pastor, whether unsaved or saved. God graciously granted her a repentant heart. She decided that she would obey her husband with an excellent spirit.

The following Sunday morning, she was up early straightening things around the house when her husband said, “Aren’t you going to church today?”

“No,” she replied. “Last week you said you didn’t want me to go to church anymore. God has set you as head over me and I have set my heart to obey your leadership.”

“Oh, get ready and go on to church,” was his reply to her.

After her heart was changed, God changed her unsaved husband's heart. God used her husband to expose the rebellion that was in her heart toward God. God can easily change an authority's heart when the people have their hearts right. May we learn to seek God for His wisdom to see what the real issue is when these conflicts arise.

Angeline:

When our children were young, I thought it would be great to have an above ground swimming pool in our backyard. I asked my husband if we could get a pool. He said, "I am not spending one penny for a pool." I then asked him if it was okay with him that the children and I would start to pray for one. His reply was, "That will be OK."

At bedtime we started to pray for the Lord to provide us with a swimming pool. A few weeks later, my aunt was in the hospital and my husband went to see her. As soon as he entered her hospital room, she said, "Bob, you are just the person I wanted to see to ask you if you wanted my swimming pool. My children are raised and I have no use for it. It is yours for the taking."

Well, there was great rejoicing in the Tucker household that evening! My husband was just speechless. We soon had the pool set up in our yard. It was a wonderful blessing to us and lasted until our children were grown. My sweet Aunt's reply was, "I love to be an answer to prayer for others." Her gift to us was such a token to our children that God was mindful of their prayers and that He was interested in their having fun. It was also a token to me that if I kept my heart right toward my husband and his decisions, God could bless us.

Chaste Behavior

Another very important aspect of a wife's demeanor in this process is presented in 1 Peter 3:2. Here, Peter uses the word "chaste" when referring to a wife's behavior, which contains the concept of being holy, pure, innocent, and modest. With this word is also used the word "fear," which is referring to the fear of the Lord. God's purpose, expressed here, encourages a wife to present herself to her husband with a pure and holy life. Out of fear, reverence, and desire for the Lord, she is to conduct herself with respect and reverence for his God-given position as head of the home. Because of her desire to please the Lord she honors her husband. She seeks to develop godly character, which will cause her to be attractive to her husband.

"Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel;" (1 Peter 3:3). Many women depend upon natural features or beauty to attract their husbands. Ezekiel 16:15 expresses this: *"thou didst trust in thine own beauty."* Certainly it is desirable for a wife to care for her personal appearance. A wife should dress in a modest manner which pleases her husband and fix her hair in a style that he appreciates. However, a wife must never trust in her beauty to keep her husband's heart. If this is the approach, then when a more beautiful woman is present, the wife will become threatened and insecure about her own appearance. There must also be the realization that natural beauty can fade with age.

Angeline:

Some women want beauty techniques to produce something they are not. Other women know that beauty treatments

awaken the beauty and loveliness that's within and nurtures them again to feel rejuvenated, refreshed, and alive. Take time for yourself. Do what you can to accomplish this by perhaps a nice bubble bath, doing your nails, putting on makeup, or styling your hair in a new way. Any one of these can once again revive a sense of well being about oneself that a husband will appreciate. Being feminine involves an attitude of gentleness, kindness and an appearance of good health, softness, neatness, poise and radiance.

Meekness

But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands: Even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement (1 Peter 3:4-6).

The value that we place on something is determined by two factors--its desirability and its rarity. God places great value on a meek and quiet spirit because these qualities are most desirable to Him, and are most difficult to find. These are virtues that enable us- both men and women- to qualify as the Bride of Christ, and cause us to find favor with God when we approach unto Him.

These characteristics are also very important in the area of marriage. While ungodly men may initially respond emphatically to outward beauty, men are most affected by the inner beauty that comes from a godly character. This

inner beauty is the most desirable, as it lasts over time, and carries the strongest appeal to a man. A wife who is graced with a meek and quiet spirit can be used of God to help draw her husband into becoming more like Christ. A wife should therefore seek to make the development of these qualities a priority. What does it mean to have a meek and quiet spirit?

Meekness is often defined as a mildness of disposition, but it is certainly much more than that. More than a response to people, meekness primarily relates to our attitude toward God Himself. As we read earlier, Romans 8:28 begins, “*And we know.*” Many Christians do not have that deep trust in the Lord and His way of doing things that they really “*know*” God will work “*all things*” together for their good if they love Him and are walking according to His will.

We all perceive ourselves as possessing certain rights such as having our expectations met. We believe that we are entitled to a measure of treatment that makes life easy and pleasant for us. According to that belief, no one should be treated below a certain level of dignity or be expected to endure difficult circumstances in life. One can go to great trouble to defend these rights and expectations. Many Christians are unwilling to embrace such difficulties. However, seeking to maintain such standards of treatment toward ourselves becomes a heavy burden.

Jesus gives us the answer for such a heavy load of trying to make everyone around us conform to our wishes and treat us properly. He says, “*Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light*” (Matthew 11:28-30). He says, “*learn*

of me for I am meek.” Meekness embraces the knowledge that God uses everything to work for my good. It willingly accepts the circumstances and treatment by others that comes my way. There is a willingness to lay at the feet of Jesus all expectations of how I think things should be, taking Jesus’ yoke upon myself.

Jesus willingly accepted rejection, mocking, physical abuse, accusations, and misunderstandings. He committed Himself to God, the One who uses everything to benefit those who belong to Him. In becoming meek, a person can enter into peace and rest knowing that “it is well with my soul.” Because a person who has developed meekness understands these things, he or she is free to let God allow any circumstances to come knowing they will all work together for good.

How many people have said, “Nobody is going to walk over me!” Contrary to this, Isaiah writes, “*But I will put it into the hand of them that afflict thee; which have said to thy soul, Bow down, that we may go over; and thou hast laid thy body as the ground, and as the street, to them that went over*” (Isaiah 51:23). The prophet, under the anointing of the Holy Spirit, expresses in this verse an attitude of true meekness. There must be a complete realization that God has everything under control.

The Romans used a process called “meeking a horse” to prepare battle horses. The animal was subjected to rigid standards of discipline so that it would be useful to do whatever it was commanded to do in battle. Before its final approval, it would be subjected to the ultimate test. The horse was called to stand at attention while a small fire was built directly before the animal. Natural instinct would tell the

horse to flee the fire. But if the animal was fully “meeked,” it would remain in its place.

How important it is for a wife to allow God to work meekness in her heart so that she can remain in difficult situations which God will use to work for her good. I Peter 3:5 clearly states that this can be accomplished, but only if a wife has her trust fully planted in the Lord.

Quiet Spirit

A quiet spirit translates from the original Greek “to keep one’s seat, to be still or undisturbed.” It speaks not only of an outward quietness during distressing situations, but even more so of having perfect inward peace because of an acknowledgment that God is in full control and working for good.

“Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth” (Psalms 46:10). As a wife continues to develop her relationship with the Lord, she is able to be still and peaceful in the midst of the storm. She does not rise up from that seat of peace to flee in her spirit from her circumstances. Because she has come to trust the Lord more fully, she is able to remain seated and allow God to work, as it says in 1 Peter 3:6: *“and are not afraid with any amazement.”* A loose paraphrase that carries the Greek concept would be to “hold steady and don’t run in fear of the circumstances.”

Often, as a wife receives decisions her husband has made, she feels panic because she may question whether his judgment in the matter is right. If she has learned to trust the Lord and has developed a meek and quiet spirit, she can express those

concerns to her husband but remain in perfect peace if he chooses not to consider her input. This godly character and response is not developed quickly in a woman's life. When a wife is experiencing difficulty accepting her husband's decisions, she should ask him to pray for her that she can come into God's rest. This will also help her husband to realize that she wants to be different.

Sarah

Peter gives us an excellent example demonstrating this truth in action through the relationship between Sarah and Abraham (1 Peter 3:5-6). Here, he is referring to the first account in Genesis 12:10-20:

And there was a famine in the land: and Abram went down into Egypt to sojourn there; for the famine was grievous in the land. And it came to pass, when he was come near to enter into Egypt, that he said unto Sarai his wife, Behold now, I know that thou art a fair woman to look upon: Therefore it shall come to pass, when the Egyptians shall see thee, that they shall say, This is his wife: and they will kill me, but they will save thee alive. Say, I pray thee, thou art my sister: that it may be well with me for thy sake; and my soul shall live because of thee. And it came to pass, that, when Abram was come into Egypt, the Egyptians beheld the woman that she was very fair. The princes also of Pharaoh saw her, and commended her before Pharaoh: and the woman was taken into Pharaoh's house. And he entreated Abram well for her sake: and he had sheep, and oxen, and he asses, and menservants, and maidservants, and she asses, and camels. And the Lord plagued Pharaoh and his

house with great plagues because of Sarai Abram's wife. And Pharaoh called Abram, and said, What is this that thou hast done unto me? why didst thou not tell me that she was thy wife? Why saidst thou, She is my sister? so I might have taken her to me to wife: now therefore behold thy wife, take her, and go thy way. And Pharaoh commanded his men concerning him: and they sent him away, and his wife, and all that he had.

In a time of famine, Abraham made a decision to go into Egypt for help, although nothing in the scriptural account suggests that God spoke to him to do so. It may be that this decision was a mistake. The possibility also exists that it was at this time that Hagar became their servant, which later led to another problem (Genesis 16).

Abraham was afraid that the Egyptians would desire Sarah and kill him to get her if they knew she was his wife. To disguise the fact, he commanded Sarah to say she was his sister. Initially, this may appear that he was asking Sarah to lie to protect his life. The full truth of the situation is revealed in Genesis 20:12: *“And yet indeed she is my sister; she is the daughter of my father, but not the daughter of my mother; and she became my wife.”* Sarah was Abraham's half-sister as we would say today. Even though what he asked Sarah to do was not a lie, it certainly did not reveal the whole truth, which would have offered protection for Sarah in the situation.

This was God's man of faith and power to whom she was married! But instead of making a decision that would protect her, he actually placed her in a very vulnerable situation. A natural response for her in this type of situation would be

to resist her husband's decision. Sarah would naturally feel very insecure traveling in a foreign land with different people and customs. She could have refused to go to Egypt. Most would not fault her if she had rebelled against Abraham's command to say she was his sister. But Peter says that she obeyed Abraham, calling him "lord" (1 Peter 3:6). This means that she willingly put herself under his leadership and obeyed him.

The scripture does not shed light on the matter of whether or not Sarah made an appeal to her husband concerning his decision. He certainly needed her input, and it would have been proper for her to share her heart in the matter for his consideration in making the final decision. If she did appeal to him, he must have insisted that his decision stand. Sarah set her heart to trust God in the matter. She had so allowed God to work a meek and quiet spirit in her that she was able to hold steady in this most difficult circumstance.

Sarah was taken into Pharaoh's house for the purpose of becoming one of the wives of his harem. How very difficult it would have been for Sarah to keep a right attitude and respect her husband. She could do so only because her trust was not in Abraham, but in the Lord (1 Peter 3:5). Because she believed that "*God works all things for good to those who love Him and are called according to His purpose,*" she was able to lay down her expectation that her husband would be a man and protect her. She meekly bowed herself to the situation and trusted the Lord. Therefore, God was able to work in her behalf. "*And the LORD plagued Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai Abram's wife*" (Genesis 12:17). God plagued Pharaoh's household, not because Abraham was a great man of God, but because Sarah understood God's ways and allowed Him to work in her life.

At this point we should consider what kind of person Sarah was. According to Genesis 17:15 God changed her name from Sarai to Sarah. The name Sarai is a masculine gender name meaning “dominative.” Names in the scripture were surely highly indicative of character. This would suggest the possibility that Sarah was, by nature, domineering and resistant, with a tendency to take over whenever possible. If this was the nature with which she was born, the work that was accomplished in her and sealed with a name change is even more encouraging. The name Sarah is a feminine gender name meaning “noble lady, princess or queen.” As this woman met with God she was transformed from a dominating woman with masculine traits to a feminine queen. When one considers such a dramatic change, as manifest in Sarah, it gives hope that God can change anyone who is willing. It may take time and intense working of the Holy Spirit but every willing-hearted woman can be changed to respond to her husband as Sarah did. Take heart, ladies!

A similar situation took place more than twenty years later (Genesis 20). This time, Abraham journeyed among the Philistines telling them that Sarah was his sister. Again, Sarah responded correctly in God’s ways. God threatened King Abimelech with death because he was taking another man’s wife. Genesis 20:3 shows how God feels about the situation of a man taking another man’s wife for himself.

God also stopped Abimelech’s wives from having children, which was a curse upon his house. “*For the LORD had fast closed up all the wombs of the house of Abimelech, because of Sarah Abraham’s wife*” (Genesis 20:18). God did all of this, once again, not because of Abraham, but because Sarah trusted God and followed His ways. God is able to do great and mighty things when we will follow His word. “*For the*

eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him” (2 Chronicles 16:9).

Many wives have come to us saying that because of wrong decisions their husbands have made, they are no longer able to trust them. Often, a wife has expectations of her husband that only God can fulfill. God has intended for a wife to put her trust in Him.

We heard the testimony of a woman whose husband had passed away. After a time, she grew so much closer in her relationship with the Lord. When her husband was alive, she had looked to him for many situations that only the Lord Himself could handle properly. A wife can actually hinder her relationship with the Lord and put undue pressure upon her husband when she places expectations on him that only God can fulfill.

A meek and quiet spirit is developed in a heart that has learned to trust in the Lord. This process of development in a virtuous woman takes time. Sarah was sixty-five to ninety years old when these incidents took place in her life. We always encourage a wife who is struggling to remember Sarah. If you are not yet ninety years old, there is surely hope that God can work the necessary changes.

We are all His workmanship (Ephesians 2:10). As He is allowed to continue working in us facilitated by our desire to be changed, He will complete the work He has begun. Maintaining a tender heart that wants to be changed and conformed to His purposes and His image will allow God to do His good work, and help to transform marriages and families.

Positive Instruction from Negative Examples

Vashti was queen to Ahasuerus, one of the most powerful kings of his day (Esther 1:10-20). Her refusal to respond to her husband's request for her to appear at a banquet made the king furious. Although she possessed great physical beauty, her husband was not pleased with her. He and his court advisors knew that if her rebellion was left unchallenged, chaos would result in homes throughout the empire. King Ahasuerus decided to replace her with one more noble than herself.

And Memucan answered before the king and the princes, Vashti the queen hath not done wrong to the king only, but also to all the princes, and to all the people that are in all the provinces of the king Ahasuerus. For this deed of the queen shall come abroad unto all women, so that they shall despise their husbands in their eyes, when it shall be reported, The king Ahasuerus commanded Vashti the queen to be brought in before him, but she came not. Likewise shall the ladies of Persia and Media say this day unto all the king's princes, which have heard of the deed of the queen. Thus shall there arise too much contempt and wrath. If it please the king, let there go a royal commandment from him, and let it be written among the laws of the Persians and the Medes, that it be not altered, That Vashti come no more before king Ahasuerus; and let the king give her royal estate unto another that is better than she. And when the king's decree which he shall make shall be published throughout all his empire, (for it is great,) all the

wives shall give to their husbands honour, both to great and small (Esther 1:16-20).

Eventually, a woman of godly character named Esther was chosen to replace Vashti. While God does not allow a husband to replace his wife like this, we see the importance of a wife allowing God to change her. Esther was the opposite of Vashti. In Esther 2:15, we see that she allowed Hegai, who is a type of the Holy Spirit, to choose what was best for her. Esther exemplified what God wants in a wife's heart toward her husband. We will see later how God used this quality in Esther to turn the evil plans of a tyrant and save God's people.

Another prominent negative example to consider is Jezebel, the wife of Ahab, a king of Israel. She was a very wicked woman who never came under her husband's leadership, but rather influenced him to be evil. The meaning of her name is very revealing. It means to be "unhusbanded" (Parker, Tenney, & White, 1980).

By reading the scriptural account of Jezebel's life, we see that she was a woman who would not be ruled by her husband. Being stubborn and self-willed, she never allowed her husband to take his place as head of the home. Her end was one of the most deplorable of anyone in scripture, as can be seen in 2 Kings 9:30-37 where she was thrown out a window to the ground and eaten by dogs.

Say ye to the righteous, that it shall be well with him: for they shall eat the fruit of their doings. Woe unto the wicked! it shall be ill with him: for the reward of his hands shall be given him. As for my people, children are their oppressors, and women rule over them. O

my people, they which lead thee cause thee to err, and destroy the way of thy paths (Isaiah 3:10-12).

Rejecting God's ways always ends in sorrow and disappointment. If a wife fails to allow God to work in her life according to His ways, which are perfect and right, the results are very disappointing in the end. Resistance to her husband's leadership affects the whole family.

When a wife takes on responsibility that is not hers, the whole family is affected negatively. But if a wife sets her heart after God's ways and embraces her God-given place, she will become a blessing to those around her and the end result will be joyful.

Making an Appeal in Wrong Decisions

Husbands do not always make wise decisions in leading their families. Nevertheless, we have seen how God can work for good if a wife puts her trust in the Lord and conducts herself as God says she should. However, what should a wife do if her husband commands her to do something contrary to scriptural conduct?

Our years of experience in marriage counseling have proven this to be a rare occurrence. More often than not, wives are resisting their husband's leadership and need to apply God's ways in the situation. It would be wrong for a wife to remain silent and conduct herself contrary to God's Word. This situation occurred with Ananias and Sapphira when they "agreed together" to tempt the Spirit of the Lord (Acts 5:9). Had Sapphira appealed her husband's decision, he possibly would have turned from his deed, but they agreed together, thus incurring God's wrath.

Situations can arise in which a husband does overstep his boundaries. What should a wife do in this type of circumstance? Making an appeal to her husband, as one would for justice in a court of law, becomes necessary. True submission does not mean that a wife always agrees with her husband's decisions, but as was shared earlier, she submits all that is in her heart to him.

For example, one wife came to us whose husband was commanding her to do something contrary to God's Word. We encouraged her to be certain she was doing everything she knew that God wanted her to do. We prayed and trusted the Lord to intervene, which He did. Her husband never again required her to do that ungodly thing. We witnessed God's faithfulness to work on behalf of those whose hearts are right toward Him.

In Matthew 27:19, we read of an appropriate appeal by Pilate's wife: "*When he was set down on the judgment seat, his wife sent unto him, saying, Have thou nothing to do with that just man: for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him.*" She gave her husband a proper warning even though he chose to ignore it.

Esther provides for us a most excellent example of a wife's appealing her husband's decision. Haman, her husband's top prince, had deceived the king into making an edict to destroy all Jews throughout the kingdom. If Esther approached the king without his extending to her the golden scepter, she would lose her life. Esther followed a course of action that is an example for persons making an appeal to authorities over them.

Esther fasted and prayed (Esther 4:16). She prepared her own heart before the Lord and appealed directly to Him first of

all. She then put on her royal clothing and approached the king (Esther 5:1). Because of the situation, she could have been wearing sackcloth and ashes. This certainly would not have provoked the king's favor as seeing her in royal apparel would have. Sometimes, because a wife is in such distress concerning her husband's decision, she forgets what made her attractive to her husband in the first place.

Esther used every natural advantage, even though she exercised great self-control and did not hurriedly blurt out her concern in an emotional outburst. An invitation for the king and Haman to attend a banquet served to spark the king's interest further. Esther waited for the perfect timing and then, with well chosen words, she presented her appeal (Esther 7:1-6). The king's heart was turned and her people were saved.

Often in appealing her husband's decision a wife is impatient and lacks wisdom in the timing of her approach to her husband. When he first returns home from work is not a good time to approach him. How important it is to be sensitive to the Lord and follow His leading. If she has done everything she can to help her husband see that it would be better for him not to act contrary to God's Word, and he still insists on his decision, she must commit herself to the Lord and stand in what is right with an excellent spirit toward her husband.

At this point, her response must be like Daniel's friends: *"If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up"* (Daniel 3:17-18). Their hearts were

set to obey God. Likewise, when the commands of those over us conflict with scripture, we must set our heart to obey God rather than men (Acts 5:29).

CHAPTER 6

The Older Instruct the Younger

Paul's letter to Titus, chapter 2, gives some very essential instruction in order for the church to function in proper order. Specific instruction is given to the older women to teach the younger women. It seems as though everywhere we teach the subject of marriage and family, the question is asked, "What is a woman's place in ministry?" There is concern as to what position or how much authority in the church a woman can have. From our perspective, people are often missing the point. Perhaps one of the greatest needs in the church today is for the older, more mature and experienced women, who understand God's ways, to teach the younger women in very practical matters that deeply affect both the spiritual and natural circumstances of life. We need spiritual mothers who are convinced of God's ways, who will stand by the younger women and encourage them in God's ways.

"That they admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed" (Titus 2:4-5 NKJV). Many would assume that the things Paul says in Titus that should be taught to the younger women are unnecessary since the young women know these things by nature. Nothing could be further from the truth. It is essential that the seven foundational truths found here which affect marriage and family life be taught to the younger women. Without training in these areas, life becomes chaotic. Let us look at each of these truths individually.

To Love Their Husbands

The English word “love” covers a wide spectrum in meaning. We say, “I love my wife; I love my children; I love my home; I love my car; I love my dog.” Hopefully, even though we use the same verb “to love,” we do have different levels of love toward each of these. The Greeks used different words to express different types of love rather than just one word for everything. When scripture commands a husband to love his wife, the Greek word *agapao* is used. In this verse, as the wife is taught to love her husband, another Greek word is used expressing a different thought. This word is *philandros*, meaning that the wife is to be an affectionate friend or companion to her husband.

The concept is that a wife is to be a companion who responds to him. The key to a wife’s loving her husband centers on her receiving grace from God to respond in many different ways to him. Many wives are very much governed by their feelings or emotions and have not learned to respond well to their husbands. The older women should teach the younger in this very vital area of responsibility so that the husband will feel loved, appreciated and respected.

Every husband desires that his wife learn to respond to his leadership with respect. Ephesians 5:33 states that a wife should “*see that she reverence her husband.*” This means that, because a wife has the fear of the Lord and honors God’s ways, she has an esteem for her husband’s God-given position as leader over her. Many wives disdain their husband’s role as the head and respond with great disrespect. Others are very controlling of their husbands and families, proving that they do not have the fear of the Lord and proper

godly awe of their husband's place in family order. A husband's advancement in life can be very much influenced by his wife's response to his leadership.

When a wife truly responds in love to her husband, she is very mindful to listen carefully when he speaks to her or others. I have often asked in counsel what type of requests a husband has for his wife. Many times, a wife has stated what her husband has asked of her and follows with a statement something like this: "He said that it is important to him, but I know it is really not important." What she is saying is that what he has requested is not important to *her*.

A wife who has been taught to respond to her husband will learn to listen carefully to his requests and not cast them off as insignificant. Because a man and woman are created by God to be so different, a wife must realize that matters which are unimportant in her thinking may be of major importance to her husband.

As a wife learns to really hear what her husband is requesting and responds with grace from the Lord, a profound affect may be made upon her husband. Quality time for a husband and wife to communicate and share their hearts is limited. A wife should be careful not to be so involved in her many other responsibilities as a homemaker and mother that her husband finds her unresponsive when he wishes to share his heart with her.

Another very important issue is a wife's response to her husband's affection. Later, we shall study the importance of a husband's giving affection to his family. Equally significant is the wife's return of affection to her husband. Believe it or not, men really do have a deep desire to please their wives.

Because their wives seldom express thankfulness, appreciation, or praise for their husbands' acts of affection some men feel that nothing they do will ever be appreciated.

Keeping the Home Fires Glowing

Angeline:

Women, just think back to when you first met your husband. Remember how exciting it was to anticipate seeing him after being apart from one another. When I first met Bob, he was in college in New York and I was a senior in high school in Michigan. We were about 350 miles apart from one another. We were able to see each other once a month. The anticipation was thrilling.

Somehow, after marriage the humdrum of life saps us of these feelings. We begin to react instead of respond to one another. God has intended that we keep the love for one another alive. Proverbs 5:15-19 says,

Drink waters out of thine own cistern, and running waters out of thine own well. Let not thy fountains be dispersed abroad, and rivers of waters in the streets. Let them be only thine own, and not strangers with thee. Let thy fountain be blessed: and rejoice with the wife of thy youth. Let her be as the loving hind and pleasant roe; let her breasts satisfy thee at all times; and be thou ravished always with her love."

For this to happen, you must make yourself available. Husbands are usually sexually motivated by what they see, and wives by what they hear. To husbands, sex is what goes on in the bedroom, but to wives, sex is what has been going on all day. If a wife has had a bad day, it is hard to

respond; but a husband can easily forget what the “wrong” of the day was and desire to have time with his wife in an intimate way.

This is where a wife must learn to be a responder to her husband. I have known wives who continually refused to care for the needs of their husbands, and eventually the husbands have gone elsewhere. The wife shares in the responsibility for the husband committing adultery because she was not fulfilling her duty in marriage.

Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband. The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife. Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency (1 Corinthians 7:3-5).

God never intended this to happen. Adultery is so very devastating to marriages, family life, and to the individual. The word “ravished” in Proverbs 5:19 means to be infatuated. When the infatuation has left a marriage, it is time to get alone with your mate and meet with God so that He can once again fill you with that longing for one another. Communicate, spend time with each other, and share your hearts with one another.

Included here are a few items of instruction:

1. Check with your husband to see if he needs time with you.

2. Be sure you are desirable, neat and clean, and that you are a tidy, clean housekeeper with a nice clean bed in which to be together.
3. Make yourself lovely. Prepare your thoughts for coming together.
4. Set an atmosphere. Light a candle in your bedroom or powder your sheets. Wear something that he really likes to see you in.

In Genesis 2:25 is the account of Adam and Eve both being naked and not ashamed. God created man, woman, and sex. It was His idea. After they sinned, they wanted to hide from God. When our relationships are right, we are not ashamed, but sin will always take the good things God has made and twist and pervert them. So it is in our marriage. If we are not open and transparent with our mate, if we hide things and keep things from the knowledge of our mate, we open our marriage to deceit. We feel ashamed and find it difficult to be open with one another.

Keeping It Pure

Hebrews 13:4 tells us, “*Marriage is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.*” Marriage is the social order that God ordained for His creation. It is right and honorable in all; the bed is undefiled. However, there are guidelines for the marriage act that God reveals to us in His Word.

Proverbs 22:14 says, “*The mouth of a strange women is a deep pit: he that is abhorred of the Lord shall fall therein.*” This is speaking of oral sex. Only those abhorred of the Lord fall into this. This is hated by God. If you have given yourself to this type of sex, you need to repent of it and be cleansed

from it. Jude 7 says, “*Even as Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.*” In the Greek, the “*going after strange flesh*” can be attributed to oral sex.

We know that the sexual atmosphere of Sodom and Gomorrah was that of homosexuals. God even mentioned that the end of Sodom and Gomorrah was suffering the vengeance of eternal fire. Romans 1:26-27 tells us,

For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet.

The discussion of this passage refers to sodomy or anal sex. Once again God makes it very clear about His attitude towards this type of sex act. Second Timothy 3:1-6 says,

This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away. For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and

*lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away
with divers lusts.*

In these verses, we can also see the acts of masturbation—*”lovers of their own selves.”* When people are caught in the web of masturbation, they, many times, become their own best friend. As parents, we need to teach our sons and daughters to beware of this trap. It can turn into an obsession. We need to share with our sons that “wet dreams” are a very natural release for the pressure of the build up of sexual desire. Of course, if they are feeding their minds with lustful entertainment or pornography, they will not be able to stay clear of this trap. Loneliness and boredom can open our children to masturbation. Ask the Lord to help you be creative with family activities and provide meaningful, hard work for your children so that when they go to bed at night, they go to sleep and do not involve themselves in sexual fantasies.

One very important protection for a daughter is a close relationship so that she will open her heart to you as parents. Girls possess a lot of emotion and need to talk and talk and talk. This, many times, relieves the frustration and sexual drive that they may be experiencing.

Measuring His Motive

Sometimes, a wife should look beyond her husband’s actions and see his motives in what he does for her. Much misunderstanding can result otherwise.

Years ago, I asked Angeline what she would appreciate for a birthday gift. She indicated that a certain bracelet she had seen would be a lovely gift. I can still remember the battle

in my mind as I stood at the jewelry counter inspecting this bracelet: “Surely she won’t want this. It is useless! A person cannot do anything with it. Wouldn’t she really rather have a nice womanly ‘tool’ that could perform great miracles on vegetables? The bracelet seems to be so impractical. On the other hand, this is exactly what she said she wants. I will buy it, but I know it could not possibly please her.” With conflict of mind, believing fully that Angeline would have a disappointing birthday, I purchased the bracelet, had it wrapped beautifully, and presented it to her. Her response was shocking and has left me scratching my head in wonderment to this day. “Oh, it’s just beautiful!” she exclaimed. “I just love it! You are such a wonderful husband.”

When we arrived at church later she showed it off to other ladies. “Oh, it’s just lovely!” one of her friends squealed (as only a woman can). “Your husband is so thoughtful. He must love you so much.” I stood in sheer bewilderment beholding this whole scene with utter unbelief. How could they all like something so useless? I still do not understand it, but I have allowed myself to be conformed to my wife’s wishes because, like most every other man, I want to please my wife.

In general, women like gifts which “show off” their husband’s love for them. Putting it from a man’s perspective, most women like “useless” gifts that have absolutely no purpose but show. Men are very different. Men want tools—gifts that are useful and with which something can be accomplished. I once saw a cartoon showing a man at a hardware store buying a lawn mower with lace all over it. The caption read, “She said she wanted something frilly for her birthday.” This portrays the concept of most men when doing something special for their wives. Their motive is good even though their actions are misguided.

Ladies, your husband has probably tried to show his love for you in ways that have shown as much ignorance of women as my ways have. But how important it is that you see past his ignorant deeds to his deep motive of seeking to please the woman he loves and appreciates. Learn to respond with gratitude and affection even for such misguided attempts on his part. Perhaps, after you have been married for thirty or forty years, he will catch on. Many men do begin to understand their wives' desires if given enough time for God to work in their lives!

Angeline:

There are some wives who do love "tools." I have a friend who really does not care for jewelry but loves every new kitchen gadget that comes out. The whole thought is to display a grateful attitude for the expression of love that your husband has shown to you either in thought, word, or deed. A thankful, grateful heart is an attribute that we need to keep flowing, with words of kindness and gratitude to our husbands. Don't forget that your children are beholding your responses and learning from you at all times. What you sow you will reap, not only in your husband but in your children as well.

To Love Their Children

Children are a precious gift from God. In these days, however, many people think that children are an intrusion into their own quest for prominence, riches, and pleasure. Paul warns of extremely dangerous times at the end of the church age when people will be "*without natural affection*" (2 Timothy 3:1-3). This phrase literally means "to be hardhearted toward one's own family." We are witnessing many mothers who, not having had a proper mother

themselves, are lacking those essential mothering qualities. That gentle tenderness which should naturally come from a mother's heart is often lacking. Many have the nature of the ostrich, as described in Job 39:13-17:

Gavest thou the goodly wings unto the peacocks? or wings and feathers unto the ostrich? Which leaveth her eggs in the earth, and warmeth them in the dust, And forgetteth that the foot may crush them, or that the wild beast may break them. She is hardened against her young ones, as though they were not hers: her labour is in vain without fear; Because God hath deprived her of wisdom, neither hath he imparted to her understanding.

Angeline:

As we look around and observe the times that we live in, we see such desperate need for family life teaching. God does have answers! We knew of a man and woman who had two children whom they gave up to foster care so that they could pursue their own careers. Our hearts were so broken when we saw this strong desire in them to pursue their careers rather than to invest in their children. The sorrow of their lives continues on, both for the parents and for the children.

God has purposed for families to love and care for one another. In Galatians 5:22-23, we read, "*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness temperance: against such there is no law.*" These are so essential in our families. Many times we are able to manifest the fruit of the spirit to people outside of our homes, but to our own families we are hateful, crabby, nagging, shouting, angry, cruel, nasty, and very unkind.

Have you ever been in a heated discussion with members of your family when the phone rang, or someone came to the door? All of a sudden, you were sweet, kind, and gracious. This dramatic change of behavior is certainly observed by the ones you are living with daily. They are observing and absorbing much through your actions. You become an example to them of being phony. We all have “short circuit” occasions arise in our lives, but if this becomes the rule and not just an occasional mishap, our family will suffer greatly. If we are teaching our children self-control, and yet are not striving for that control in our own lives, we can become incredible to them.

From the time of your children’s birth and throughout their lives, it is important to let them know how much you love them and how important they are to you. Rehearsing the excitement of the pregnancy and the excitement of waiting for them to be born is so very important in letting them know that they were wanted. On every birthday we would tell our children about the day they were born, how special they were to hold, and how much they were loved. They were the most beautiful babies that ever arrived here on earth. All of these things establish a sense of acceptance.

I had read that you should have a baby picture of them on the wall of their bedroom. This would put before them the wonderful event of their birth and the story of joy that went with their arrival.

One woman shared with me that the birth of her child was not a delight to think upon because of the circumstances that she found herself in at the time of her baby’s birth. I encouraged her to think of something positive that did happen at that time and to reflect upon that in the story of

her baby's birth. She incorporated positive thoughts into the event and found joy in the midst of her difficult situation. It changed her whole thought pattern about what had been a hard time in her life.

Our children will face many difficult events in their lives, and they need us to be there to build them up, to encourage them, and to assure them that we love them, want them, and care for them. Psalm 144:12 gives us a beautiful word picture to strive for: *“That our sons may be as plants grown up in their youth; That our daughters may be as corner stones, polished after the similitude of a palace..”*

A mother's hardness of heart toward her own children, combined with a lack of wisdom, leaves the children with major gaps in their development and training. Hospital nurses have told us that they are able to determine what kind of mother a woman will be by the words and tone of voice she uses with her newborn baby.

God has purposed that the older, godly women instruct the younger women to love their children. This love is a giving of themselves for the good of their children. Their lives are to be committed, not to their own careers, but to investing all the goodness and godly training into their children that they possibly can in the few short years which are available.

Consider the variety and volume of training that is necessary to prepare our children to be what God has called them to be—to obey, to know God's Word and ways, to learn personal hygiene and how to maintain a wholesome godly appearance, to learn and practice proper etiquette and conduct in life situations, and to gain good communication skills. These are just a few necessary areas of training we can mention.

Only by the grace of God can the mother invest her time and energy most wisely in her children. The immediate and eternal rewards for this investment are well worth it. A mother will often need support, counsel, and encouragement from her husband. But the reassuring instruction from mature, experienced women proves to be essential as well. Satan seeks to destroy children at an early age. God wants to raise up godly mothers who deny him that opportunity by training their children and preparing a godly seed which will fulfill all of God's will. What greater responsibility could a mother fulfill? If she does not fill this place in her children's lives, who will? It is a privilege and an honor to prepare people for the kingdom of God.

To Be Discreet

Many, if not most, women are known for their keen sensitivity in situations of life. Women, in general, tend to view life's circumstances through the eyes of emotion. God has wonderfully created a woman to be like this. Her husband needs the balance of this refreshing difference in her makeup. However, this part of a woman's soul must be brought under the control of the Holy Spirit. This word discreet means "to have a sound mind, to be sane in one's senses, to curb one's desires, or to be self-controlled." If this area of a wife's soul is not harnessed and brought under control, she can become very difficult, if not impossible, to lead. She will allow her feelings and fears to scatter her in every direction, making it impossible for her to be what God has called her to be as a wife, a mother, and a Christian.

In Luke 21:19, Jesus gave us one of the keys for enduring the turmoil of the last days of the church age: "*In your patience possess ye your souls.*" We must each have possession of

our own souls. A soul is comprised of the mind, will and emotions. Our souls should not have control of our lives, but rather should assist our spirits in moving with the direction of the Holy Spirit in us.

A man desperately needs his wife's input and perspective in circumstances. However, if she has not learned to be discreet, he will often find it difficult to receive from her. If she becomes extremely emotional and uncontrolled, she will make it difficult for him to determine the Lord's will in the situation.

Many wives have not learned this self-control, but instead react in a way that eventually causes their husbands to turn them off and ignore their emotional outbursts. If a wife has learned to trust God, she can quiet herself and believe that God will work for good as she prays for her husband to make the right decision.

Chaste

God has purposed that a wife should have a clean and pure heart that can be fully consecrated to God's will, as Ephesians 5:26 declares: "*That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word.*" How important it is to spend time daily in prayer and reading the scriptures that God may speak and separate from the heart any evil that would hinder this full and pure consecration to the Lord and to His will. With this consecration comes a commitment to follow God's ways and do what He says. The thoughts that a woman allows into her mind are of major significance.

And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Finally,

brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely; whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things” (Philippians 4:7-8).

This scripture gives the guidelines for testing each thought as to whether or not it should be allowed to remain in the mind. The eight tests that Paul mentions here are to be like eight sentries that must be passed by in order to enter the thought pattern. If a subject cannot pass each of these, it must be turned away, never to return. We cannot always control what thoughts may present themselves to us, but we can choose whether or not we will entertain those thoughts further or cast them aside.

If a person has had a morally polluted past, often the Holy Spirit will seek to accomplish a deep work of repentance and cleansing in order to restore the heart and mind of a virgin. If this cleansing and separation from the past transpires before marriage, a woman can enter holy matrimony without bringing past relationships to plague her union with her husband. Even though this process may last for several years, the work of the Holy Spirit can produce a chaste heart. Thank God that the work which Jesus Christ accomplished can bring a person freedom from sin of the past which continues to bind in the present. God’s purpose is to restore what has been lost and produce a pure heart that will fully respond to His purposes.

Angeline:

It is important to note here that modest apparel is also a very important factor in being chaste. By our appearance, we outwardly express what is happening in the inside. For a woman to wear scant clothing is only an invitation

for trouble. The book of Proverbs portrays two women. One is a virtuous woman and the other is an adulterous or strange woman. Scripture goes into great detail about both of these ladies, in how they act, their character, and their productivity. One represents the kingdom of light and the other the kingdom of darkness. There is a body language that is expressed in immodest dress.

We were once on a vacation and in a souvenir shop, when I noticed a man staring at our five-year-old daughter. Once I became aware of what was happening, I told my husband. We quickly got out of the store and into our car. As we traveled, the Lord started to deal with me: "Look how you have dressed her." She was in cute little shorts with a ruffly halter top. Pink, white, and cute.....or so I had thought. Then my eyes were opened and I began to realize that she was dressed in a way that had drawn the looks of an evil eye and had caused lust to be conceived. I was abhorred.

I believe strongly that God will protect our children, but I also believe that we must dress them in such a way as not to attract people who have a lustful or evil heart. When we came home from our vacation, I thrilled our daughter's heart by telling her that we were going to go through her clothes and she would get a new wardrobe. She was thrilled, and I did not fill her with fear at this young age. I gracefully changed her clothing so that she would not attract an intrusion into her life by immodest dress.

Homemakers

Homemakers or keepers at home could be translated "guardians of the home." We will consider two applications of this thought.

Atmospheric Pressure

A wife, more than any other member of the family, affects the atmosphere of the home. When entering a business or a home, one immediately senses the prevailing spirit there. Upon entering some places, one feels love, joy, contentment, peace, and friendliness. The atmosphere says, "Welcome, please come in and be refreshed." In contrast, other places instantly produce tension, making one want to leave as soon as possible. God has intended our homes to be a sanctuary from the world. We cannot control the atmosphere of every place we go in the world, but we certainly can affect the spirit of the home in which we live. When a wife has learned to be contented and thankful, others will sense it readily.

The apostle Paul said, "*I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: everywhere and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need*" (Philippians 4:11b-12a). How important it is that the older, more mature women teach the young ones this truth. So often a young wife puts pressure on her husband to provide everything that she was accustomed to having in her father's house. She fails to remember that Mom and Dad worked and waited for years to accumulate those things. Two verses which can be extremely helpful in this regard are the following: "*But godliness with contentment is great gain*" (I Timothy 6:6); "*Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee*" (Hebrews 13:5). Material things will never bring contentment. Contentment is learned by being in the presence of the Lord.

Peace in a home results from allowing the work of righteousness to be accomplished in us by the Holy Spirit. *“And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever. And my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places”* (Isaiah 32:17-18). When the Holy Spirit puts His finger on areas of our lives that are out of God’s order, we must respond so that our homes will be filled with the peace of God. Often when people come into our home, they remark how beautiful and peaceful it is. Angeline does a superb job of decorating, but we both realize that the real attraction is the peace and presence of God in our home.

Joy is another essential decoration for the atmosphere of the home. *“Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore”* (Psalms 16:11). A wife should concern herself with attracting the presence of God into the home. In the Old Testament, the Ark of the Covenant was that place where God chose to manifest His presence.

King David longed to have the presence of God at his house and began to bring the Ark of the Covenant to Mount Zion. *“So David would not remove the ark of the Lord unto him into the city of David: but David carried it aside into the house of Obededom the Gittite. And the ark of the Lord continued in the house of Obededom the Gittite three months: and the Lord blessed Obededom, and all his household”* (2 Samuel 6:10-11).

The presence of God blesses the whole household. A wife can attract the presence of God by rejoicing in the Lord, by singing praise and giving thanks to the Lord throughout the day. Good Christian music is helpful, but the very best is for

the wife to sing and rejoice in the Lord herself. “*Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ*” (Ephesians 5:19-20). This scripture begins the instruction for the order of the home. Fill your home with praise and attract the presence of the Lord and make a sanctuary from the world that will cleanse and refresh each member of the household.

Order Within Your Borders

Another matter of great importance for the wife in being a keeper of the home is the maintenance, neatness, and order of the home and children. The virtuous woman in Proverbs 31 gives a vivid picture of a well-organized, hard-working, able director of home affairs. True godliness certainly includes cleanliness and orderliness in the home.

Not only does the attitude of the wife and mother affect the atmosphere of the home and everyone who enters, but also the way a home is decorated and maintained affects everyone as well. The decor of a home need not be expensive to communicate an atmosphere of peace, order, and well-being. In the most humble of dwellings, the industry and vitality of the wife will help to create a warm, inviting, homey atmosphere. Everything should have its place and be kept there. Every family member is affected negatively with disorder in the care of the home. I find it difficult to study or pray in a place that is messy and disorganized. Children growing up in this type of situation are being trained to develop the same type of atmosphere for their own home one day.

*True
godliness
certainly
includes
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and
orderliness
in the home.*

Angeline:

Make your home an exciting place to come home to. The smells of dinner cooking, cookies being baked, or bread in the oven immediately says, “I have been working all day to receive you into a place of love, joy, peace and to refresh you from all that you have faced.” Before my children would go to school, I would tell them that I was going to prepare a new dessert for them for dinner that night. They would be so excited. They would question and quiz me for some hints.....but no, they would have to wait and see. They would run home and burst into the door saying, “I’m home! Did you make the surprise?” I would reply, “Yes, but you have to wait until dinner.” We would share their day and how things went for them, have dinner, and then the big surprise would be presented.

Planting these little “excitements” into their little hearts makes home very appealing. Of course, you must constantly keep your mind creative in planning new surprises. I would also listen to different reports on the radio or read articles from the newspaper or magazines, and we would have many discussions around our dinner table, with lots of time to laugh and have a good family conversation. Many times this was my project during the day—creating the smells and gathering the news for when they entered the house, which was our home.

Do not make the mistake of having your house only to be a place of rules to follow. If excessive or unreasonable the *don'ts* can be discouraging to a family. Of course, we want to train our children to respect our furnishings and to keep things clean and tidy, but if we try to accomplish it only with rules, we will produce very angry, unfulfilled children. I know houses that have never been homes to

the families that live in them. You do not want to produce a house of rules. You want a home of relationships.

We knew a family whose children ate in the basement while the parents ate in the dining room. The result was very angry, unloved children and an atmosphere of feeling unwanted. The ultimate goal is to make the atmosphere of your home so inviting that your loved ones can hardly wait to get there at the end of their day. You are waiting for them with open arms and a cleansing wave of refreshment from the pollution of the world.

Guarding the Gates

God has given to a wife a special sensitivity to guard against anything coming into the home that would dissipate the precious presence of the Lord. Such things as unwholesome music, magazines or literature, inappropriate programs or videos, pornographic materials, or any idols or materials having to do with demon gods, affect and destroy a good, safe environment for the whole family. God has given special grace to a wife and mother to keep these things from polluting the atmosphere of the home, and to maintain a refuge of safety and protection from the world.

Angeline:

We received a gift of a wooden fork and spoon. On these items were engraved heathen gods. When these items came into our possession, we started to have unusual manifestations. Our son developed an infection from a sore that would not go away, our daughter suddenly developed a high fever, and I, a terrible headache. With this attack happening all at once, we went to prayer. The Lord revealed the source— those engraved wooden articles. We burned

them, and all of the physical effects stopped immediately. We need to check what we have brought into our homes. Some things may seem very innocent but can be very disastrous. God is so faithful. We must ask for His wisdom, and we must act upon those things that He indicates.

In Acts 19:19, the apostles had a bonfire to dispose of the things of the occult. A fire is the best way to cleanse away the effects of such things. If you have any questions about any item, discuss it with your family and destroy it. Cleanse your home so that the presence of God will reside in it. You can't change the whole world, but you can keep the atmosphere of your home so that it can be a place of peace and restoration.

Many years ago, some families in the church had purchased dolls for their daughters that they did not realize carried curses from demon gods upon them.

In one situation a young girl had mysteriously developed an infection in a bone in her leg. Several attempts by a medical doctor to cure the infection through use of antibiotics failed. The next step planned by the doctor was surgery. The family had called for prayer and we were quickened by the Holy Spirit to ask if they had any of those dolls that were popular at the time. They had several. These were created by a practicing Hindu and opened the door for Satanic attack in many lives.

We counseled the family that this was perhaps the source of the problem. They prayed and decided to burn the dolls. In his examination just prior to surgery, the doctor discovered that the infection was completely gone. His statement was that it looked on x-ray as if someone had "burned" the infection out.

As these dolls were exposed for what they were and were destroyed, relief was found from nightmares and unresolvable physical problems. Satan seeks to exert his diabolical influence in the home in any way he can make an entrance. God gives that special perceptive guardianship of the home to the wife. She is usually the first to become aware of any such intrusion into the home.

Good

The established, mature women should also teach the younger women to be “good.” Some translations render this as “kind.” This carries part of the meaning; however, the Greek word *agathos* has a much broader meaning. It invokes the thought of a goodness of character or constitution that is beneficial in its effect. This goodness exudes excellence, honor, and dignity. The portrayal of this type of goodness is found in Proverbs 31 in the description of the virtuous woman: “*Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies. The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil. She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life*” (Proverbs 31:10-12). Any wife who develops this quality helps complete her husband in a wonderful way. Her value is far above the most valuable rubies. Why is a ruby so valuable? It is most desirable because of its beauty and rarity.

“*A virtuous woman is a crown to her husband*” (Proverbs 12:4). A crown speaks of splendor and authority. Any man who is recognized as a godly leader must have a wife who is like a crown to him. The Proverbs 31 wife is recognized as an integral part of her husband’s position as a governmental leader (Proverbs 31:23). Wives often fail to recognize what an influence they have on their husbands and

on others as they develop such godly character. At times, a good wife may doubt her effectiveness and value to her family, feeling quite inadequate. Some become discouraged and begin to let some of the goodness slip away. However, a wife must understand how important her godly character and function is.

No one will ever be able to truly replace you. Abraham and Sarah tried to fulfill the promise of God with a woman other than Sarah. It was impossible for Hagar to fulfill what God had purposed for Sarah. Abraham needed Sarah to fulfill together with him the promise of God. Your husband needs you to be all that God wants you to be as a wife that he (your husband) might lead you into God's best.

Obedient to Their Own Husbands

God has established a husband to be the leader of his wife and children. His internal programming is set to be a leader. A husband is always frustrated when he senses that he is not able to lead his wife. While some men are lacking in leadership abilities, it is also true that some wives refuse to be led. As God commands a wife to be obedient to her own husband, this means that she should willingly yield herself to her husband's leadership, counsel, and admonition. We have observed many men who experience great frustration and resist their wives because the wives refuse to follow their husbands' leadership. This causes the Word of God to be blasphemed. A wife's obedience to her husband affects him deeply in many ways.

When we first began pastoring a small congregation consisting mainly of women, I began to ask the Lord why

we had so few men. The Lord spoke to me that the solution began with the wives. As we sought the Lord for His way for wives and began to teach them, the husbands began to respond to the Lord in a new way as their wives responded to them in obedience and respect.

Through more than twenty-five years of pastoring, we have seen many men set their hearts toward the Lord as their wives first began to change. At first, it seemed to me that God should begin working to change the husband and then the wife, until I began to realize that God addresses the wife first when instructing on home order. It is as though a husband needs the support of his wife before the Holy Spirit can begin certain aspects of change in his life. This could be likened to a person who desperately needs surgery but must have an infection healed first before he is able to endure the surgery. Men so need the support of their wives that God usually begins working in the wife first. As the wife learns to trust God and brings herself under her husband's leadership, we have seen that these men often begin to be leaders in the church and in other aspects of life. As the wife learns to follow, the husband learns to be a better leader.

One difficulty facing a wife in trying to be obedient to her husband is the problem of two opposing desires in her own heart, as was mentioned earlier. This conflict of heart resulted from the fall of man through disobedience to God. Genesis chapter 3 states: "*Thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee*" (Genesis 3:16). The natural desire of a woman is to have a strong, loving man sweep her off her feet onto his white horse and gallop off with her into the sunset, to live in a beautiful castle where she is served as a queen, living happily ever after under his decisive, secure leadership. She imagines herself protected and defended in

every situation by the strength and care of this wonderful husband. Constantly she lives in an atmosphere where her every desire is her husband's concern and delight. Willingly she allows her husband to take his God-given role as leader over her. Reality is quite different.

The opposing desire to exert control over the man manifests itself in certain situations. Such things as nagging, trying to be his conscience, and seeking to control him with subversive motives expose this conflicting purpose of heart. Often a mother finds it easy to transfer her methods of instructing and directing the children to her relationship with her husband.

Many cultures are matriarchal in function, but this results from ignorance or rejection of God's ways. God knows how a wife should conduct herself so that her husband is free to fulfill his responsibility toward her. God has created a wife to function in a beautiful and exclusive way. As a woman seeks God for grace to fulfill her function in life, the Lord will freely supply all that she needs and bring her to joyful fulfillment. *“Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her. Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised. Give her of the fruit of her hands; and let her own works praise her in the gates”* (Proverbs 31:28, 30-31).

PRAYER

“They that trust in the Lord shall be as mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abideth for ever” (Psalms. 125:1). Heavenly Father, we come to you in the precious name of our Lord Jesus Christ to pray for each wife reading this book. We ask you to give an abundance of grace to put full trust in You. We realize that a central issue is whether or not we are willing to trust in You. Help each wife to become all that You

intended a wife to be—a loving, responsive, submissive help to her husband. May each one know the exceeding joy of Your approval and a home built on the solid Rock. Amen.

CHAPTER 7

God's Design and Order For Husbands

Assuming God-Given Leadership

God has given to a husband a very definite place of responsibility in marriage and family life. Many homes are disintegrating because husbands have failed to fulfill their God-given responsibilities. *“But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and head of Christ is God”* (1 Corinthians 11:3). The first thing the Holy Spirit states here is that the head of the man is Christ.

In order to discharge his duty faithfully, a husband must be under the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ. One cannot truly have authority unless he is under authority, and all authority comes from God (Romans 13:1). I am convinced that no man is able to be all that a husband and father should be unless he is fully submitted to Christ. What a man should really be is seen in the image of a man with a tender heart who allows Jesus Christ to fully master his life.

The instruction given to wives in 1 Peter 3:1-6 is preceded by instruction to the men on the importance of relating properly to God-given authorities (1 Peter 2:13-25). The next chapter begins by giving instruction to the wife, how she should relate to her husband's authority. Peter instructs that a wife must be under the authority of her husband just as he must be under authority of government, employer and church leadership.

However, if a man is not properly responding to authorities that God has set over him, how can he expect his wife to respond properly to his authority? The point is that a man will reap what he sows. If he is not under authority, he will reproduce the same thing. Resistance to his leadership from his wife may be a reflection of his response to leadership over him.

Many years ago, I was called upon to counsel with a man whose wife had departed from the rest of the family. His opening statement was: "I want my wife to return." As he shared the details of the situation, the Holy Spirit kept repeating to me to ask him how his job situation was. Before me sat a man talking about very difficult marital problems and the Holy Spirit was prompting me to ask him about his job. To me, the two situations seemed totally unrelated, but I had learned that the Holy Spirit always knows what He is talking about.

As I asked about his job situation, he responded that he hated his job and his employer. The Holy Spirit then directed me to connect the importance of his relationship and response to the authority over him with his wife's relationship to him. He began to allow God to work in his heart and make him a faithful employee with an excellent attitude toward a difficult employer. As his heart changed, so also did his wife's heart change toward him. After a time, his wife returned to him and he received a different job with better conditions and pay. In a measure, he had been reaping what he had sown. As he sowed a new crop, he reaped new and more pleasant results. Husbands must allow Jesus to be the head over their lives.

The second thing stated by the Holy Spirit in this verse is that the head of the woman is the man. This means that the

husband has been given the responsibility to be a leader of the home under Christ's leadership. In the Medo-Persian empire, a decree was sent forth into all the kingdom to every province that each man was to bear rule in his own house (Esther 1:22). Many men refuse or at the very least are reluctant to give proper leadership to their household. Often this proves to be very difficult for a wife because her husband does not provide proper leadership to which she can submit.

When considering being placed as the head of the home, men often revel in the thought of all the privileges they have as the leader in the home. Their attitude exudes the idea that because they are the head of the household, they are able to do as they please. Everyone in the family has only one purpose—to serve the leader and make him happy. This is not godly thinking.

When God speaks of being the head, He indicates responsibility, not privilege. May each husband and father realize he will one day stand before God to give account of his leadership responsibility for his family. *“Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you”* (Hebrews 13:17). Each man should have the desire to present each member of his family to the Lord with joy, knowing that before God he has done all that he could do to lead them in the paths of righteousness in order that he might hear the Lord say, *“Well done, thou good and faithful servant”* (Matthew 25:21).

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Attitudes of Godly Leadership

Leadership in the kingdom of God functions on a totally different basis than that to which most of us have been accustomed. But this type of leadership will endure through the next millennium and on into eternity. Jesus expresses the function of true godly leadership in His teachings. *“But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to give his life a ransom for many”* (Matthew 20:25-28).

Jesus first states how leadership functions among those who are not in the kingdom of God. Those who are powerful in strength or influence subjugate or control those who are under their authority. They consider the needs of their subjects only enough to sustain their lives so that the people are able to serve their leader and satisfy his every whim. Their own interests are the primary focus of their lives, as they are inclined toward self-centeredness. This type of leadership is forced upon people to one degree or another as we have all observed.

In God’s governmental system, the function of a leader differs greatly from the above. Jesus said that those who desire to be great leaders in His kingdom must be servants that minister to or serve others. Those who desire to be the chief leaders are to have the attitude of a slave who serves with no rights of his own. A godly leader is one who follows

the example of Jesus in serving those he leads, laying aside his own will desiring to do what is best for them. He has left his rights and privileges at the foot of the cross so that he may take up the responsibility of godly leadership in providing what is best for those following his leadership. His life is not his own but is fully submitted to the Lord Jesus. Every husband should seek to pattern his leadership responsibility after Jesus' teaching.

Progressive Leadership

The concept of the word "leadership" is the thought of moving on, going somewhere. God wants to give a man a goal, a vision to pursue. God-empowered leadership is dynamic in its purpose and progression. Life does not stand still. Changes are occurring in the family year by year, sometimes moment by moment. Bring a new baby in the family and the change is immediate. Godly leaders are able to impart the vision or purpose they have received from God to the rest of the family and lead in such a way to help each member enter that special purpose God has ordained for their life.

Life becomes mundane and boring at times. All of this is not bad, but there must be times that the leader is able to bring new ideas and changes to refresh and enliven the family! A wife can certainly help with ideas, as can the children, but final implementation falls to the husband and father.

When our children were entering adolescence we were able to make a short-term missionary trip to Guatemala with a stop in Florida for a vacation. This gave them some short-term goals to dream about. Night after night we gathered as a family to make our plans and dream of this trip. We then had the actual experience together. After the journey

we spent many evenings talking about and reminiscing those fun times together. We gained a lot of mileage out of that trip. A spiritual impartation took place as well. Both of our children and their families have made short term mission trips.

A godly leader will adapt to each new stage of growth in the family relationship and move on into new territory to broaden the family's horizon into the purposes of God.

Proper Priorities

The responsibility of a godly husband demands a constant assessing and ordering of priorities. At times, the cry for immediate attention can come from so many different directions that it becomes difficult to know what to do next. We all have times when extra attention must be given to one area of responsibility over the others. This should be a temporary situation and must not be allowed to become a permanent way of life. We will consider this list of priorities:

1. God
2. Our Wife
3. Our Children
4. The Church and ministry to the Body of Christ
5. Ministry to the unsaved
6. Employment
7. Other interests - hobbies, recreation, etc.

1. God

Our God is a jealous God who will allow nothing else to come before our love and commitment to Him. *“Jesus said*

unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment" (Matthew 22:37-38). This means even our family cannot be allowed to come before Him. *"If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple"* (Luke 14:26). Problems will overtake our marriage and family life if others are given priority over the Lord himself. A very important lesson I learned in my observation was to never put family relationships before your love of God. If you put God first He will show you how to bring your family into His kingdom.

2. Wife

Our next order of commitment must be to our wife. She must know and be reassured often that she is more important to us than our children, our job, our ministry, or other interests. If she is not given this place above our other areas of responsibility, the marriage will certainly suffer. But she must never be put in importance above the Lord God.

In Genesis 25 is part of the story of Isaac and Rebekah. They were blissfully united together by the Lord's choosing. We might say that their marriage was made in heaven. However, their relationship degenerated to a point that keen favoritism existed, with Isaac loving Esau and Rebekah loving Jacob (Genesis 25:28). For some reason which the scripture does not reveal, Isaac put his son Esau before his wife, which resulted later in Rebekah helping Jacob to deceive his father. Parents must stand together for the sake of the children. Because Isaac honored his son before his wife, everyone in the family became a loser.

My wife and I have witnessed in some nations that a husband will eat with his son and when they are finished, his wife and daughter will eat what is left over. This should not be. This type of cultural practice must be changed as we follow the Lord.

3. Children

Children are a wonderful gift from the Lord. He gives them to us that we might train them up in the ways of the Lord in order for Him to receive a godly seed. How important it is to have God-governed priorities so that our children may have the very best opportunity in life. As the father puts the Lord first in his own life, it has a profound effect upon the children causing them to love the Lord and to begin to understand His ways.

Someone once said that one of the greatest gifts a father can give his children is to love their mother. What a wonderful blessing the children receive from parents who flow in harmony with one another under the Lord's care.

At times, God allows testing so that we will not prioritize our children above the Lord. Abraham faced a severe trial in this regard (Genesis 22). His willingness to put Isaac on the altar in obedience to the Lord caused great blessing to be secured for generations to come.

4. The Church and Ministry to the Body of Christ

The family's involvement in church life proves to be most essential. Strength and encouragement to walk in God's ways flow from one member to another. However, some

men, especially those who are pastors or missionaries, find difficulty in distinguishing their love for the Lord from their ministry to the church. We have witnessed many pastors' families who have been devastated by the husband's overbalance in commitment to the work of the Lord. God wants every member of the Body of Christ to function and produce good works. The apostle Paul wrote how the household of Stephanas had addicted themselves to the ministry of saints (1 Corinthians 16:15). The Lord commands us to work diligently. However, ministry is never to be placed ahead of our responsibilities to our wives and children. One of the qualifications of a church leader is that a man must lead his own home well.

Through the years, we have experienced many times of pressure as a family in ministry. The Holy Spirit has reminded me periodically that my family must come first in priority before ministry to people. Out of a properly functioning home develops a ministry that can be a positive influence on others. How sad it is when a Christian home, because it is malfunctioning, fails to be an enticement to draw people to the Lord and His ways. We all have a desire to serve the Lord, but it must be according to His order.

5. Ministry to the Unsaved

God's Word directs us to preach the Gospel to everyone. We all bear that responsibility. A properly functioning family can be an opportunity for people to "taste and see that the Lord is good" (Psalms 34:8) as they eat the spiritual fruit of our lives.

Keeping godly priority even in this matter is essential. Some have neglected their families to reach out to the lost. Many

say, “Reach the lost at any cost.” This may sound noble but if we lose our own household because of it, which some have, what will we have gained? Our family responsibilities should not be an excuse for failing to witness to the lost, but neither should witnessing to the lost be a reason to lose our own families. We know an evangelist who traveled much and ministered to thousands of people, but his own son was wayward and died of AIDS.

Angeline:

Through many years of travelling, we have met many pastors and missionaries, who have said how the nation to which they had been called was so much upon their hearts. Some literally gave all their time, strength, and hearts to their pastorates or mission fields. My husband and I would be so grieved because it was obvious that their hearts were given more to their ministries than to their families. Neglecting their families brought many years of sorrow to these pastors and missionaries because, as their children grew up, they rebelled against their parents’ authority as well as any godly influence that their parents had tried to invoke in their lives. There was no reality of laying down their lives for their children; it was always for their ministries. These children had been dealt a bad blow concerning what they had seen “Christianity” to be, and they wanted no part of it.

In Exodus 28:15-21, the Lord instructs the priests to wear on their breastplate the stones that represent the names of the tribes of Israel. The priests were to carry the burden for each of the tribes on their hearts before the Lord. God wants us to have our children on our hearts and to be reminded daily of their need for our influence and participation in their lives.

6. *Employment*

A man is responsible to provide for the temporal needs of his family along with all their other needs. *“But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel”* (1 Timothy 5:8). Most men have a very strong motivation to provide for the material needs of their families. Some become so engrossed in their work that everything else becomes a secondary priority. Some wives have declared that their husbands are married to their jobs.

In the 1930’s, after the Great Depression in the United States, many people vowed that their children would never suffer need as they had when they were children. Men set their hearts to work as many hours as necessary to provide all the “things” their families needed. They forsook God, their wives, and their children to “provide.” A generation of children grew up in the 60’s and 70’s who were spiritually void. Possessions their fathers and mothers sacrificed to obtain meant nothing to them as they turned in rebellion to immorality and illicit drug use. Again we see that when God’s ways are not adhered to, there is chaos.

“He that is greedy of gain troubleth his own house; but he that hateth gifts shall live” (Proverbs 15:27). Material needs are important, but they are not a family’s only needs. Spending time loving and training children so that they will have spiritual and moral foundations in their lives must not be laid aside for the temporal things of this earth. Affluence can be a curse to our families if we do not provide for these other areas of need.

7. Other Interests

In these days, it seems that no end of diversions exist to take man away from his God-given responsibilities. Certainly we all need times of recreation. However, we must beware that we do not allow other interests such as sports, hobbies, or other pursuits of pleasure to possess too much of our time and interest. These can be perfectly good activities that, out of proper priority in our lives, rob us of the very best. Never should these things interfere with our spiritual walk.

Early in our marriage, I made a choice that I would not become involved in activities that took me away from my family. Like many men, I have many interests. However, I would not allow myself to pursue interests that were for my benefit alone. Recreation that involves the whole family, whenever possible, is a wise investment of time.

How beneficial are many of your family activities? Do they really provide an opportunity for relational development or do they divide your family further? As we allow the Holy Spirit to lead us, He will choose the best activities for us to be involved in—those which will be a benefit to us spiritually and as a family. As a man seeks the Lord daily, the Holy Spirit will lead and guide in a way that keeps all of these different areas of responsibility in proper perspective and balance so that he may have the blessing of the Lord.

Put On Your Priestly Robes

The Ark of the Covenant was the symbol of the manifest presence of God in the Old Testament. As referred to

earlier, King David wanted to bring the presence of God to the capital of his kingdom on Mount Zion. During the initial attempt, Israel did not seek God for His way to transport the Ark of the Covenant, and it ended in disaster for Uzzah. The Ark was taken aside to the house of Obed-Edom for a period of three months (2 Samuel 6:10-12). During the time that the Ark of the Covenant dwelt in the home of Obed-Edom, everything about the home was greatly blessed because of the manifest presence of God that dwelt there.

God wants us to bring His presence into our homes by leading our families into singing with praise and worship. Often, praise and worship are lacking in the church because they are nonexistent in the home. God desires to fill our homes with His presence as we train our families to respond to Him.

We are responsible also to teach our families the Word of God. All members of the family need to have their own personal times of prayer and Bible reading as they become old enough. It is also profitable for the father to take notes in his Bible classes at church or as his pastor is teaching. Then this material can be taught again in the home and broken like bread into smaller bits and personalized to each family member's needs. By using what is being taught at church, the father fortifies the pastor's message and helps his family learn to feed upon God's Word, experiencing it in a practical way. This will also encourage the members of the family to share their needs from daily life, which need counsel and prayer.

Our own children attended public school. This afforded many excellent opportunities to direct them in a practical

way to experience the working of God's Word in their daily lives. As you can imagine, our children faced many conflicts at school. We tried to be available to discuss what transpired during their day at school. They were often troubled by situations they faced. As we prayed and asked the Lord for His counsel, we were able to teach them God's ways to face challenges with teachers and other students.

Often we have observed parents who are quick to intervene if there is a conflict with a teacher over something that is being taught, rather than to train their children how to "eat the meat and spit out the bone," so to speak.

Conflicts with other children afford the opportunity to teach our children forgiveness, patience, and kindness in suffering for doing what is right, and learning to be a peacemaker with difficult people. *"But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust"* (Matthew 5:44-45).

Parents often try to remove their children from a conflict or the conflict from their children, rather than realizing the opportunity to apply God's Word. Children usually need specific instruction on how to respond to a situation. Then they need prayer to receive the grace of God in order to be successful and learn God's ways. This responsibility to counsel and pray for the family belongs to the spiritual leader in the home. Husbands have been given this responsibility by God.

Angeline:

When our daughter was in elementary school, there was a girl who constantly tormented her. At recess, this girl would call our daughter “mush face.” We had no clue as to what she even meant by those words, but, nevertheless, they were very distressing and hurtful to Tam. Tam would come home so depleted of self-esteem. We began to seek the Lord on how to respond to this verbal attack which continued day after day. Finally one night when we were having our “tuck me in bed” talk, I felt to give Tam some direction on how to answer this girl. I told her, “The next time this girl says this, tell her you feel so sorry for her because she is so hateful. Just be compassionate in your conversation to her.”

Tam did have an opportunity to talk to her the next day. The girl was so shocked that she could not say anything. I also encouraged Tam that we were going to trust the Lord that until His purpose was complete in this whole episode, He would give her the grace to ignore or endure, or else remove this harassment. It was only a few weeks after this playground scene had happened that the girl moved away. It was after Tam had gotten victory and had obeyed the direction that we had given to her that the lesson the Lord had intended was complete. This was a wonderful token to all of us how the Lord would intervene on our behalf as we submitted situations to Him.

In studying the Old Testament patriarchs, one can see that they were spiritual leaders in their homes who led the way into God’s purposes. As strong, decisive spiritual leaders, they received the respect of generations that followed them. People are looking for heroes to follow. May we be men of God whom our wives and children admire and wish to

pattern their lives after. If we are diligent and faithful to hear our children and help them when they are young, they will usually seek our counsel and direction as they become older as well.

Rooting Out Iniquities

All of us are born with iniquities which, in turn, if not dealt with will be passed on to our children. *“Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and upon the children’s children, unto the third and to the fourth generations”* (Exodus 34:7). God wants to interrupt this cycle of passing on from one generation to another tendencies toward sin and the proclivity for missing God’s purposes.

John the Baptist declared that *“the ax is laid unto the root”* (Luke 3:9). The root of many problems found in our children is directly related to those found in our own hearts and lives. We always want the best for our children; therefore, it is essential that we present ourselves to the Holy Spirit so that He can expose and remove from **our** lives those things that negatively affect **our family’s** lives.

Often we do not see sin to be as harmful as it really is until we see it manifested in our children. Then we are horrified when the root in us grows into a full plant in our children. Seeing the same thing in our children often provokes us to let God cut the root out of our own hearts. *“But when he seeth his children, the work of mine hands, in the midst of him, they shall sanctify my name and sanctify the Holy One of Jacob and shall fear the God of Israel. They also that erred in spirit shall come to understanding, and they that*

murmured shall learn doctrine” (Isaiah 29:23-24). As we allow this precious working of the Holy Spirit in us, we are set free from the bondage of iniquities that keeps us from passing God’s blessing on to our posterity. A godly leader will deal with his own iniquities for the sake of those whom he leads.

Angeline:

In my own life, I would begin to see things that my children were doing and would remember doing those same things when I was young. It would bring me, first of all, to expose those things to my husband. Then we would pray and ask God to forgive me and ask Him to cut off those iniquities in the children before they became their own sin. I know that our children were spared many areas of sin because God brought us to repentance over our own misbehavior. Many times the seeds of iniquity lie dormant in one’s life, but the right situation will bring life to those seeds. I remember the story about King Tut’s tomb being opened for display. There were seeds of grain in that tomb which, when they were planted, grew even after all those years. So it is in our lives. Those seeds can lie dormant for years; but given the right conditions, they can come alive and be a blessing or a grief to us.

Nurturing a Queen

God has purposed that a husband’s leadership helps each family member develop to his full potential both spiritually and naturally. The Apostle Paul demonstrates to us how Christ’s leadership nurtures the church on to maturity. *“That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their*

own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church” (Ephesians 5:27-29).

In the same way, the husband should seek God for help in directing each member of his family. Some men become frustrated with their wives because of their areas of lack. But God wants to give a husband a new perspective. His wife must be viewed as a potential to be developed. Ultimately, what she becomes is greatly determined by the investment he makes in her life.

I have encouraged many husbands by telling them that if they do not like certain attributes in their wives, they bear part of the responsibility. A wife reflects her husband’s character and leadership. *“The woman is the glory of the man” (1 Corinthians 11:7).*

Of course, we realize that a husband cannot change his wife. He must seek the Lord and receive positive direction that will help her overcome weak areas of her character. Often a husband will react to his wife with a critical, harsh, or bitter attitude that only serves to tear her down further, rather than lifting her up out of her problem areas.

A short fictional story beautifully illustrates how a husband’s investment in his wife greatly affects her development. An enterprising young man on an island in the Pacific wanted a very special wife. The customary dowry was two or three cows for a reasonable choice and four or five cows for a very special one. Most men would bargain with the girl’s father to obtain the lowest price possible, but not this young man. He wanted an extra special wife, and so he offered eight cows to the father of the girl he had chosen. She was nothing special

in the eyes of most people, and her father would have been lucky to get one or two cows for her from someone else.

Because this young man invested so much to obtain her, she was deeply affected in the way she thought about herself. Other women whose husbands had bargained their price down had low self-esteem. This girl became a prized wife of beauty and dignity who was known throughout the island as “the eight cow wife” (McGerr, 1988, p. 138).

What have you invested of your life in your wife to help her become what you want her to be? Some men want an eight cow wife but only want to invest a scrawny chicken. The old saying is true in one respect: “You only get what you pay for.”

The Gentle General

When some people consider what an ideal leader should be, they perhaps think of someone who is passive, indecisive, and who grants unlimited freedom. However, few people would really respect or appreciate such a person in authority. God intends a leader to be decisive and give godly direction to his family. This means that at times he must make decisions that are not popular with those under his leadership. With grace he must stand firm in decisions that are God’s best for his family members.

When conflicts and resistance to his decisions occur, a husband must lead with gentleness. “*Thy gentleness hath made me great*” was David’s appraisal of God (2 Samuel 22:36). May our families be able to say the same about us! A husband bears no responsibility to make his wife submit to his decisions. God has given the responsibility of submission to the wife.

But the husband must be gentle with his wife when conflict exists so that he can ultimately win her heart and lead her into what is best for her sake. God resisted the husbands who were mistreating their wives in Malachi's day.

And this have ye done again, covering the altar of the Lord with tears, with weeping and with crying out, insomuch that he regardeth not the offering any more, or receiveth it with good will at your hand. Yet ye say, Wherefore? Because the Lord hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously: yet is she thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant. And did not he make one? That he might seek a godly seed. Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth. For the Lord, the God of Israel, saith that he hateth putting away: for one covereth violence with his garment, saith the Lord of hosts: therefore take heed to your spirit, that ye deal not treacherously” (Malachi 2:13-16).

The husband's mistreatment of his wife greatly affects the children as well. Christ's leadership for the church sets the pattern for a husband with his wife. The love that willingly gives of itself is the strength that God wants in our leadership.

Deciding to Decide

Decision-making is an essential element in leadership. God has designed a man to be a definitive leader that can stand up and declare “This is the way we are going. Follow Me.” Today many men do not want the responsibility of making decisions that results in everyone in the family scattering in a different direction and doing what is right in their own eyes. Rise up, men and be godly men!

Like a good shepherd, a husband should lead his family in “paths of righteousness” (Psalm 23:3). A path of righteousness is that which is right and best in God’s eyes. A husband needs to consult his wife to receive her input before making decisions. God has given her a different perspective on situations, which a man desperately needs. She may possess information that her husband needs in making decisions. Different factors in situations demand different solutions and actions. If a man does not have all the facts of a situation, he can easily make a decision that his wife knows is foolish and potentially harmful to the family’s well-being. A wise husband will consult his wife for her input into the decision to be made.

God’s input into our decision-making process is also essential. He sees every aspect of a circumstance. He also knows the outcome of situations. Our omniscient heavenly Father invites us to receive His wisdom to make right choices in every matter. We must seek Him and be willing to wait at times for His counsel and direction. Israel, in the wilderness journey from Egypt to Zion, failed on this very point. *“They soon forgot his works; they waited not for his counsel”* (Psalms 106:13). It is foolish to make hasty decisions without consulting the Lord. Repeated occurrences of this will make a husband untrustworthy in his family’s eyes. The results of bad decisions will affect his credibility as a leader.

As leaders we must also be certain that we are making decisions that are consistent with God’s Word. All situations are certainly not the same; however, we must align our choices with the Word of God. Those under our leadership will detect if we are wavering in holding to what is right in God’s eyes, and they can easily lose respect for us. *“If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask God, that giveth to all men*

liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed” (James 1:5-6). God is inviting us to receive His wisdom so that we will lead our families into paths of righteousness for His name’s sake.

When we have sought our wife’s input, God’s wisdom, and God’s Word in our decision-making, we must stand firm in that decision even though it may be resisted. If our wife finds the decision difficult to receive, we should pray for her to receive grace from God. We also must hold steady and allow God time to work and confirm our authority. God will work to convince a resistant wife that she should willingly place herself under her husband’s authority. Sometimes it is essential for a husband to suffer as God works in his wife. This conduct portrays laying down our life for her good.

One husband I know often became exasperated with his wife’s constant resistance to his decisions. Instead of standing firm, he became angry and withdrew, not standing in godly decisions. As this truth was shared with him, he began to see that God would intervene if he would obey Him. Rather than become angry and forsake his decisions, he began to seek God for His backing.

His wife, a secretary, became overtired with her work schedule. One evening, in consideration of what was best for her under the circumstances, he stated that he really wanted her to stay home from the office the following day to rest. Immediately, she reacted with resistance to his loving suggestion. Just as she was stating that she would not be staying home the next morning for rest, she reached into the cupboard to take a drinking glass. The glass slipped from

her hand onto the countertop and shattered into small pieces. Just as this happened, she opened her mouth with surprise and a small chip of glass flew into her mouth and lodged in her throat. Her husband rushed her to a nearby hospital where they tried to extract the glass chip without success. She was sent home that evening to rest.

The next morning, her husband took her to a larger hospital further away where they again worked to remove the glass chip. By this time, a film of skin had grown over the glass chip making it impossible for the doctor to remove it without surgery. This hospital also sent her home to rest. The chip of glass remains lodged in her throat to this day—but she did not go to the office that next day since the doctor had sent her home to rest. God allowed a circumstance which He used to back her husband's authority. Her husband was willing to be affected by the situation so that God could work in her for good.

Another wife said she was afraid to disobey her husband's decisions because she always found herself in trouble with God when she did. Husbands must make decisions with God's counsel and then trust God to back their authority and decisions.

But if any provide not for his own,
and specially for those of
his own house,
he hath denied the faith,
and is worse than an infidel.

I Timothy 5:8

CHAPTER 8

Designed to Carry Manly Responsibility

God created a man to carry certain kinds of pressures and responsibilities that women are not designed by God to handle well. Women can certainly carry pressures that a man cannot carry at all or cannot carry effectively. A husband's responsibilities are many and varied. We will look at several that are very important and which must not be neglected.

Provision

Providing basic sustenance for the family has been delegated to the husband. *“But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel”* (1Timothy 5:8). Certainly the wife has a very important part in helping in this matter, according to Proverbs 31. But God has intended the husband to be the primary provider for the family. Obviously, we as men cannot trust in ourselves in this matter, but our trust must be in the Lord. It is normal for a man to have a strong desire to provide for his family. However, many men have abdicated this responsibility and expect their wives to take responsibility that is not theirs. This does not mean that a wife should not be a part of helping to provide for the family.

We have found that a wife can be more productive and contribute more by her industry in the home, by providing goods and services, which are often bought when a wife

works outside the home. God did not create most women with the ability to handle pressures that often exist in the working world. So often, a family will not realize true benefit with the wife working outside the home. As well, the family will lack all the wonderful benefits that a wife and mother provide in being a keeper of the home, as we studied earlier in Titus 2:5.

More and more families are realizing that from an economic perspective alone, it is not worthwhile for the wife to work outside the home. A working mother must spend more on clothing, transportation, childcare, food preparation and housekeeping than a mother who is at home. A wife at home can also provide many other blessings to the family that money could not buy.

We have observed husbands who panic during times of financial pressure and encourage their wives to work outside the home. Patience must be exercised during these times so that better solutions may be found instead of having the wife go outside the home to work. Sometimes a family must learn to live within its means and become better managers of what God has provided already. *“Much food is in the tillage of the poor: but there is that is destroyed for want of judgment”* (Proverbs 13:23).

Some people are moved by their emotions to buy things they cannot afford just because “everyone else has it.” (Which, of course, is neither true nor a right motive for buying.) We have often observed that when a family has learned how to manage well what they have, God will release greater provision through the husband.

“I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be

full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need” (Philippians 4:12). God will often prune us financially before He releases greater fruitfulness in financial matters. We must learn to hold steady under times of financial pressure, learn our lessons, and put our trust in the Lord. We must be obedient to God’s Word and be faithful in giving tithes and offerings to the Lord so that He may pour out His blessings upon us (Malachi 3:8-12).

Director of Finance

This brings us to the next important issue of a man taking his place of responsibility. Whoever directs the finances leads the family. God has created a man to handle the pressures that come with handling financial matters. I learned this lesson through a difficult and embarrassing situation that occurred early in our marriage. We were working to become established financially after graduation from Bible school. We often experienced financial pressure in those days. I reasoned that since I was so busy, my wife should handle paying the bills. However, a nasty side effect of this was that she was putting me under pressure because she was experiencing constant anxiety over whether we would have adequate finances to make ends meet.

One day I received notification from our bank that our checking account was overdrawn. I immediately began to seek out where the problem was in my wife’s accounting. After a time without success, I requested help from the bank to locate the error. While the bank was searching this out, I promptly announced to Angeline that I would be taking control of the checkbook and other financial matters since she had made such a terrible mess of the situation. With this statement, God had me where He wanted me.

The bank called to say that they had found the problem to be a check written which was not recorded in the register. I tried to figure out how my wife could have done such a thoughtless thing, when I suddenly remembered that I had carried a check in my wallet in case of an emergency. I had completely forgotten that I'd had such an emergency and had failed to record the check in the check registry. Obviously, I found it necessary to humble myself greatly and repent before my wife for my false accusations against her. But God had allowed me to be cornered by this situation.

I began to handle financial matters and soon realized what pressure it removed from Angeline. I also found that I could handle the difficulty of financial pressures much better than she could. God has created her to be able to handle situations I could never face. But other matters, which should have been my responsibility, brought undue pressure to her. Some couples may find it necessary, because of the husband's long periods of absence from the home, that he delegates responsibility to his wife in financial matters. He can give her direction, which she implements in such necessary cases.

We have also found through many other circumstances that I can handle pressures that are my responsibility, no matter how difficult. However, one of the greatest pressures that I face, and have not received grace to carry well, occurs when my wife is under pressure which God never designed her to bear.

Be a Parent Too

Another very important responsibility for husbands is to be involved in the training, instruction and correction of the

children. We will discuss child training further, but at this juncture I wish to consider the husband's role.

Many men reason that because they are away from home so much of the time, they should not have to be burdened with child correction when they are home. They do not want the children to feel like their father is only for correction. Many men only want to have "fun" with the children and be well liked by them. Most mothers of younger children have spent the whole day wrestling with them and trying to train them to behave properly. By the time their husbands return home, these wives are exhausted, exasperated, and in need of some support and relief. Sometimes the children feel they can get away with things in Dad's presence that they could not under Mom's watchful eye.

In writing to the Thessalonian church, Paul expressed the necessity of having the different types of spiritual influence for their development. These influences should come from both the mother and the father (1 Thessalonians 2:7,8,11). A mother must correct the children because she is there with them all day long and correction cannot wait until Daddy returns home. However, when Dad is with them, they need his loving correction as well. Men have a certain authority that helps to fortify Mom's authority over the children. Sometimes a father can deal with certain problems more effectively than a mother can. The point is that both parents have a responsibility in rearing the children.

Secure Spiritual Covering

Israel was a nation of slaves in Egypt many years after the death of Joseph. God raised up Moses to lead God's people out of Egypt into their inheritance in Canaan. After nine

severe plagues came upon the Egyptians through the hand of Moses, Pharaoh continued to harden his heart against God and refused to release Israel. In Exodus 12 God gave Moses instruction concerning one last plague that was to come upon the Egyptians. God would allow Satan, the destroyer, to pass through the land to destroy the firstborn, both of mankind and cattle.

In order for the children of Israel to be spared this destruction, they were to take for each household a lamb without blemish to be slain and eaten. The blood of the lamb was to be brushed onto the doorposts and lintel of each house among the Israelites. God promised that when He saw the blood of the lamb on their doorposts, He would “pass over” the house and not allow the destroyer to come and smite the firstborn in that house. This incident was, of course, the foundation for the Feast of Passover and a type of our experience of salvation and deliverance from our spiritual Egypt—this present world.

When God said He would “pass over” their houses and not allow the destroyer to touch them, He was saying that He would hover over that home and be a protection to it. Evil spiritual influences would not be able to affect a household over which God was the covering.

A similar example is seen when Jesus sat outside the city of Jerusalem weeping because they had rejected Him. *“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate”* (Matthew 23:37-38). When a mother hen senses danger, she fluffs her feathers

and calls her chicks to be covered under her wings. She will defend her little ones with all her ability against whatever danger arises. She covers her chicks even as God covered the Israelites homes in Egypt.

God has given the responsibility for the spiritual protection of a household into the hands of the husband. He is ordained to provide this same type of spiritual covering which God provided for Israel in Egypt and which Jesus offered to the Jews in His day. As a wife brings herself under her husband's authority, God intends her to receive protection, or covering, so that satanic spiritual forces are unable to affect her.

The apostle Peter admonishes husbands to give "honor unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel" (1 Peter 3:7). A wife is weaker in the sense that she needs this spiritual covering under her husband's leadership, as we have seen earlier. *"For this cause ought the woman to have power (authority) on her head because of the angels,"* i.e., the spiritual powers that can attack her. (1 Corinthians 11:10).

In Genesis chapter 3, Satan came to Eve in the form of the serpent because she was the weaker vessel. She was deceived and acted on her own without consulting her husband and transgressed against what God had spoken. This led to the fall of man into sin. Had Eve brought Satan's enticement to her husband before acting on her own, he could have protected her and helped her stand against Satan and remain obedient to the Lord. Because she made a decision outside of her husband's covering, she became vulnerable and missed God's purpose.

The way a man walks both publicly and privately greatly affects the spiritual covering he is able to provide for his

family. If a man does not walk in righteousness before God and man, the covering for his family is lacking, making them a target for the powers of darkness. Isaiah the prophet speaks of this: “*and that cover with a covering, but not of my spirit*” (Isaiah 30:1). The Holy Spirit provides a covering of safety as we walk in obedience to His voice. If a man does not walk faithfully under God’s covering, he can become open to another spirit that will bring destruction upon his household.

Some men think that if they keep their sins hidden, no negative effects will be experienced by their families. This, of course, is only self-deception. After King David sinned with Bathsheba, major incidents occurred that proved that the covering of safety was destroyed. His whole family was touched by his sins even though he sought to keep them hidden. Righteousness and obedience to God lay the foundation that allows the Holy Spirit to form a covering of safety and security for the whole family.

Angeline:

The hiding of secret sins pertains not only to the men but also to the women and children. Luke 8:17 says, “*For nothing is secret, that shall not be made manifest; neither any thing hid, that shall not be known and come abroad.*” Those things which are done in secret will be made known. The Lord offers us repentance to clear up these areas and not to involve ourselves in them again. Second Corinthians 7:10-11 says,

For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death. For behold this selfsame thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what

fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge! In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter.

If you know that you or another family member is hiding things or deeds that open your covering to a satanic entrance, God wants to bring repentance and restore your covering to safety. Satan wants us to keep things hidden, but if we love the truth we come to the light (John 3:19-21).

Husbands, love your wives,
even as Christ also loved the
church, and gave himself for it.

Ephesians 5:25

CHAPTER 9

Love in the Home

What Is True Love?

A man's true strength in leadership issues forth from love. God commands a husband to love his wife. "*Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it*" (Ephesians 5:25).

The word love communicates different concepts to different people. The Greek word used here, translated "to love," is the verb *agapao* corresponding to the noun *agape*. This love is not whimsical or rooted in the sensuous but rather exudes from a heart that has made a deliberate decision of commitment to a person. Emotion, desire or circumstance do not alter this type of love. *Agapao* is not self-centered but rather seeks to do what is the very best for the recipient of that love. God is the primary source of this enduring love.

The qualities of this love are expressed beautifully in God's Word.

Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues,

they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away (1 Corinthians 13:4-8).

Also, in John 15:13 we read:” *Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.*” A husband’s true love has a willingness to lay aside its own plans and wishes to do what God shows to be best for his wife.

I am convinced that the only possible way for a husband to love his wife as God has spoken, is by a daily meeting with the True and Living God, receiving the character of Him who is Love. We become like those with whom we fellowship. We must be with Him to be what we are called to be as husbands. We can never hope to come to this maturity of giving ourselves for our wives if we do not have a continually developing relationship with the Lord. This should be a goal of all husbands.

No Bitterness

“Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them” (Colossians 3:19). God knows that a man can tend toward bitterness when it comes to his relationship with his wife. But He commands a man to love instead of allowing bitterness to come into his heart. Bitterness is always destructive. *“Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled”* (Hebrews 12:15).

Men are very prone to this type of response in many situations, but God forbids it. To respond in bitterness is counterproductive to all that a man wants in his marriage. Why do husbands become bitter? One of the reasons is

because a man and a woman are designed by God to be very different. A wife has a very different perspective from her husband. A husband can become exasperated and bitter because of his wife's emotional view point on matters. Sometimes she may seem totally illogical to him.

In other situations, a husband may fight bitterness because his wife does not respond to him in the way he would like. How important it is at these times to love her and do what is best for her, not allowing bitterness an entrance into his heart.

Often a wife reacts to her husband's decisions with difficulty and frustration because she does not understand them. A husband must be patient and kind, "*dwelling with his wife according to knowledge*" (1 Peter 3:7).

Reacting in bitterness will hinder a husband's prayers and further complicate the situation, rather than resolve it. Again in these verses, we read,

Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honor unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered" 1 Peter 3:7. Malachi 2:13-16 also warns us: "And this have ye done again, covering the altar of the Lord with tears, with weeping, and with crying out, insomuch that he regardeth not the offering any more, or receiveth it with good will at your hand. Yet ye say, Wherefore? Because the Lord hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously: yet is she thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant. And did

not he make one? Yet had he the residue of the spirit. And wherefore one? That he might seek a godly seed. Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth. For the Lord, the God of Israel, saith that he hateth putting away: for one covereth violence with his garment, saith the Lord of hosts: therefore take heed to your spirit, that ye deal not treacherously.

We all need our prayers to be answered by God. The verses quoted from the prophet Malachi make it clear that God will not receive a man's crying unto Him if he mistreats his wife.

For prayer to be productive it must be offered to God with our hearts in harmony with Him and with each other. Matthew 18:18-19 confirms this: *“Verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven.”*

The word “agree” is the Greek word *sumphoneo* from which we derive the word symphony. The concept Jesus taught here involves the importance of harmony when two are praying concerning a matter. Effective prayer demands that those offering the prayer be in harmony with God and with one another.

If a husband mistreats his wife and does not lead well, how can they harmonize together before heaven and pray profitably? If a husband holds bitterness in his heart toward his wife, can he expect that God will move on his behalf?

Love Her as You Love Yourself

“So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself” (Ephesians 5:28). Initially, this may sound easy to fulfill. This command for husbands flows beautifully with the Golden Rule that Jesus gave. *“Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets”* (Matthew 7:12). If everyone always practiced this rule, what a different world this would be.

One major difficulty that many men face is that they do not properly love themselves. This does not mean that they are not self-centered and self-serving, but that they have never come to a place where they accept the unchangeable aspects of their lives. When a man has a poor self-image and does not accept the way that God has ordered certain aspects of his life, he will find difficulty in loving his wife properly.

This problem can develop very early in life. The problem often centers in comparing ourselves with others. *“For we dare not make ourselves of the number; or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise”* (2 Corinthians 10:12). Children are not very old before they begin to notice and point out the differences in one another. Any departure from what is considered “normal” may become a point of ridicule. At times, parents unwisely add to the scorn felt by their children.

The difficulty is in determining what is “normal.” God wants us to understand that He has designed certain factors

into our lives at birth. We are His workmanship as is stated in Ephesians 2:10.

People often reject certain physical characteristics or limitations that they have. This can be seen in God's speaking with Moses. *"And the Lord said unto him, Who hath made man's mouth? or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? have not I the Lord?"* (Exodus 4:11). At times, one may find it difficult to accept with joy the way that God has created us. Yet, in His infinite wisdom, He has fashioned us perfectly for His eternal purposes.

In the midst of his psalm exalting God for His intricate participation in man's formation, David rejoices in the Lord. *"I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well"* (Psalms 139:14). God has done all things well, but we are not always quick to understand His good purpose in these matters.

In my own life, I experienced for years a difficulty in accepting a certain unchangeable situation. Often I would think, or even present to God, that if this matter in my life had been different, how much more advanced in life I would have been. I spent years mourning over this matter until God spoke. He told me that He had formed me in this way because it was best for me and had helped me turn my life to Him. Had this situation been different, I may have turned away and forsaken Him. Oh, how great and perfect is His goodness to us!

"Nay but, O Man, who are thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why has thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the

clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor?” (Romans 9:20-21). People often contend with God over different unchangeable situations in their lives—physical appearance or size, physical or mental abilities, parentage and siblings, home environment, financial or social beginnings and early training, to name just a few.

God wants us to accept His wisdom and come to trust that He has done what is best for us. Yes, He could have made things different from what they are, but He will take circumstances that we cannot change and use them for the very best in our lives if we will respond to Him.

Every husband must meet with God if he feels a lack in this area of his life. If this acceptance of God’s design does not occur before marriage, it often results in pressure being put on his wife to fulfill areas of his life in which he feels lack. We have seen that expecting a wife to try to fill these voids results in frustration because only God Himself can resolve these problems.

If a man feels insecure about himself, he will allow feelings of insecurity to pass on to each member of his family. Unless he looks to the Lord for His solution, the man will spend a lifetime seeking the elusive approval of people.

Others react with attitudes of pride trying to compensate for their feelings of lack. *“But he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord. For not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth”* (2 Corinthians 10:17-18). If we react to our feeling of lack by becoming proud it causes God to resist us. *“But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble”* (James 4:6).

God wants us to humble ourselves, meet with Him, and put away these ongoing effects upon our lives that are rooted in our childhood years. *“When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things”* (1 Corinthians 13:11). These perceived areas of lack in our lives must not be allowed to continue to stunt our growth. God wants us to put away these things from our childhood by meeting God in them and accepting His choice for us. We will then be able to move on to maturity and love our wives properly.

May we remember that God often uses what we would reject so that He receives the glory. *“But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in his presence”* (1 Corinthians 1:27-29).

George Mueller, that great man of God who established orphanages and became a channel for thousands of dollars to go to missions, was once asked how he became what he was. His reply was that the day he died to seeking the approval of man and studied to show himself approved unto God, he began to become what he was (Tan, 1984).

CHAPTER 10

Nourishing and Cherishing

Leading Toward Perfection

“For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the Church.” (Ephesians 5:29). The word “nourish” expresses the thought of a husband’s providing what is needed so that his wife may grow to full spiritual maturity. No man would feel adequate to fulfill such a responsibility.

This further confirms how dependent upon the Lord a husband must be. *“If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him”* (James 1:5). The Lord invites us to call out to Him for help because He has what our families need.

Daily circumstances of life bring to the surface areas of need that require teaching, counsel, and prayer. I have been encouraged to see how God will give me answers and direction for Angeline when she needs counsel. Sometimes she needs help to overcome in an area of her life, and God has given me simple boundaries for her to help her be victorious.

Many years ago when our children attended grade school, a news story giving graphic details of a child kidnapper and slayer captured the front page of our newspaper. Angeline would be riveted to these stories and feed fears that one of our children might be the next victim.

I prayed with her often to overcome these fears since God wants us to have a sound mind and not to be filled with this type of fear (2 Timothy 1:7). However, these fears persisted. As I sought the Lord as to what to do, He showed me the source of the fears. I gently, but firmly, set boundaries to protect her from feeding this spirit of fear by asking her not to read anything further in the newspaper about that story. As she received this counsel, she eventually became free from this terrorizing fear.

I have been amazed to see, at different times, when I would share some little thing with Angeline that God had given me, how that became the answer that she needed. How faithful He is to give husbands what they need for their families. A husband must pray for weak areas, not only in his own life, but also in those for whom he is responsible. We have seen God change many weaknesses in our family through prayer.

Cherish Your Lady

The next response of true love mentioned in Ephesians 5:29 is that a husband should cherish his wife. The word cherish means “to warm or brood over like a hen with chicks.” For a husband to cherish his wife, he must have an attitude of commitment and respect for her. However, he must also display action toward her that warms her heart. Some men say that their wives are cold, indifferent, and unresponsive in their relationship. This can be because a husband has not warmed his wife’s heart the way God says he should.

A somewhat perplexing narrative has been placed in the scripture. In one country where we were teaching on this subject, my interpreter, who was also a pastor, stopped as I read the scripture and said he had always had a problem

understanding why it was that the Holy Spirit included this account in scripture. I certainly don't understand all of God's purposes, but it does help to understand in a measure this word "cherish."

Now king David was old and stricken in years; and they covered him with clothes, but he gat no heat. Wherefore his servants said unto him, Let there be sought for my lord the king a young virgin: and let her stand before the king, and let her cherish him, and let her lie in thy bosom, that my lord the king may get heat. So they sought for a fair damsel throughout all the coasts of Israel, and found Abishag a Shunammite, and brought her to the king. And the damsel was very fair, and cherished the king, and ministered to him: but the king knew her not (1 Kings 1:1-4).

This incident gives us a very beautiful picture of cherishing. King David was old and his internal thermostat was not functioning properly, so he needed help keeping warm. Ecclesiastes 4:11 says that if two lie together, they keep warm, so David's servant sought Abishag to help keep David warm. 1 Kings 1:4 says that she "*cherished the King*," that is, she lay next to him to help him keep warm, "*but the King knew her not*," that is, there was no sexual activity between them. This is very important to understand as we study the word cherish. In a practical sense, a husband can cherish his wife in two different ways, both of which are very important and essential.

Give Them Affection

The first way a husband can cherish his wife is by giving her physical affection. Everyone, but especially a woman, has a need to have her heart warmed through physical affection.

Certain boundaries must exist in this matter of expressing physical affection toward others than our immediate family members. Basically, we could say that a very limited expression of physical affection (such as shaking hands) could be expressed to those outside of our family members. For the proper expression of physical affection, the husband must fulfill his responsibility with his wife.

In the truest sense, a husband's showing affection or cherishing his wife has a purpose apart from sexual intimacy, although it definitely is an element in leading to intimacy. A wife needs to know that she is special to her husband. Holding her hand, putting his arm around her, or even kissing in some public situations, lets a wife know she holds a place that no one else does in her husband's life. It also notifies any would-be intruders into the marriage that you are committed to each other, and any further advances will be spurned or rejected.

Some people believe that physical affection is improper in private or public, but different expressions of affection are necessary in both. Many families have not learned to practice this, and some cultures are void of any show of physical affection. However, we all need touch, and God's Word encourages the proper expression of physical affection.

And Isaac dwelt in Gerar: And the men of the place asked him of his wife; and he said, She is my sister: for he feared to say, She is my wife; lest, said he, the men of the place should kill me for Rebekah; because she was fair to look upon. And it came to pass, when he had been there a long time that Abimelech king of the Philistines looked out at a window, and saw, and, behold, Isaac was sporting (“caressing” NIV, “fondling” RSV) with Rebekah his wife. And

Abimelech called Isaac, and said, Behold, of a surety she is thy wife: and how saidst thou, She is my sister? And Isaac said unto him, Because I said, Lest I die for her (Genesis 26:6-9).

Isaac was caressing his wife in such a way that Abimelech recognized Rebekah was Isaac's wife and not his sister. This incident also confirms to us that we should not show everyone the same type of affection. I reserve certain acts of affection for my wife and other close family members.

On one occasion after teaching on marriage and family life, a woman approached me as if to embrace me. I immediately put up my hands to stop her, when she said that she wanted to hug me because her husband had died and she had no one to hug her. I responded that I did not hug other women, but reserve my hugs for my wife. I suggested that if she needed a hug, it would be appropriate for her to go to my wife. If a man expresses affection freely to everyone, he has little left to express in public that his wife is special to him. Improper affection shown to others can lead to misconceptions and raise questions.

As I teach marriage and family life in pastors' seminars throughout the world, I often give an assignment to each pastor that the next time each sees his wife, he is to embrace her, tell her he loves her, and give her a kiss. One pastor in a certain culture approached me after the meeting and stated that he had never kissed his wife, but that he would try to do the assignment, even though he was unsure of his wife's response.

This practice or habit of showing affection needs desperately to be instituted in every family. We have found that often a

daughter seeks physical attention from boys, not because she is looking for a sexual relationship, but because she lacks affection that God intended to be ministered to the child in a proper, safe way in the family by the father and mother. Even sons need the touch of their father.

When I made my first overseas trip, our son, Rob, was in his early teen years and my wife remained home with our children. He wanted to wrestle with his mother in my absence, as he was accustomed to doing with me. He had a need for that manly touch of his father, but his mother was not strong enough to give it, so she called my brother-in-law to fill my spot while I was away.

Often as our daughter, Tamara, was growing up, I would fail to be mindful of expressing gentle, masculine affection to her. Angeline would always be affectionate to the children, but she could sense the children needed my affection also.

Obviously, we are speaking here of expressing affection that is pure and appropriate and has nothing that resembles an incestuous action. In the story with David and Abishag, "*David knew her not.*" Appropriate affection is not, in itself, a sexual expression. The showing of affection in the family is so often lacking, but each individual has a lifelong need for proper touch.

During the Vietnam War, babies were brought to a refugee facility in the Philippines. Some of these babies died mysteriously even though they had received excellent medical care and food. It was finally determined that the reason some died was because of a lack of nurses to hold the babies and show them the affection they needed. They literally died for lack of affection.

In one study, a test was conducted with baby monkeys to see what was a greater need—food or affection. The baby monkey was allowed to become very hungry. A metal contraption was devised that could dispense milk but was very hard and rigid. Another soft, stuffed contraption was designed which gave warmth and cuddles to the baby monkey but had no nourishment. The monkeys consistently responded to the contraption that would cuddle them rather than the machine that could feed them.

We are living in a day in the United States when many grandparents move far away from their grandchildren to retirement communities and rarely have contact with them. We believe that God intended for grandparents to have an influential role in the lives of their children's children whenever possible. This includes taking an interest in them and showing them attention and affection.

Young ones need the assurance that comes with receiving affection, especially in the early years on through the teen years. Babies cannot be given too much affection. All they receive seems to help them prosper the more. As a baby, one of our twin grandsons woke up in the night crying. His father got up with him and checked that all needs were met. Finally, he realized that the baby needed a few minutes of affection, and then he immediately went back to sleep.

Angeline:

As a family, we always had a signal of “love pats” that we constantly passed between ourselves. This communication consisted of squeezing hands 3 times or 3 gentle pats. This meant “I...LOVE...YOU.” Many times as we would sit by each other in church, in the car, on outings, or wherever, we would communicate this way.

We always held hands to pray before meals, and to this day, those love pats continue.

I have a friend whose son was on a baseball team. While he was playing the outfield, or getting ready to bat, she would yell out to him, "1....4.....3!" She was yelling out the number of letters to the words of the message she was sending to him, which was "I...LOVE...YOU." These codes of communication are so very reassuring to our loved ones. They express a confidence to them that they are loved and being loved, while living in a busy, uncaring world.

In visiting older folks at nursing facilities, I have often found that people hold on to my hand when I shake their hand. Some have stroked my forearm with their other hand. I realized that these were ones who rarely had anyone to touch them and show them affection. Many throughout the world are crying inside to have this need for proper affection ministered to them. It begins with a husband who cherishes his wife by showing affection to her.

Praise and Approval

The second aspect of cherishing that a husband needs to give to his wife and family is that of ministering praise and approval. How important is this act of cherishing in a day when people in the world seem to tear down one another and degrade each other.

Even though Jesus is the Son of God, as the Son of man he needed the approval of His heavenly Father. *“And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him:*

and lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Matthew 3:16-17). If Jesus needed praise and approval, we do as well. “That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaisas the prophet, saying, Behold my servant, whom I have chosen; my beloved, in whom my soul is well pleased: I will put my spirit upon him, and he shall shew judgement to the Gentiles” (Matthew 12:17-18). The Father openly expressed His approval of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul and Peter both confirm that those in authority must fulfill two basic responsibilities. *“For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same” (Romans 13:3). “Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well” (1 Peter 2:14). God has placed authorities, first of all, for the correction or punishment of those who do evil or wrong and, secondly, to praise those who do well.*

In Psalms 50:16-22, God is contending with His people concerning their manner of speaking against one another and tearing one another apart with words. *“Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me: and to him that ordereth his conversation aright will I shew the salvation of God” (Psalms 50:23). As He ends this discourse, He makes it perfectly clear that He is glorified when we speak praise and encouragement to each other.*

We must at this point make a distinction between praise and flattery. Praise always builds a person up, but flattery destroys. *“A flattering mouth worketh ruin” (Proverbs 26:28). Flattery emanates from deceit and trickery with a motive to control another person with vain talk about them. God has purposed that we mature to the place that our conversation builds up*

and imparts God's grace or ability to those with whom we communicate. *"Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers"* (Ephesians 4:29). We need to let those under our care know openly how we appreciate them, and we should praise them in areas where they are developing godly character and becoming overcomers.

How important it is that a husband receives God's acceptance so that he can build up each member of his family and help them come into the full purpose of God. Words are very creative. May we have grace from God to minister praise and approval, especially to those for whom we are responsible.

Many husbands speak in such demeaning words about and directly to their precious wives. This is like shooting themselves in the heart. Calling a wife degrading names or even thinking degrading thoughts toward her will not help her overcome and be changed into the ideal the husband desires. Peter says that a husband should "give honor unto the wife" (1 Peter 3:7). This means that the husband should esteem or value his wife with dignity.

Angeline:

One very good example of this is the reaction of a husband to a wife who is battling a weight problem. If he constantly puts her down and calls her names, she fights depression and feels defeated. It is hard for her to be encouraged to continue a program of weight reduction. If he would have the attitude of being her "cheerleading" squad, she would receive strength and encouragement to press toward her goal. She would even try harder to receive his continued praise.

As one reads about the virtuous woman in Proverbs 31, it becomes readily apparent that part of the reason she has developed into the great woman she has become is because her husband praises and encourages her. *“Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her... Give her of the fruit of her hands; and let her own works praise her in the gates”* (Proverbs 31:28, 31).

As our children are growing up, they desperately need praise and approval. *“Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged.”* (Colossians 3:21). Many children become discouraged because they do not receive adequate praise and approval, especially from their fathers.

Children have a deep desire to please those whom God has made responsible for them, such as parents and grandparents. When parents are silent or show no interest in the children’s achievements, the children are often devastated. How important it is that the children receive encouragement that they are doing well and have pleased their parents. Children should also be trained in the home to be kind to one another and not be allowed to speak harshly to one another or call each other derogatory names. The training they receive at home will carry over into their own marriage later.

Angeline:

We would make sure that our son Rob would treat his sister kindly. The way that he treated her would be a foundation of how he would someday treat his wife. Likewise, our daughter Tam was not allowed to “mother” her brother. Even though they became frustrated with one another they were not allowed to argue and fight. I would tell them, “If either one of you have a problem with the other, you come to us and we will deal with the situation.” This way, they

would maintain a respect for each other and each other's possessions.

CHAPTER 11

Commitment to Communication

Necessity of Sharing Hearts

When we speak about communicating with God, we call it prayer. Most Christians understand how important and powerful prayer can be. Even as communication with God is vital, so also is communication between a husband and wife. A husband needs to understand the crucial role of communication in a strong marriage and take the necessary actions to ensure an intimacy of heart with his wife.

The prophet Hosea married a very morally wayward woman. Eventually, she wandered from her husband and descended into a terrible bondage caused by a lifestyle of adultery. The following verse reveals the course of action that Hosea set his heart to follow to redeem his wife from her bondage and restore her to himself: *“I will allure her...and speak to her heart”* (Hosea 2:14).

Within marriage God intended that a husband and wife open their hearts to one another. People can talk to one another and never reveal what is in the deep recesses of their being. Communication of the heart does not take place easily or without effort. *“Counsel in the heart of man is like deep water; but a man of understanding will draw it out”* (Proverbs 20:5). Conversations often begin with casual subjects. A husband must be patient and ascertain what his wife is seeking to tell him when she begins a conversation. Some people have tried to share their hearts and have been wounded in so doing. Perhaps a person’s most intimate

thoughts may appear foolish. We must avoid ridicule even if some statements initially seem irrelevant. Women often have a different perspective and manner of expressing things. A husband must be sensitive and ask the Lord for understanding as his wife speaks about those subjects that are important to her. Sometimes a question will help her to express herself more fully.

It is essential that a husband also opens his heart to impart to his wife his vision, goals, plans, feelings, frustrations, conflicts and concerns. As both husband and wife open those hidden chambers of their inmost being to each other in intimate conversation, they are drawn into deeper understanding and unity with each other. We cannot and should not reveal everything about ourselves to everyone. God has intended that we do so with Him and our mate.

What fulfillment a couple experiences when they enter the level of communion with each other that God has intended! Much time, trial and error are involved in the process of developing such an open relationship with one another. Many misunderstandings can arise but we must be willing to work past these and seek the Lord for understanding of our spouse. Often as we speak to our mate about those things that we contemplate and meditate upon, their input can bring clarity to an area of confusion or to a situation that may feel as though we are lacking a part of the puzzle.

Sometimes people are afraid of rejection by their mate if they reveal themselves fully. Consider David's freedom to tell God exactly how he felt as he was passing through the various situations of life. David expressed himself openly without fear of God rejecting him. David's relationship with God was that of an intimate friend, and is an example

of the openness of response between those in intimate friendship.

“Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment” (1 Corinthians 1:10). How can a couple be of the same mind if they do not take the time and exert the effort involved in learning to communicate well? A couple must have quality time to make this happen. Today there seem to be so many distractions to keep such important exchanges from taking place. Angeline and I intend to share our hearts fully with one another never keeping anything hidden from one another.

If a couple fails to communicate well with one another and begin to withdraw from one another, walls can form that lead to a wounded heart, an undue interest in things that are not eternal, or to finding a substitute with whom to share their heart.

Scripture gives us no idea how or when this happened in the marriage of Isaac and Rebekah, but obviously a major communication breakdown occurred. The problem is revealed in one brief verse. *“And Isaac loved Esau, because he did eat of his venison: but Rebekah loved Jacob”* (Genesis 25:28). Because the parents were not communicating properly, they each became partial and gravitated toward a different son, fostering weakness in both of their children.

Isaac planted in Esau a propensity toward temporal things that led to him selling his birthright for a bowl of soup. Rebekah, instead of sharing her heart with her husband, helped Jacob deceive Isaac. This couple’s failure to openly and intimately

communicate to each other the issues in their hearts led to strife, division, and rebellion within their family.

The Holy Spirit has spoken several things to me that I need to state to my wife and reaffirm from time to time. First of all, I need to tell her often that I love her. Secondly, with the spirit of disloyalty and covenant breaking that exists today, I have declared that I will never divorce her for any reason. Thirdly, I have affirmed that I will always care for her.

We witnessed a wonderful example of unwavering commitment in the marriage of our spiritual father and mother. He was faithful beyond words to care for his physically incapacitated wife for several years. I want my wife to know that I am committed to her and, therefore, I reaffirm it from time to time.

Submitting to One Another

“Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God” (Ephesians 5:21). This portion of scripture brings us to one last important point concerning communication. As we have previously studied, the husband has the responsibility to take leadership and give direction to the family. The wife is responsible to submit herself under her husband’s leadership. But there are times when a husband must submit himself to his wife.

Every thought, idea or plan has a way of being solidified when it is shared or bounced off someone else. Sometimes we may realize after sharing that our idea is worthless and throw it out. God has intended for a husband to submit his thoughts, ideas and plans to his wife. She more than anyone else has been appointed by God to this task. A husband

should in this sense submit his considerations or intentions to his wife. Her input into his thinking can be invaluable. She has a different perspective on his considerations that he should not forsake.

I planned a trip with our son, Rob, and his family to Europe by train for 28 days. When I submitted my plan to Angeline she immediately felt that was too long to be away from the church. She was also concerned whether or not we would be able to endure that length of time. I must admit that I did not initially appreciate her perspective. I wanted to go as long as I could and see as much as possible. I reasoned that she lacked my love of adventure and exploration. However, I somewhat grudgingly received what she shared and presented it all to the Lord. He began to give me the sense that she was right and I readjusted our time in Europe.

Upon returning home it became very clear that it was God who had adjusted my plans through my wife's input. We arrived home in time to minister to members of our church who had experienced a death in the family. Thank God I was willing to submit my plans to my wife so that God could perfect my plans so that we would not miss His purpose.

Another aspect of submitting to one another involves accountability. A husband should always make his wife aware of his whereabouts and activities. This courtesy is not only informative but also for protection. A husband should always submit to his wife where he is going and what he is doing.

When God speaks an important message to my wife and me, she will often receive something from the Lord first. Angeline has learned to bring it and submit it to me; then we

judge it to be sure it is indeed from the Lord. When it has been confirmed that it is the word of the Lord, I submit myself to it even though it has come through my wife. The will of the Lord always reigns over us. In this sense, a husband submits to his wife as the word of the Lord comes through her. This does not mean she takes over the headship of the home, but that a husband and wife both are in submission to the will of God, no matter who receives the message.

If a husband and wife do not communicate well, they will often misunderstand the mind of the Lord and His will for their lives. A wife must be willing to submit to her husband those things she feels God has spoken to her and also be willing to set them aside if her husband feels that they are not from the Lord. A husband must be willing to take time to hear and receive from his wife so that he fully receives what God is seeking to convey to him. We must talk humbly and openly to each other so that we can have God's best.

PRAYER

Lord Jesus, we thank You that You are a perfect husband for Your bride, the church. Your example of laying down Your life for the church is our example to pursue. Give us grace to fulfill our responsibility to You and our wives, to fulfill faithfully the covenant that has established our marriage so that we can also be an example to our sons and others who are beholding our conduct. Make us men of vision who lead our wives and children into the high eternal purpose You have ordained for them so that Your name may be glorified and honored. Amen.

CHAPTER 12

The Value of Children

An Eternal Inheritance

“Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD: and the fruit of the womb is his reward” (Psalms 127:3). How important are children to God? What value should we place upon our children? Here the scripture declares that children are like an inheritance. The one thing that is not clear is whether they are God’s inheritance or our inheritance. It seems that they are an inheritance to both God and us.

God speaks through the prophet Malachi that one of His reasons for desiring a husband and wife to flow together properly in marriage is because of the tremendous effects that are invoked upon the children. God declares that He seeks for a godly seed (Malachi 2:15). This indicates God to be the inheritor of the children. Truly the fruit of the womb is a reward for the Lord as they are trained in His ways.

Earlier in this book we gave several biblical examples of women whose experiences of pregnancy were important for us to study. Obviously God has indicated some instruction for us to consider so that we could have some wisdom and knowledge to produce fruit that would be a blessing. Even in the very early stages of development of a child in the womb, to declare

*God is
seeking
for a
godly
seed.*

your love and God's love for your unborn child is very important.

Angeline:

In our own experience, my husband and I would talk to our babies in the womb telling them daily that we loved them and were very anxious to see them and hold them. We prayed every day for them. We noted that when we prayed at different times of the day the babies would respond by moving or kicking. We knew that their spirits were alive unto God. They were responding not only to our voices but also to their Everlasting Father. I always encourage the women to do their homework when they are pregnant—to pray, to talk, and to read to their unborn babies. It never fails; the parents who do this have such peaceful babies at birth, and they know their parents' voices.

I have such strong conviction that for every pregnancy we should seek the Lord for a verse or a word to help give direction in the life of each child. While I was in the delivery room birthing our son, my husband was in the waiting room praying for me. The Lord had made it clear to my husband that we were having a son and He had given him some verses for his life.

As was stated of Mary of old, she pondered these things in her heart. I also pondered these things in my own heart. Those same promises and verses have been such an encouragement to my husband and me as we have seen our son and his family go to the nations of the earth.

When I was pregnant with our daughter Tamara, God showed Himself so faithful to us again. After I delivered her, I could hardly wait to see my husband and hear what

verse or word he had for her. When they wheeled us out of delivery, there he was waiting and beaming at the sight of his little girl. When we were alone, I asked him, "Did you feel any special verse for her?" He said, "No." I was devastated. "Hello, God. We just had a baby!"

Even her birth had been a miracle because I was ready to lose her in my sixth month of pregnancy due to a kidney stone that had caused my kidney to stop functioning. The church had gone to prayer and I finally passed that stone, but because of all the pain, the baby had moved into the birthing position. We were so thankful for the wonderful token that we felt we had from God for her life at that time. Now no word or verse at her delivery!

Two days later, I was reading 1 Samuel 1:27-28: *"For this child I prayed; and the Lord hath given me my petition which I asked of him: Therefore also I have lent him to the Lord: as long as he liveth he shall be lent to the Lord. And he worshipped him there."* I was so excited! God had quickened a verse to my heart concerning my baby. Later on that day, my husband came in to visit us. I told him, "Honey, I feel God gave me a word for our baby." He said, "God gave me one too." As we shared with each other, we discovered it was the same verse! How wonderful our God is!

We must remember that He does not always do things in the same way. Even in that verse, Hannah LENT Samuel to the Lord. He gave him to her, but she in turn LENT Samuel to the Lord. That is a real key for us. So many times we say that we gave our children to God. God gave them to us and we lend them back to him for His purposes. That puts a responsibility upon us that we need to realize.

Children are also an inheritance for us as parents. As was mentioned earlier, the vision that God gives to us often goes partially unfulfilled in our lifetime and will be renewed and continued in our children. The promises given to Abraham and Sarah were dependent upon subsequent generations responding to the Lord so that they could have their full inheritance. *“Seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment; that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him”* (Genesis 18:18-19). The inheritance of generations of family can be affected if the children are not valued and are neglected. It would seem that Judas’ predecessors were affected by his conduct (Psalms 109:12-15). King Hezekiah’s flippant attitude toward the word of the Lord concerning his children led to a loss for generations succeeding him (2 Kings 20:17-19).

We, as parents, must realize with more than just sentimental emotional attachment how important our children are. We are to see them as an eternal inheritance. Our children are the only earthly things that we can take to heaven. Our children must not become idols to us, nor should we favor them to their own destruction. But God wants us to invest our lives to see that they carry on in the purposes of God.

Arrows Shot Forth

Psalm 127 also gives us another simile to show us the potential of our children. *“As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of thy youth. Happy is the man that hath his*

quiver full of them: they shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate” (Psalm 127:4-5). At the time these verses were written, arrows were most valuable offensively. A well-formed arrow could be shot forth a great distance, to a target that the man shooting the arrow would not be able to reach himself! Well-led and well-trained children can be used by God to accomplish purposes which their parents would never be able to fulfill.

Flourishing Olive Plants

Olive trees are esteemed for their value in the agricultural areas surrounding the Mediterranean Sea. The olive tree takes about twenty five years to become fruitful, but once it begins to bear fruit, it may be productive for hundreds of years. It symbolizes peace, prosperity, and wealth. Children are likened to olive plants in Psalms 128:3. This comparison also reveals the importance of long-term investment in our children so that they will produce good fruit and much fruit for years to come.

King David wrote about being delivered from strange or alien children who are unfamiliar with God and His ways.

Rid me, and deliver me from the hand of strange children, whose mouth speaketh vanity, and their right hand is a right hand of falsehood: That our sons may be as plants grown up in their youth; that our daughters may be as corner stones, polished after the similitude of a palace: That our garners may be full, affording all manner of store: that our sheep may bring forth thousands and ten thousands in our streets: That our oxen may be strong to labour; that there be no breaking in, nor going out; that there be

no complaining in our streets. Happy is that people, that is in such a case: yea, happy is that people, whose God is the LORD (Psalms 144:11-15).

What blessings abound in our lives and in the lives of our children as we honor God and obey Him. Our sons can develop an early maturity rather than giving years to vanity. Our daughters can be women of nobility who are like the cornerstone from which point the rest of the building is constructed. They can be women of dignity who show a polish rather than the brashness which prevails in so many.

Our children should be a glowing testimony which manifests Jesus to others. *“Behold, I and the children whom the LORD hath given me are for signs and for wonders in Israel from the LORD of hosts, which dwelleth in mount Zion”* (Isaiah 8:18). When we lead our children as scripture teaches us and seek direction from the Lord in their training, our sons and daughters make a stark contrast to the seed of those who know not God. *“And their seed shall be known among the Gentiles, and their offspring among the people: all that see them shall acknowledge them, that they are the seed which the LORD hath blessed”* (Isaiah 61:9). People will easily recognize the difference.

Angeline and I received excellent reports of our children from our children’s teachers in the public school system. Teachers recognized that the blessing of the Lord was upon them. God’s ways are perfect and right. We can expect good results if we will seek Him, honor Him, and obey Him, so that His working can fully affect our lives and those of our children.

Angeline:

While at parent/teacher conferences, we would ask questions concerning the attitudes and character that our children were

portraying in the classroom setting. We realized that the teachers could see our children function in a manner which we did not have the privilege of viewing, such as opportunities for reactions to be displayed. We would ask the teachers if they saw any flaws in these areas. If so, they could share their observations with us so that we could work with our children to bring correction to areas that needed to be changed.

The teachers' observations of our children were so very important to us. As parents we realized that we could have "blind spots" where others could easily see and be able to identify attitudes or actions that we did not see. Another view of children would be from their friends' parents, employers, or other contacts with whom the child is involved.

Parents must, however, obtain this information not as "spying" on them, but for insights that can help to correct and teach them socially correct manners and acceptable responses. An open attitude of receiving knowledge not only of the praiseworthy attributes but also of the areas of lack in the children will help in molding their attitudes and character, the proper development of which will literally be a foundation for the rest of their lives.

With many families involved in home schooling, there are fewer opportunities for others to have insights into the lives of these children. Extra activities, which involve the input of others, are very important. Perhaps if the children are taking private lessons or are involved in sports, a parent can gain this valuable information. Grandparents and relatives are another source of insight.

We know of a situation where a child was involved in a certain sport that was often practiced without the view of

parents. When the coach approached the parents with the fact that their child used very abusive language, the parents asked the child if this were true, but the child denied it. They, of course, wanted to believe their child and chose to defend him. Years later as a teenager, this child had become very rebellious, and one very obvious problem was his very abusive, filthy language.

As a child, this little “weed” had surfaced, but because the parents would not receive this information as truth, this problem became a large “plant” in the life of this teenager. To allow the Holy Spirit to make known those things which are done in secret is so very important. He knows all and sees all. We as parents must ask Him to expose and bring to light the things that are in the lives of our little ones. We want the full blessing of God upon our lives and their lives.

CHAPTER 13

Show and Tell

Teaching in the Home

Jesus' Example

Because we have no previous experience as parents, we need an example to follow. Jesus' leadership of the disciples provides us with excellent instruction. Here, Jesus spoke of major concepts that are important to us.

I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word. Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee. For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me. I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine. I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth. As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. And for

their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth. Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word (John 17:9, 14-20).

In verse 6, Jesus said that He manifested His Father's name to the disciples. Just as Jesus displayed godly character to His disciples, so we must live a godly life before our children always. We know that our children usually follow our example. We have observed children who begin to rebel against their parents and against God during the teen years, often because their parents are hypocrites, not living the Word of God as they have been taught.

Children are very perceptive and know if their parents are genuine and responsive to God. Many children become disinterested in church because they do not see the reality of God's ways being lived out at home. As the parents, and grandparents, whenever possible, manifest the character and ways of God to the young ones, it is natural for them to follow in the same steps.

Jesus said in verse 8 that He gave the disciples the words that His Father had given Him. How often the scriptures teach us the importance of instructing our children in God's Word.

Give ear, O my people, to my law: incline your ears to the words of my mouth. I will open my mouth in a parable: I will utter dark sayings of old: Which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us. We will not hide them from their children, showing to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, and his strength, and his wonderful works that he hath done. For he established a testimony in Jacob, and

appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children: That the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born; who should arise and declare them to their children: That they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments: And might not be as their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation; a generation that set not their heart aright, and whose spirit was not stedfast with God (Psalms 78:1-8).

It is not sufficient to send our children to Sunday school one hour a week and expect them to know God's Word and ways. Even if they attend all the church services, which they should (with their parents, of course) the amount of time to teach what they need is limited.

A good idea is for the father to take good notes in church meetings and use those in teaching his family during family devotions. This way what has been taught by their pastor is further confirmed and personalized to the individual.

Using Every Opportunity

Therefore shall ye lay up these my words in your heart and in your soul, and bind them for a sign upon your hand, that they may be as frontlets between your eyes. And ye shall teach them to your children, speaking of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt write them upon the door posts of thine house, and upon thy gates: That your days may be multiplied, and the days of your

children, in the land which the LORD swore unto your fathers to give them, as the days of heaven upon the earth. For if ye shall diligently keep all these commandments which I command you, to do them, to love the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, and to cleave unto him; Then will the LORD drive out all these nations from before you, and ye shall possess greater nations and mightier than yourselves (Deuteronomy 11:18-23).

Daily family life affords abundant opportunities to illustrate various Biblical truths. Jesus used the situations around Him to teach His disciples spiritual truths.

In the same way, we can use whatever surrounds our children's lives to make spiritual application. Even the negative circumstances of life afford us an excellent opportunity. As mentioned earlier, when our children faced conflicts at school with other students, this became an opportunity to instruct them on how to avoid or resolve conflicts. Sometimes the lesson showed them how to practice forgiveness. God has purposed everything as something to be used to teach His ways. Spend time with each child to review the day. Discuss conflicts, anxieties, victories, and defeats.

Pray for Them

Jesus prayed for His disciples. Prayer is essential in training our children. Some aspects of preparation in our children's knowledge of the Lord and His ways can be accomplished only through prayer. Some of the work can be accomplished by the Holy Spirit's working in them, quickening their spirits and minds.

In the World, Not of the World

In John 17: 14-18, Jesus speaks of being in the world but not of the world. God has put us in this world because it has the elements that are essential to press us into His kingdom, develop His character in us, and prepare us for an eternal, heavenly inheritance. We must not be like the world even though we are in the world, but we must be separate from worldly ways.

Sometimes Christian parents are convinced that their children must be in a Christian school setting or be home schooled. While either of these can be a wonderful blessing, neither is always the right answer for every child. The key is found in asking the Lord what is best for each child. Christian educators have done extensive study and determined that a child's success in school—whether public, Christian, or home school—is most profoundly affected by the participation of the parents in the children's instruction and training.

Some parents seek to isolate their children from any contact with the world. While we want to protect them from learning and copying the world's example, we want them to overcome the forces of evil. Moses and Daniel are excellent examples of children who overcame in very evil circumstances.

In the years from birth to weaning (probably about age five), Moses was cared for and trained by his own godly mother. How very important are those beginning years of life! The major foundations are laid in those first five years. Moses received the major portion of his schooling in the systems of Egypt, a most ungodly place at the time. Yet Moses overcame and rejected all the treasures of Egypt and followed Christ.

Daniel was taken captive as a teenager into Babylon where he was placed into service in that kingdom. All the allurements of Babylon were available to him. Daniel chose godly friends, and together they overcame in the midst of that most evil empire.

Obviously, we as parents are to protect our children from the evil of the world. But we must view the situation as we would water. A child can drown in water. Therefore some parents seek to keep their children completely away from water. This, however, is not practical. They need water for drinking, bathing, and pleasure. The answer is not to keep them from the water completely, but rather to teach them to swim. They must be trained to overcome and be victorious.

Sanctified for Their Sake

The last thing we want to look at is what Jesus said in verse 19 of this passage in John 17. Jesus said that for His disciples' sake He sanctified himself. All of us are born with iniquities (sometimes translated from the Hebrew or Greek as "lawlessness"). Iniquities are passed from one generation to another (Exodus 20:5; 34:7). Our children have iniquities which we have passed on to them. However, God gives us wonderful hope in this matter.

We have witnessed a number of situations in which God dealt with iniquities in the parents with a positive effect being left upon the children. Sometimes, as parents repent and turn from their iniquities, it is as though the roots of a plant growing up into the child's life are cut off or pulled out, and the plant in the child dies also. In Daniel 4:27, this thought is shown when the king was told to break off his sins and iniquities.

When we as parents allow the Holy Spirit to circumcise our hearts and deal with our iniquities, the children can sometimes reap the benefits. Occasionally, we have seen parents try to deal with problems in their children without success by conventional methods. As they sought the Lord for solutions, they found that their own iniquities were the real problem in the children. As the parents were changed, then they could deal with the effects in the children. May each parent obtain grace to sanctify themselves for their children's sakes, even as Jesus did for His disciples.

Earning Their Attention

The parents' ultimate goal, after having taught and trained their children in God's ways, is to be able to present the children to the Lord and see them go on to know the Lord in His fullness and to complete the course for which they were created. In order to accomplish this, parents must first win the children's respect and attention. This proves to be a simple task, in one sense, for parents who are willing to invest the necessary time. Complicated training and skills are not so important as is a commitment to our children and giving them proper priority.

Children have a built-in desire for heroes to follow. God has intended that the father and mother should be their children's heroes. "*...and the glory of children are their fathers*" (Proverbs 17:6). Because many parents fail to make the investment of time with their children, the children's hearts are turned toward ungodly heroes such as movie, music, or sports figures, rather than the parents as God intended. Other children turn to their peers, whom they respect more than their parents, because they are willing to spend time with them.

When parents become the heroes, the children become more concerned with receiving their parents' approval than the approbation of their peers. Later, the children transfer that desire to please their parents to a desire to receive the Lord's approval above all else (John 5:44, 12:43).

Such a limited window of opportunity exists in winning our children's respect and attention. Because many young parents are struggling to become financially established in life or, worse yet, seeking all the material things they ever wanted, establishing this bond with their children is postponed until later. If "later" happens to be the teen years, the parents may wonder why their children are not interested. By this time, the children have learned "to cope" and have established other alternatives. Often, apart from a miracle, irreparable damage occurs, leaving a huge chasm and a multitude of other problems.

Special family times must be established to give opportunity for the children to bond in relationship with their parents and allow time for them to share their hearts. The following section offers some suggestions to help parents start doing this.

Getting Started

Eating a meal together has long been recognized for its value in facilitating special relationships. Major consideration needs to be given in arranging priorities and schedules so that this becomes possible daily. It would be better to have a lesser paying employment, if necessary, in order to have this special sharing time. Television must be excluded from such precious events. Although invited company can be a wonderful blessing, some families take this to extreme and never allow their families to be alone.

Meal times are a good time for everyone to report in on their day. If any concerns arise, they may be addressed at this time. The interaction of each family member sharing at the dinner table not only leaves one with wonderful memories, but also serves to further bond each family member together. The children learn as these opportunities are made that they can and should share everything with their parents.

Another very important opportunity is in the evening before bedtime. We used this time to read good books aloud as a family, play games, and work on handcrafts. These activities often made an opening for further communication with each other. We read scripture, sang songs, and prayed together. We discussed a wide range of topics from problems at school to pimples on the face; from what kind of work they wanted to do the rest of their lives to what kind of life partner they wanted; from fears to friends; from meeting new challenges to new meetings with God.

Anything and everything was a possible topic that became a way to instruct our children to meet life situations, give them counsel and direction, and show them the Lord's excellent ways. When we tucked our children into bed, they often shared precious things from deep in their hearts. Sometimes we planned a special one-on-one date with each child. Because of limited funds, some of these events were as simple as mother and son going to a restaurant for a cup of hot chocolate.

Many of us have not grown up in ideal home situations, so we are left without examples to follow. Some have come from homes where little or no communication existed. God is able to change us and give us help in these areas of need. The most ideal time to begin establishing communication

with our children is as soon as we know they are conceived in the womb, as has been shared earlier. Of course, this is only the beginning. A faithful and continuing bonding through communication must take place at each stage of their development.

The Value of Asking Questions

Angeline is an expert in asking questions. I have learned from her the value of posing questions to develop communication. Asking people questions about their lives, circumstances, or how they feel about something can convey to them your genuine interest. We practiced asking our children questions about their days at school.

Our children attended public school and came home with many accounts of their class subjects as well as interaction with teachers and other students. This sparked lively communication in our home, as we took an interest in all that our children were experiencing. We made ourselves a part of their interests and activities. Never have we regretted this investment of time in our children's lives. Our lives have been enriched for it. But we were also able to establish a bond of communication that continues to this day.

Angeline:

In communicating with our children, it is very important for parents to establish a relationship with them as one of their best friends. This does not mean a parent does not understand they are also in authority over their children. Friends spend time and share experiences and events together. Time alone with them on a one-on-one basis is so very important. Establishing communication in the preteen years will give a wonderful foundation for years to come.

We must let them know that we enjoy being with them and that they are very interesting and fun.

If they had a difficult problem, we encouraged them by seeking God together to receive an answer. This is teaching them how to seek for answers so that they will know how to get a hold of God for themselves when they are older or when we are not around to help them. We must constantly remember that we are raising them to be men and women of God and that our goal is to work godly character into their lives.

Another way to open up communication is to review with them their birth and how precious and beautiful they were and still are. Psalm 139:13-17 and Ecclesiastes 11:5 give wonderful scriptures to remind them of how precious they are to you and to God. Going through baby pictures and talking of their sweet ways can also open up a door of communication for them to share their heart with you. Review things that God has spoken to you for them.

If communicating is still very difficult, ask them sincerely, "Is there a promise I made to you that I have not kept? Is there some way that I have hurt or wounded you with wrong words or actions?" The Holy Spirit might even now bring to you thoughts of what you may have done or said which has led to a breakdown in communication with members of your family.

Here is a list of topics to discuss that may help you in opening up communication:

- Stealing (whether in an action or in the mind)
- Unconfessed lies
- Broken vows or promises
- Discussing the time you were most afraid

Discussing their most embarrassing moment
Wounded spirit
Cheating
Friends
Music
Dating
Moral purity

All of these can be a very heavy burden for a child to carry. Many children are very discouraged because of the weight of “wrongs” that they have committed in their lives. If they open their hearts to us, we must be very careful how we react to this information. At times, you as a parent might be very devastated, but remember, they are sharing their hearts with you and they are wanting to be free of their own despair. Once communication has begun to happen, keep it going. Check with them every day to see how they are doing. Don’t check like a truant officer, but talk with them as a friend and as a parent who can help them get cleansed from the pollution of the world.

Signs of danger can be:

Quiet, short replies
Wanting to be alone
Lack of communication at meal times
Despondency
Wanting to be with others instead of the family

In any communication, you must be sensitive to them. There is a time to talk, a time to listen, a time to pray, a time to bring correction, and a time to show affection.

At one point, our son, Rob, took an interest in coin collecting and desired to join a coin club. This necessitated my

attending as well, because he had to be transported quite a distance to the meeting. At that point, I could not think of much that I could care less about than a coin club. As I considered what to do, the Lord spoke to me that I did not need to be interested in coin collecting but only in being with my son. That brought a clarity that helped me make the decision to join the coin club with my son. I realized later that I really enjoyed hearing the history of various coins, but more importantly my son knew that I was interested in him. At times, I rode the bus with the wrestling team to attend wrestling matches at other schools. Boys whose fathers never came to watch them responded to me as I cheered each of them on. They would inquire of our son, "Hey, Tucker, is your dad coming to watch us tonight?" How children long for someone, preferably their own parents, to take an interest in what they are doing.

Angeline:

Our son played in the marching band in high school. During halftime, they would perform and then sit in the bleachers with the rest of the fans. One particular Friday night, it was raining very hard. After the band had marched, the bleachers emptied out leaving very few people to watch the rest of the game. The football team was just returning to the field and saw the fans exiting. They ran to the fence where we were seated, held on to the fence, and pleaded with us, "Please stay! Please don't go!" Here were these big, tough, burly football players, pleading with the fans to stay and watch them finish the game. I remember many fans responding, "No way! We don't want to get wet." We stood up and yelled, "We're here! We'll stay and watch you play." They started to jump up and down and clap to us. My heart will never forget that picture of the strong desire to be wanted and to feel that they were worth watching. So the

four of us huddled together in the cold, wet rain and finished watching the game. That is the very picture and plea which many young people have in their hearts. So many times, parents are not sensitive to search out the feelings of their children and to fill a need that is in their lives. If the situation does not fit the parents' schedule or comfort, they abandon their children so that their own desires can be fulfilled.

The investment we made in our children by taking interest in their interests has paid wonderful dividends. To see our children both go on to fulfill God's call for their lives has brought us such joy and fulfillment. Somehow, I believe that communicating with them throughout the years has played an integral part in their entering into God's purposes for their lives.

How important it is to be available to our children even at inconvenient times. They must be made to know they can approach us anytime. Often children's hearts become open and communication begins as the family enjoys fun activities together. Some families do not know how to have fun together. Times of fun and laughing together can be as important as times of worship together, and can even open the way for worship together. If children feel that life is dull and boring with their parents, they will often reject their parents' God. Fun times do not need to be expensive. Usually the greatest investment of the parents is their time and willingness to enjoy activities suited to their children's interests at each stage of development. If children cannot have fun at home with their family, they will often seek it in contexts that are neither suitable nor safe for them spiritually.

When communication is not flowing in a family, it will be manifest in various ways. One of these warning signs of

impending danger is the withdrawal of the children from the family and a desire to spend too much time alone. Others will react by developing an undue interest in hobbies, pets, school, or work, as they withdraw from family life. This often leads to finding peers to identify with who replace family members. These friends cannot fill the needs that parents are ordained by God to meet. Their peers often lead them astray. Open rebellion is often manifest in their lives as their deep needs are not met.

Follower the Leader

My father often repeated an adage in my years of growing up, “Do as I say, not as I do.” Of course, this is a wonderful idea but not one that functions as parents would sometimes like. More often than not, our children follow our example as parents in uncanny detail, only with greater intensity.

It has been commonly thought that Proverbs chapters 1-9 contain the training given by King David and Bethsheba to prepare Solomon to reign over Israel. They gave much warning about being involved with strange women. David had practiced multiplying wives, contrary to God’s law for kings (Deuteronomy 17:17). David’s instruction for Solomon was excellent but, unfortunately, Solomon practiced with outlandish intensity what his father had done (I Kings 11:1-4).

Our children are watching us when we are totally unaware, registering in their minds and hearts every detail of our conduct and actions. Our lives as parents are an object lesson perhaps more powerful than any other. May we receive the abundance of grace to be the examples of godliness that we would want our children to follow.

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

Proverbs 22:6

CHAPTER 14

Training

The Narrowing Process

“Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it” (Proverbs 22:6). In many respects, training is very different from teaching, although training does involve teaching. This word “train up” is very picturesque in the original Hebrew. It means literally “to narrow.” Thus, this verse could be more properly translated, “Narrow a child into the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.”

When babies are born, they have no responsibilities placed upon them, but are free, in a sense, to do as they like. Basically, we could say that they get whatever they want whenever they want it. The circle of their boundary is wide at this point. Our goal as godly parents must be to begin to constrict this circle and bring proper control to their lives as they grow and develop. As they reach the time to leave home and establish their own homes, they should be narrowed so that their feet are in the pathway that God has ordained them to take in life. Parents must consider what type of boundaries to put around their children’s lives to help prepare them to enter into God’s very best. The following diagram should help us to understand this.

*The word
“train up”
is very
picturesque
in the
original
Hebrew.
It means
literally
“to
narrow.”*

Training Our Children

Way To Eternal life

The Narrow Way



“Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat:

Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.”

Train Up- “Narrow”



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

The child has much freedom at birth. Parents must narrow the child more and more as he grows so that he will be able to enter the narrow way that leads to life and possess freedom to do what God has called him to.

“Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it” (Matthew 7:13-14). Many parents have failed to

understand God's ways and have led their children in the broad way allowing themselves to do as they please. The way that leads to life is the narrow way—a way that teaches our children discipline, self-control, and the accepting of limits in order to gain the ultimate freedom to do what God has created them for in this life and for all of eternity.

Wise parents are willing to make the necessary investment of time and energy to train their children in the way they should go, especially in the early years of their lives when the major foundations are being laid. Many mothers become exasperated because of the rigorous job before them. Many fathers leave everything concerning the child's training to their wives, causing the burden to be even greater on them. Parents must work together diligently to narrow the child in the early part of his life.

Consider the situation of Moses, the mighty man through whom God manifested His power to the Egyptians and Israelites. Moses was born in a time when the babies were being killed, just as they are in our day. Destroying the children always took place when God was seeking to bring forth a great deliverer, such as Moses, Jesus, and the Manchild of Revelation 12.

Moses' parents were people of great faith. Pharaoh's edict was to cast all the male babies into the river (Exodus 1:22), but they were not afraid of his commandment (Hebrews 11:23) and hid him for three months. They then obeyed Pharaoh's orders and cast him into the river in an ark made of bulrushes (Exodus 2:3). Pharaoh's daughter found him there and desired to keep him. Moses' older sister, Miriam, was nearby and offered to find a mother to be his nurse. Of course, Moses' mother was selected by Miriam and paid

by Pharaoh's daughter to nurse Moses in those important beginning years.

So powerful was the influence of this mother who understood the limited time to invest in her son, that when Moses came of age to choose the course of his life, he chose to walk in God's ways (Hebrews 11:24-27). Even though he experienced years of being trained in the ungodly Egyptian ways, the influence of his parents' training in those first few years, before he was brought to Pharaoh's daughter, had narrowed him in the way that he should go. Because of his parents' faith and investment in Moses, he found the way that leads to life. This narrowing process ultimately brings such freedom in the life of the recipient. Let me illustrate this with an example from our own lives.

The Freedom of Limitation

During Angeline's adolescent years, her parents narrowed her in a specific area of her life. For five years, she studied and practiced the piano, which, of course, limited her from doing other activities that she would naturally have preferred. During this same time span in my own life, I did not receive the same type of training. I was free to do many of the things that children prefer, such as playing ball.

As the years have passed, Angeline has found that she has the freedom to play the piano for worship services and help lead people into the presence of God. She has also had the opportunity to write a number of beautiful worship songs, as she has sat at the piano and the Holy Spirit has moved upon her.

I have no such freedom. Often as I wait on the Lord, I have songs in my mind with beautiful chords and arrangements, but

I was not narrowed in this area and I am not free to share them with others. Angeline will probably play the piano and other instruments for the rest of her life, but I seriously doubt that I will play ball for the rest of my life!

“Then Adonijah the son of Haggith exalted himself, saying, I will be king: and he prepared him chariots and horsemen, and fifty men to run before him. And his father had not displeased him at any time in saying, Why hast thou done so? and he also was a very goodly man; and his mother bare him after Absalom” (I Kings 1:5-6). Adonijah wanted to reign as king over Israel instead of his father David who was growing old. Because he was not properly trained and narrowed into that purpose, he was not qualified for the privilege and responsibility to reign as king.

This principle of narrowing, stated by Elihu, further confirms God’s wisdom in the matter of training our children: *“Even so would he have removed thee out of the strait into a broad place, where there is no straitness”* (Job 36:16). As our children are led through this process of being narrowed, limited, and disciplined so that they are able to practice self-control, then they can experience joy and freedom in so many areas of their lives and be free to do what God created them to fulfill in life.

If this training that God prescribes is not instituted in our families, our children will always experience great limitation, and will ultimately go in the way that leads to destruction. Our children will appreciate for the rest of their lives what we have done for them. Through godly training, they will have the freedom to do all of God’s will.

Some families are in situations that have encouraged them to hire someone else to train their children. Sometimes a

mother works outside the home and leaves the training of the children to others. Other parents, because of their affluence, have chosen to have someone else be responsible for their children especially in the early years. Let's consider these important factors.

No one cares for your children like you do, except God Himself. They do not have the insights that you have and the interest needed to make the necessary investment in your child. A person not only teaches and trains others by their words but also by what they are.

Angeline and I were ministering in another country when this account was shared with us. It was a common practice for those with wealth to hire a nanny to care for their young children. One day a pastor entered his young child's room to see him in a face down kneeling position praying to another god. He realized that the Muslim nanny they had hired had taught their son this. This nanny was imparting what she was to the child.

We know of another child raised by a nanny for several years who was full of all kinds of fears. None of the other family members had such unnatural fears. Finally, God revealed that the fears were imparted to the child through the nanny who was full of all kinds of these fears. God has intended that the parents make the investment in training their own children in the way they should go.

Areas of Needed Training

Following is a list of ten areas of training our children will certainly need. You will, of course, realize other areas in your own children. All of us have some general needs, but

each individual also has selective areas of training which are necessary.

- 1. To know the Holy Scriptures and to recognize God's voice** We have shared a bit on the value of reading scripture to our children in the womb. As they mature and are able to read, we should start them reading in the Bible. We should help them form habits that they will need throughout their lifetime.

We are convinced that children can begin to recognize God's voice speaking to them at a young age. The prophet Samuel was quite young when God began to speak to him. He needed some training and direction from Eli, the priest (1 Samuel 3:4-10). Jeremiah, also a prophet, began to hear God's voice at a young age (Jeremiah 1:4-6). Jesus said, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me" (John 10:27).

How important it is that we train our children to know God's voice. We see in Deuteronomy 5:22-27 that Israel did not realize that hearing the living voice of the Lord caused one to receive the ability to do what God was asking. Our children need the flow of God's grace in their lives that comes by responding to His voice.

- 2. Obedience** Not only must the children learn to respond to God's voice, but they must first learn to respond to the voice of their parents. How many times do you want to command your children to do something before you expect them to obey?

Many parents wrongly train their children negligence in obedience. “If you do that one more time, I’m going to spank you,” and the child does it again. “If you do that one more time, I’m going to spank you,” and the child does it again. This may be repeated several times until the parent raises his voice several decibels, which the child has learned is the signal that the parent is serious. Finally, he receives the message that it is time to obey. He complies only when he is really expected to obey.

Suppose that a child is running toward the street when the mother sees a large truck coming. How many times does she want to say “Stop!” before she truly expects her child to respond to her voice? In this situation, saying it once may be all that is possible. We must train our children in the importance of responding the first time we speak to them. This can take intensive training for a period of time, as well as consistency on the part of the parents, but it is well worth the results.

- 3. Responsibility** In the United States, we live in a society which teaches personal responsibility for little, if anything. We will all give account of ourselves to God one day. Giving our children responsibilities, which they are able to handle at each stage of growth, is so very important. Then we must hold them accountable to be faithful in the responsibility. Jesus taught, “*You have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things*” (Matthew 25:21).

We are training our children to be kings and priests (Revelation 5:10). They must learn to handle responsibility that is appointed to them and faithfully fulfill what is expected.

4. **Respect** The scriptures teach us to respect rank, age, and gender. We have witnessed so many who have forsaken the spiritual inheritance because they never learned this lesson. Those who lack respect for man in these areas often lack proper respect and honor for God as well. “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom” (Psalms 111:10). If our children truly fear and respect God, it will be manifest in their respect for people. They must receive training from their parents both in word and example.

5. **Etiquette** So many have forsaken proper conduct in various social situations. Many children receive little training in this very important discipline. As our children face various situations in life, they need the confidence that comes from knowing they are conducting themselves properly. I was ministering in a church a number of years ago when I saw the need for further training our children in how to conduct themselves. I noticed that our children did not know how to approach other children they did not know, introduce themselves, and generate friendly conversation. As soon as we left in our car, we discussed the matter together. Angeline and I, as a result, began instructing our children in this vital social function.

Angeline:

In instructing our children in etiquette, we would have times of actual practice to teach good manners. As a young girl, my mother had the opportunity to be around socially elite people. She learned the proper settings of a dinner table, as well as the proper placement of utensils and dinnerware with lovely tablecloths and napkins. As I was growing up, she always set a beautiful table. Her china and table settings made anyone who came for dinner feel very important and special. Her love for these things was imparted to both my sister and me. As our children were growing up, at times we would have formal dinners so that they could learn how to conduct themselves. Our son would seat his sister, and we would teach proper use of utensils, going through the different ways of serving and handling food. We did this so that our children would know how to respond and react if they were ever invited to a very important event. Both of them have had opportunities to use this type of teaching. They have been in the presence of leaders of nations and did not feel embarrassed because of a lack of training. They are now training their children these same things which they learned. We must pass on to the generations following the training that we have acquired.

- 6. How to work** The book of Proverbs says much about work ethic and slothfulness. Left without training, children naturally tend to avoid learning to work with their hands and minds. We must work alongside our children at times and show them what we expect them to do. Learning to work hard always has benefit later in life. So many enter adulthood with little practical work experience. This brings limitations that so few

seem to overcome. Our children will bless us later as we train them to do hard work.

When I was growing up at home, my dad had a big garden to help feed his big family. Especially after a nice rainfall he would send us into the garden to pull all the weeds. It was a boring task for me and seemed never-ending, not to mention the sore back, knees, and hands. Somehow I lived through the experience.

Years later after I was married and had my own family, I also planted a big garden. My son had much the same attitude toward my garden that I had toward my father's garden. Now my son is married with his own family, garden, and many of the same attitudes in his children toward his garden as I had toward my father's garden. However, I have noticed that as each generation matures a bit, they are able to appreciate knowing how to work with their hands.

Even though he is not a trained carpenter, because he learned to work hard and use his hands, my son has been able to build his own house, which has saved his family thousands of dollars of debt. Should we deny our children the opportunity for such ultimate blessings, even though they may resist us at the time we are giving them this type of training?

- 7. How to handle finances wisely** Jesus said that if a man is not faithful in handling finances, then who will commit to his trust the true riches? (Luke 16:11) Mismanagement of finances often

increases tension in marital relationships. Severe limitations and long-term bondage can plague a person who has not learned to handle financial affairs properly. What a wonderful privilege it is to train our children to properly handle money and use it for the purposes for which God intended it!

When our children first began to receive money as birthday and Christmas gifts, we taught them God's law of tithing. As they began to practice this at such a young age, they never faced the conflicts that I see so many older, new Christians face in learning to trust God and obey in this matter. As children are instructed and guided to have godly perspectives in finance, they can go on to know this truth: "*The blessing of the Lord, it maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow with it*" (Proverbs 10:22).

- 8. How to be involved in a conversation and take interest in others** Many children find it very awkward to carry on a conversation. As they receive training on what to talk about and what is inappropriate in certain circumstances, it will boost their confidence. Learning to ask appropriate questions can greatly facilitate the flow of conversation, as well as give others the sense of your interest.

- 9. Preparation for marriage** Most children will marry eventually. So often, as the children pass through adolescence, they are more concerned with finding a mate than they

are in preparing themselves for matrimonial union with whomever God chooses. Often, when they do enter into marriage, they are ill prepared for the responsibility that goes with it.

If parents, when rearing their children, would only project their child's behavior and habits down the road of time into marriage and visualize how certain attitudes and conduct could become problems, they would know more clearly how to train the child. In a measure, the way a child responds to his parents and siblings is much the same as he will respond to his partner in marriage. How much easier it is to deal with certain problems when the children are young than for their mates to face the same problem with them in marriage.

God has given parents control of their children. This same type of influence does not exist in marriage. As parents are faithful to consider all their children's needs to prepare them for marriage, God will see to it that they are matched with someone who is as prepared as they are.

10. Preparation for God's purpose Perhaps the highest purpose parents can have is to prepare their children to fulfill that plan which God has designed for their lives. Some parents have vision for their children to become only what they themselves are. Perhaps the father is a shoemaker and he wants his son to be a shoemaker.

We must seek the Lord and find a general direction which God purposes for our children. While we may not know the specifics, we can receive a general sense of the direction their life is appointed to go and help train them and direct them toward that. Our ultimate satisfaction as parents will come as we know that our child has fulfilled God's will and has received His approval. God can give parents His wisdom in order to properly prepare their children for His plan for their lives if the parents ask Him.

Many other topics could be added to this list. As parents look ahead in their children's lives, the Holy Spirit will quicken what is needed for each individual child to properly prepare him to fulfill God's will for his life. Be courageous as parents to narrow your children in the way they should go. Some negative, resistive responses from them are unavoidable, but diligent parents will rejoice in the good fruit in the lives of their children in days to come. As the children become established in life they will thank you for leading them to the narrow way that leads to more abundant life.

CHAPTER 15

Instruction, Discipline, and Correction

For Their Good

“Though he were a Son (the Son of God), yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered” (Hebrews 5:8). As the Son of God, Jesus was perfect and complete in every way. As the son of man, in His humanity, He learned obedience in the flesh through the things He suffered. Our children will learn obedience through the same process. All children need correction at times.

One of God’s purposes for correction is to teach our children that disobedience and rebellion always cause pain and suffering. Hebrews 12:9-10 says, *“Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness.”* Parents tend to lean upon their own understanding in the matter of correcting their children. They do what seems best in their own thinking. Some parents only seek to stop a child’s misbehavior when they have reached the end of their patience, have become fully irritated and provoked, and are ready to vent their anger on the child. The true purpose for correction is to do what is the very best for the children and cause them to profit the most by instruction and discipline.

Let's face it—we often really do not know what is best for them.

God always chastens us for our profit. His correction is always for our very best if we accept it. Parents must seek the Lord and receive His wisdom in order to provide this beneficial correction for their children. The Holy Spirit can lead us into all truth even in this area of our need (John 14:17,26).

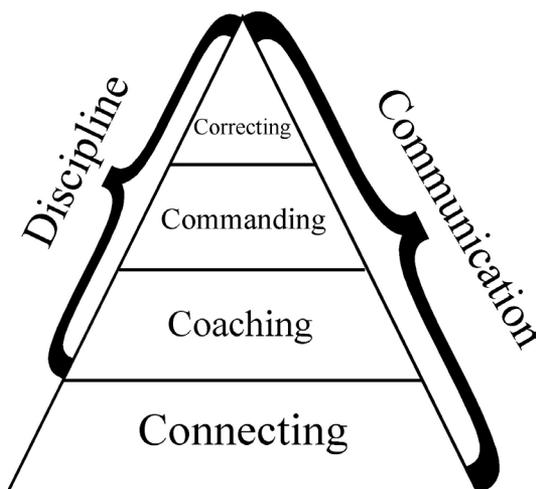
God wants to give grace to parents to have somewhat of a vision or understanding of His purpose for their children's lives. We, as parents, must look down the pathway of their lives and see what aspects of their behavior or attitudes will cause them to miss the plan God has ordained for their lives if we leave those areas uncorrected. With wisdom received from the Holy Spirit, parents can discipline and correct their children, not for the parents' own pleasure, but for the children's benefit. Even though correction often comes through suffering, the purpose is educational and corrective, not punitive.

Administering Correction God's Way

Many ideas are floating around concerning child discipline and correction. As we have observed many situations over a long period of time, we have come to the conclusion that only God's ways work. In the book of Proverbs, God has given us a number of verses that give us distinctive instruction in this very important matter. When a child rebels and needs correction, his parents can turn to Proverbs to be encouraged with what God's Word teaches on this subject. *"A wise son heareth his father's instruction: but a scorner heareth not rebuke"* (Proverbs 13:1).

Love is our reason for correcting our children. Children must know that we love them before we can effectively administer correction to them. Love must be conveyed through communication with our children. Rapport must be established. If parents do not make the investment of time to establish good lines of communication with each child, effective correction will not result. We must spend much time sharing and allowing them to share so that we connect with one another. My son, Rob, has developed this diagram that portrays the relationship and amount of time needed in bringing our children to correction. Connecting with them in communication and sharing is the foundation for everything else.

Parent-Child Relationships



Distinct, repetitive instruction or coaching must be given to children so that they understand clearly what is required of them. We cannot expect them to know what is correct without intense instruction in every area of their lives. Until they know what is expected of them, they cannot be corrected.

Instruction must be very assertive. Genesis 18:19 says, *“For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment; that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him.”* God was able to bring to pass His promises to Abraham and Sarah because Abraham *“commanded his children”* in the way they should go. He was very concise as to what he expected of them. *“This is the way, walk ye in it”* (Isaiah 30:21).

God has purposed that we be firm and declare His absolutes as we instruct our children. Some parents have an apologetic attitude toward their children or feel that they have no right to direct or command their children and so allow them to choose for themselves. God has placed parents in control and they must take that responsibility seriously. Children need specific instruction and control from their parents or they will become very insecure and lack self-control.

When our children have been concisely and clearly instructed but refuse and rebel against that instruction, then correction must be administered to them. At this point many parents are in a dilemma as to what should be done. Some parents beg, barter, threaten, yell, or reject their children. Others make such statements as, “Daddy doesn’t like it when you do that” or “Mommy is upset with you.” Responses such as these can be taken as rejection by the child. They need assurance that

we are in control and can help them change. We must help them gain control of themselves so they will obey. Many times they are not able to change by themselves. They need our help and we need God's help. God gives very specific instruction for parents who are willing to obey Him.

Proverbs 13:24 tells us, "*He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes.*" As this verse points out, correction is an act of love, not a reaction of anger and frustration. Parents must have control of their own emotions before they can properly correct their child and do what is best for him. If there is a loss of control and reaction to the child in anger or frustration rather than in love, the situation can become one of child abuse rather than correction.

The old English word "betimes" used in this verse means that a parent responds to his child's rebellion without delay. Ecclesiastes 8:11 tells us, "*Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.*" They must be dealt with while the matter is fresh and before it is repeated enough to become a habit in them and their heart becomes hardened.

When children need to be chastened, God has prescribed the rod for correction by spanking. Although in training a toddler not to touch things, a parent may slap his fingers gently and say "No," in general it is best not to try to correct by hitting with our hand. God says to use the rod, or in other words, a stick. I once witnessed a child sitting beside his father in church. When the father raised his hand to put his arm around his son, the child flinched as though his father would hit him on the head. Obviously, the child was accustomed to this type of correction or he would not have

reacted as he did. He showed great relief when he realized his father was only showing affection. This demonstrates why God wants parents to use the rod and not their hands for correction. Their hands are to be used show affection.

Notice that God indicates a course of action that does not include pulling hair, scratching, biting, pinching, kicking, or sending them to their rooms. These reactions are not correction and only serve to make the child angry or to feel rejected by their parents. These methods do not free them in their hearts from the problem.

Proverbs 19:18 tells us, “*Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying.*” When a vehicle is launched into outer space, a certain “window of opportunity” exists for the launch. If it is not launched during that period of time, it must be postponed until another window of opportunity presents itself. Many situations in life have these windows of opportunity which we must learn not to allow to pass by before it is too late. Certainly, child training and correction has its windows of opportunity. We must not let these slip away or our children will become hardhearted and set on a course in life which is not good.

Angeline and I visited a country where the people believe that children lack sufficient understanding to be corrected until they are seven years old. By this age, they are well set on an out-of-control course that proves to be difficult to turn in the right direction. If parents are diligent during the difficult time of the early years of their children’s lives, they will usually find the going much easier later, although it is essential to be faithful until the children are ready to leave home. As children enter adolescence, many parents find they are dealing with correcting attitudes rather than just actions.

Every mistake does not demand a spanking, but willful disobedience must be stopped. If they are not able to gain self-control, parents must help them by correction as God has commanded. Both of our children were in their mid- to late-teen years when they received their last spankings. By this time, they rarely needed this kind of intervention in their lives. The assurance was there, however, that if they could not keep themselves under proper control we would be faithful to assist them.

Often parents are impressed by the fact that children are sorry for their rebellion and manifest it by crying. Crying is not the goal in correcting our children. Stopping their willful disobedience is the reason we must be faithful to spank them. One time, I realized during a correction session with one of my children that he would cry especially loud, trying to make me think that I had severely inflicted pain upon him. On the next occasion of correction, as he was bent over ready to receive his spanking, I lifted my stick and then hesitated. The child followed my rhythm and let out a bloodcurdling cry just as he thought I would be hitting him. However, my stick was still in the air and I had not yet struck him. I paused and warned him that I was not impressed with his crying, and that I would not allow my emotions to change my obedience to the Lord and my love for him.

Proverbs 20:30 says, *“The blueness of a wound cleanseth away evil: so do stripes the inward parts of the belly.”* Properly administered spankings accomplish a depth of inward cleansing of guilt and evil. Children usually know they are wrong when they have transgressed their boundaries. They feel miserable and want to be free. Although no one likes to be chastened, everyone appreciates the inner freedom that results.

On one occasion, I asked a father how his correction session with his son turned out. His son had committed a serious transgression which required a spanking by God's Word. He replied that he did not give his son a spanking because his son cried and said he was sorry. He may have been sorry, but that did not release him from the guilt he carried.

How cruel parents are to their children when they do not love them enough to free them from guilt by properly correcting them. Sending them to their rooms and separating them from the rest of the family often causes deep wounds and anger in children. God's ways are far superior to the best that man can reason. Often we have witnessed the joy and freedom in a child who has been freed from his inward bondage by proper, loving correction.

Free Them from Foolishness

Another scripture in Proverbs gives some very important insights. Proverbs 22:15 tells us, "*Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him.*" This verse says that foolishness is bound in their hearts. The word "bound" in the Hebrew means "tied, intertwined together, or rooted." In Luke 3:9, John the Baptist preached that God's purpose is to go to the root of the problem and deal with it there. Foolishness is rooted in children's hearts and the rod of correction will drive it far from them. What types of actions and attitudes in our children can be categorized as foolishness? Let us look at some scriptures which show the nature of this foolishness.

Proverbs 5:23 "*He shall die without instruction; and in the greatness of his folly he shall go astray.*" The word "folly" used here is the same word foolishness. God is saying that

foolishness is that which causes one to go astray from the right way.

Proverbs 12:23 *“A prudent man concealeth knowledge: but the heart of fools proclaimeth foolishness.”* 15:2 *“The tongue of the wise useth knowledge aright: but the mouth of fools poureth out foolishness.”* Foolishness in the heart pours forth through the mouth. A child’s conversation will reveal the foolishness of his heart. Parents must be faithful to bring correction to free the child from this foolishness.

Proverbs 13:16 *“Every prudent man dealeth with knowledge: but a fool layeth open his folly.”* 15:21 *“Folly is joy to him that is destitute of wisdom: but a man of understanding walketh uprightly.”* When a person has obtained wisdom, his decisions and conduct will manifest it. When his heart is full of foolishness, he will display a lack of understanding and discretion.

Proverbs 14:17 *“He that is soon angry dealeth foolishly.”* 14:29 *“He that is slow to wrath is of great understanding: but he that is hasty of spirit exalteth folly.”* Foolishness is exhibited by a lack of control of a person’s spirit. Anger rages in him and must be dealt with and stopped.

As parents are faithful to deal with foolishness in their children, God says the rod of correction will drive that foolishness far from them. We must be full of faith to believe that God’s ways are right.

As one of our children was passing through first grade, this child developed an intense dislike of going to school. At various times this was manifest by complaining or crying. One day, this child returned home after a few minutes, saying

that “something” said to return home. I began to search for the cause of this mysterious dilemma. Could it be that other children or even the teacher was mistreating my dear little child? Was the cause perhaps even spiritual in nature with some kind of spirit harassing my precious one?

I was psychoanalyzing the situation one day when the Spirit of God spoke to me and said, “*Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him*” (Proverbs 22:15). God was calling the situation foolishness. I was wondering if perhaps my child needed a psychologist when God said what was needed was the rod of correction. As I obeyed the Lord, the foolishness in the child was broken. To give a balance, we realize that some children do have special needs, but far too often, the root of the problem is foolishness. God will give us knowledge and wisdom to free our children from such horrible bondage. We must seek Him for the wisdom that comes from above (James 1:5; 3:17).

All children need correction. Even though they do not like correction and may seek to resist it, deep in their hearts they really have the desire to have someone stop their foolishness and help them gain self-control. God commands parents not to withhold correction from their children. The indication of this scripture is that we can save them from spiritual death. If we correct them, they will not die. God declares that we can deliver their soul from hell. What a startling promise this is! May we always consider this whenever we are tempted to let something pass that should be corrected with spanking. Worldly psychology tries to make one believe that a child’s personality will be warped if he is corrected in a godly manner. This could not be further from the truth. God created us and He knows perfectly what is best for us.

Satan seeks to influence and control our children. If he can capture them at a young age, he often has them for eternity. A man I knew had an orphanage for young boys. One particular six-year-old child was very naughty. As this man bent the boy over his knee to give him a spanking, the boy spoke with a man's voice and said, "He is going to kill **us**." This was not a grammatical mistake! The voice was actually the voice of demon spirits which were influencing the boy! The man declared to them that he was going to drive them out of the boy through spanking. Children can be influenced by the powers of darkness and need their parents' help and protection. Spanking helps children gain self-control to resist the powers of evil that would seek to control their lives and take them to hell.

Proverbs 29:15, 17 tells us, "*The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame. Correct thy son, and he shall give thee rest; yea, he shall give delight unto thy soul.*" Each child is an individual and differs from the other. We must understand that all children have problems in their lives and need help and godly correction to overcome their individual problems. They are unable to gain self-control without parental intervention in their lives. Reproving and spanking them will help them receive true godly wisdom. If left to their own devices and ways, children bring shame to their mother. God has intended that a child bring joy, honor, and delight to his parents. This happens when parents seek God's ways and obey Him.

We have had parents call at times to say that they have become angry with a child and embarrassed to admit that they actually have feelings of hatred toward their own flesh and blood. Parents who disobey God will lose their peace. If correction is neglected, parents will have no rest in their

spirits or minds. The way to enter into that place of tranquility and satisfaction with an out-of-control child is to love him enough to give him what he needs in the way of correction. Correction of children is a God-given responsibility of parents and a God-given right to the children. We are not saying that parents should vent their anger on the child. Parent must realize that they have lost their peace and have become angry because they have disobeyed God. They can then objectively correct their child out of love and not frustration.

God's ways ultimately produce joy. For a time, circumstances can make it appear that God's ways will not produce the desired results. We can testify to you personally that God's ways are right. His Word will not fail if we seek Him and receive grace to obey Him. At one time, before Angeline and I understood the truths we are sharing with you, we wondered if our children would one day rebel and bring us sorrow, as we had seen happen in so many other families. This caused us to seek God and He gave the knowledge and wisdom that we needed. Our children have given us such delight. Thanks be to God! Obedience to God's ways continues to bring us great joy as our children are training and correcting our grandchildren according to God's Word.

How and When to Give a Spanking

We have never met any parents who enjoy giving a spanking. My parents would often try to comfort me by saying the spanking was more painful for them than for me. Now I understand this in a way that I could not at the time I was receiving their chastening. None of us wants to spank our children unnecessarily. Every mistake they make does not require a spanking. How can we discern what is needed and when?

There are times when children make true mistakes. They are trying to do what is right because they want to please you. Because they lack experience, training, and ability, they blunder at times. A parent would never spank a child because he accidentally tipped his drinking glass at the table and made a mess. Sometimes a parent must patiently work with a child to help him understand what is expected of him.

The distinction between situations is made when a child willfully rejects concise and repetitive instruction from his parents. Making a mistake or failing to understand what is expected differs dramatically from open rebellion. Resisting parental instruction challenges a parent's authority and must not go unanswered. Our children must come to understand that we love them enough to stop them from self-destruction through rebellion.

Once we have assessed a situation and it has become clear that the child needs a spanking, how do we proceed? The first step is to gain control of our emotions if we are upset or angry with the child. Discipline is an act of love, not a reaction of frustration. If a parent loses self-control, he can become a child abuser rather than one who lovingly corrects.

Then we recommend that the child be taken to a place where the parents and the child can be alone as much as possible so as not to make an unnecessary spectacle of the situation. A clear statement of the child's refusal to obey clear instruction must be made. Tell him why you are correcting him. Command him and tell him that he will not conduct himself in this manner, and that you are committed to help him change. Remember that God's method of correcting rebellion is by

spanking with a stick or paddle. Have him bend over while you spank him on the buttocks. Light offenses receive a light spanking and more serious defiance a greater infliction of suffering.

Give him time to cry and settle himself emotionally before you proceed. Then, train him to look you in the eyes and say he is sorry. We found that often a deep breaking took place as our children expressed their sorrow. At this point, reaffirming your love for your child gives him great comfort and security. Embrace him and tell him how much you love him. Once again, tell him that because you love him so much, you will not allow him to act the way he has.

Lastly, we would strongly encourage you, if at all possible, to be available to spend time and communicate with him. His spirit will be so open and responsive that you are drawn into closer fellowship and friendship with him.

Angeline:

We have known situations in which the parents just spanked for every little misdemeanor. This will eventually become so commonplace to a child that it will lose the effect which it was intended to have in their lives. It will also discourage them. Children will actually harden themselves to spankings. There are many parents who spank out of their own frustration and “punishment for breaking their rules,” instead of bringing correction in the child’s life. We kept our rod of correction in a certain place, and I would have my children go to retrieve this little item. While they were going, I would have time to “cool down” and be free of anger and frustration. I could administer the correction and then pray for them, hold them, reassure them, and encourage them that they would become all

that God intended them to be—righteous, law abiding, peaceful, obedient children.

How Old?

To what age do we spank our children? Many opinions and much controversy exist concerning this. However, when one examines scriptural instruction, it becomes clear that a child is to be under the authority of and in obedience to the parents until he marries. Ephesians 6:1-3 says, “*Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise; That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.*” This structure of authority and responsibility to obey the parents changes at marriage when a man leaves the authority of the parents to form a new authority structure over his own family, as seen in Genesis 2:24. “*Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.*” After marriage, the children should continue to honor the parents and to consider counsel and wisdom from them whenever possible.

If parents have been faithful to obey God in the earlier years, by the time the children reach the teen years, they have usually learned obedience and require much less spanking. However, if children continue to manifest roots of resistance and rebellion, they must not be left to themselves. Remember Proverbs 29:15, which says, “*The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame.*” We found it necessary to administer correction on rare occasions in the later teen years. Our children welcomed it in their spirit because they had come to see the benefit of God’s ways.

Angeline:

In dealing with our children as teenagers, we would give them a choice of what they would prefer. By the time they reach this age, children know right from wrong, but many times it is a bad attitude that must be dealt with. There would be times that I would say to them, "You need to get your attitude right." They would respond back, "What did I do wrong?" No outward action was evident, but there was that rebellious attitude. I would give them a choice either to get their attitude right or else we would pray that the Holy Spirit would allow the rebellion to come out in an action which no one could deny. If this wrong attitude continued, we would then pray together and within hours (or perhaps days later) it would come out in an action that no one could deny. Then we would administer the proper correction to them. Sometimes they would even ask us to spank them so that the rebellion in their hearts would be driven far from them.

God's Covenant with David

God made a promise to David that we want to be ours as well. If we will fully set our hearts after the Lord, I believe God will give us this promise found in 2 Samuel 7:12-15:

And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever. I will be his father, and he shall be my son. If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men: But my mercy shall not depart away from him, as I took it from Saul,

whom I put away before thee.” Psalms 89:30-33 also says, “If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments; If they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments; Then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless my lovingkindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail.

We certainly have a God-given responsibility to obey His Word and lead our children as God has spoken. However, there are times we can be negligent or unsure if the situation warrants a spanking. Psalms 27:10 reassures us that, “*When my father and my mother forsake me, then the LORD will take me up.*” Sometimes God himself will intervene for the sake of our children. Angeline and I faced several occasions when we knew it was God intervening to do our children good.

One such incident took place as the children were returning home from school. One of our children had stepped through the doorway out of the school when a snowball came flying through the air and hit our child in the face. When she arrived home, blood was smeared all over her face. We inquired as to what had happened. When the child said she was hit by a snowball, I went running out into the street expecting to find the kid who did this terrible deed to my child. I have often been so thankful I found no one there to accuse.

When I returned to the house, we were able to discern that it was a nosebleed and no serious damage had taken place. This incident did speak loudly and clearly to us. The snowball that was thrown and hit our child was thrown from the other side of a school bus parked in front of the school.

The snowball was lobbed over the bus without the thrower seeing any particular target. This situation carried similarity to the arrow wound received by King Ahab which led to his death. (1 Kings 22:34-37). God spoke to us and caused us to remember that the child had done something that needed to be corrected with a spanking before school the same morning. However, because the time to leave for school was approaching, it was decided to let the incident pass by. God did not let the situation go undealt with. We knew that this was His manner of correcting our child's disobedience.

Through the years, we have often recognized that when children have unusual injuries or sicknesses God may be taking situations in hand that the parents have neglected or overlooked.

Many years ago a father brought his daughter for prayer. She had the worst case of a certain disease the doctor had ever seen and he knew of no cure for her. As I prepared to pray, the Holy Spirit spoke to me and told me not to pray for her. This seemed most unusual and I hesitated. At that point I asked the father if we could pray for her a week later after I had time to seek the Lord and be certain of what I felt He was speaking to me.

A week later I shared with the father that the reason his daughter had this disease was because he had neglected to obey the Lord in correcting her. God was allowing this because he loved her and was correcting her, but if the father would obey the Lord she could be released from this.

Sometime during the following week we were invited to their home for dinner. I was wondering if he had received what the Lord was telling him. After dinner he began to

share that his daughter was having a difficult week because he was being faithful to correct her. He also said that all symptoms of her disease had left completely as he obeyed the Lord and corrected her. God loved her enough to correct her when her father failed.

We are not saying that every time a child becomes injured or sick God is judging him. However, parents would be wise to ask God why these circumstances occur, in case their own neglect is provoking these incidents.

Refusing Correction

God gives to parents wonderful promises that the children will continue to walk in God's ways and do what is right if the parents will train them in the right way. Occasionally there are exceptions. Deuteronomy 21:18-21 tells us,

If a man have a stubborn and rebellious son, which will not obey the voice of his father, or the voice of his mother, and that, when they have chastened him, will not hearken unto them: Then shall his father and his mother lay hold on him, and bring him out unto the elders of his city, and unto the gate of his place; And they shall say unto the elders of his city, This our son is stubborn and rebellious, he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton, and a drunkard. And all the men of his city shall stone him with stones, that he die: so shalt thou put evil away from among you; and all Israel shall hear, and fear.

Even after parents have been faithful to follow God's ways, there are a few children who will not receive correction and who rebel. While we do not stone them as in this account, they must be stopped for the sake of the parents and other

children in the family. Rebellion spreads like wildfire. We must go to the Lord with this type of child, praying that God will do whatever is necessary to subdue them. Remember that God loves them more than we do and He will do the least that is necessary to turn them from the pathways that lead to hell. Jesus said that it is better to be maimed rather than go to hell (Matthew 18:8). God usually will not intervene until we have obeyed His Word and fulfilled our responsibilities first.

Parentally Provoked Rebellion

Why do children rebel? I am certain I do not know all the reasons, but God's Word reveals a certain problem that should be a warning to all fathers. Ecclesiastes 11:9-10 says, *"Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment. Therefore remove sorrow from thy heart, and put away evil from thy flesh: for childhood and youth are vanity."*

The KJV of this verse uses the word "sorrow," but it seems that the Hebrew leans more toward the word "anger." This gives a new concept and understanding of problems that we see in young people. God is saying, "Go ahead, young man, sow your wild oats. Be rebellious. Do what you want to do. But understand that what you sow you will reap. There is judgment for all your actions." Then God gives the reason for this type of conduct. He reveals the root cause of rebellion, which is anger. "Remove anger from your heart because if you allow it to remain, it will be a governing force in your life that causes you to do things which will bring My judgment upon you."

God is addressing a young man's personal responsibility to remove anger from his life. But where does the anger come from in the first place? Children are not normally born angry. A solemn warning is written to fathers by Paul in his letters to both the Ephesian and Colossian churches. Ephesians 6:4 says, "*And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.*" Colossians 3:21 adds, "*Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged.*" Since God opened my understanding to this truth, I have many times witnessed parents provoking their children to anger. It seems that since the father has been given the responsibility as the head of the home, the responsibility for this falls on him. We will now look at a few of the ways that parents can provoke their children to anger.

Partiality

When a parent shows favoritism to one child over the others, the potential exists to create frustration in those less favored. Jacob favored Joseph in extremely obvious ways that created much tension among his sons. The anger in Joseph's brothers became so strong that some of them were willing to kill him. They finally sold him as a slave into Egypt.

While it is impossible to treat all children the same because of differences in age, sex, ability, and personality, parents must seek God in order to be impartial. James 4:17 instructs us that the wisdom that comes from God is without partiality. God can give us His wisdom to be impartial to our children and do the very best for each of them. Perhaps you experienced frustration because of parental favoritism toward another member of your family. God wants to meet you in the situation and free you from its effects. Sometimes

later in life, those who have been favored over others are less responsive to the parent who has favored them.

Broken Promises

We can all remember the anticipation of a coming event that our parents planned for us. Some statements that were never meant to be promises to a child can become promises in his mind. As parents, we must realize the importance of keeping promises that we have made to our children. Care must be taken not to allow the children to think of possibilities as a promise. We have observed that if a child perceives that his father has broken promises, the child can find difficulty in believing God will be faithful to keep His promises. If this becomes a pattern, it can lead to deep feelings of rejection and leave the child with a wounded spirit.

If a child perceives that his father has broken promises, it can negatively impact his trust in God's faithfulness.

Little or No Responsibility

Children usually need instruction and help in carrying responsibility. They need someone to demand that they fulfill certain expectations. When their responsibilities are defined, instruction is received, and Mom and Dad make them accountable, they will have a sense of accomplishment. If they are not given personal responsibility, frustration and anger develop along with a poor self-image. Everyone must learn to carry responsibility. Of course the level of responsibility increases at each stage of growth. Children can learn at a very early age if parents are willing to take

the time to train them. Of course, this will make it easier for the parents later.

No Privileges

As a child learns to carry responsibility, he must also be given corresponding privileges. We have heard it said that “All work and no play makes Johnny a dull boy.” If children are never allowed to make choices concerning things they want to do, this can also lead to resentment and anger, which can later be manifest in rebellion.

No Boundaries

Everyone needs and most people want boundaries around their lives. Boundaries define our territory of activities and give security as we remain in them. Children want to know how far they can go. They want someone to tell them, “No” when it is appropriate or, “Yes, you must.” Even though most children will test the boundaries to see how rigid and absolute they are, they long for someone to stop them and say, “No, you may not cross that line.” Many without godly understanding are seeking to destroy needed absolutes, but our children must have appropriate well-defined boundaries to help protect them.

Little or No Time Invested

Children are a long-term investment. If we invest in them when they are young, they will bring joy to us in the future. They will be fruitful and increase our eternal inheritance. If we become too busy with other things, our children will sense that they are not a priority. We must put God first in our lives before anyone or anything else. Our relationship with our

mate must be our next priority, then our children must come before everything else, including a career. I made a decision early in our marriage that my interests and hobbies would involve my family. There was no night out alone with “the boys.” Our children need time spent with them as part of the family group, but they also need individual time when they can share their hearts one on one. If we do not make time available to become their friends and allow them to share their hearts, they will find someone else, probably a peer, to share with. They will feel lonely, estranged from their parents, and angry as they enter adolescence. As a result of the time we invested in our children when they were growing up, they, along with their mates and our grandchildren, have become our best friends. What a joy and comfort to us as we grow older!

Many pastors have equated the ministry with their relationship with God. Because they have allowed the demands of the ministry to encroach upon God-given responsibilities to their wives and children, often their children are angry and rebellious. It is little wonder why God’s heart cries through the prophet in Malachi 4:6: *“And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.”*

Lacking Communication

As previously mentioned, children need to share their hearts with their parents. Time must be made available for this to take place. Parents must be willing to take an interest in their children’s lives and interests. A very helpful tool in communicating is asking appropriate questions. We always sought to inquire about our children’s day at school. We took time to let them share about every event that was significant

to them. Often they needed counsel and direction in handling situations they faced. We arranged evenings when we would talk together of their wishes and aspirations for the future. If children are not given opportunity to share their hearts in communication with their parents, they often turn inward and become hardhearted toward their parents. They often tend to lean toward undue interest in hobbies or pets, or they prefer being alone rather than being with the family. As parents make opportunities for communication, they are able to receive vital information necessary for leading the children well and doing what is best for them.

Little Praise, Approval, or Affection

We all want and need praise, approval, and affection. It means the most when it comes from the ones closest to us. Letting our children know we are pleased with them is of utmost importance. Research reveals to us more and more the beneficial effects of touch and showing affection. Remember, when we praise others and minister to them we glorify the Lord (Psalm 50:23). A major part of our fulfillment when we stand before the Lord will be to hear Him say, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant... enter thou into the joy of thy Lord” (Matthew 25:21). Our children feel wanted, loved, satisfied, and fulfilled when we give them praise, approval, and affection. If we fail at these things, they often develop a wounded spirit and an angry disposition, feeling that they are never able to please us.

Lack of Gentleness

King David declared, “Thy gentleness hath made me great” (Psalm 18:35). In years past, men were commonly referred to as “gentlemen.” Children need strong, stable leadership that

is unwavering but also gentle. If they are handled roughly with crudeness and harshness, they will, in most cases, be provoked to anger and rebellion. Our gentleness will make them great.

Yelling

Reverend David Wilkerson, the founder of Teen Challenge Ministries, conducted extensive interviews with teens. He asked what was the one single thing most disliked about their home life. The one answer he received most was this: a mother who yelled at them. Yelling is not correction but only leads to frustration and resistance. Proverbs 15:1 tells us, “*A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger.*” Fathers as well as mothers yell at the children, in some cases. The father must overcome his own yelling problem or help his wife overcome hers if she has this problem. Yelling often stems from a frustration toward the children when one is not faithful to discipline them properly. Proverbs 29:17 tells us, “*Correct thy son, and he shall give thee rest; yea, he shall give delight unto thy soul.*”

Inconsistency and Disobedience of the Parents

Children have a keen sense of justice, especially when it comes to their rights. Adults learn to overlook and ignore shortcomings, but children can be impartial judges of others’ actions. Children are very aware of whether or not their parents are living up to what they are teaching and being taught. The children know if their parents are being obedient to the Lord or living a life of hypocrisy. I am convinced that one of the reasons children raised in a Christian home turn away from the Lord in the teen years is because they have witnessed their parents’ unfaithfulness and disobedience to

the Word of God. Remember, if your children are sitting in church with you, they will see if you are living what you are being taught. If you reject and rebel against God's Word, even by neglect, your children will often do so as well.

Most parents would not knowingly provoke their children to anger, and yet many teenagers are venting their anger in rebellion that will cause them to reap difficult judgments in the future. May we as parents prayerfully consider what we may be doing that might provoke our children in such a way.

Angeline:

When Jackie Kennedy Onassis died, there were many quotes published, which she had spoken during her lifetime. One particular one was so very interesting concerning this very well-known family. She said, "If you live your whole life with great achievements and your children don't turn out right, you have nothing. It is not fair to expect children who are in the limelight to turn out right if they are raised by others, other than their own parents. If you bungle raising your children it doesn't matter what else you do." The making of a life is infinitely more important than our social status or making a living. Also, the relationships you have with your children are only as good as the degree of involvement.

My own mother always would say to me, "You grow up with your children." Learn from the things that you may have lacked as a child so that your children do not have that same lack in their lives. As your children become adults, they will become like peers to you. At that time you will not be in a position to "command" them; instead, you request and entreat them, as you would close friends. Don't try to

hold on to them as “little children.” If you do, you will distort your relationship.

CHAPTER 16

Looking to the Future

Understanding God's Purpose

The goal of parents is to prepare their children to be successful in life and fulfill the purpose for which God created them. Parents need some measure of vision and understanding of the Lord's goals for their children so that they are able to help set them in the proper vocational direction. We should not allow ourselves to impose a personal dream upon them that we wish them to fulfill. We must seek God as our children are growing up so that we will have wisdom to encourage them in the right direction. Their own interests and abilities will give us some clues at times. It must be instilled in the children from a young age that God created them for a specific purpose which they should desire to fulfill.

Children need much natural care and training. Often parents have the sense that they are not able to meet every need their children have. We must realize that there are some aspects of their lives that only God can meet. Prayer must be a major part of our investment in our children. We want to be like Aaron, the High Priest who carried the names of the children of Israel on his breastplate when he went in to the presence of the Lord in the tabernacle, as seen in Exodus 28:29. *“And Aaron shall bear the names of the children of Israel in the breastplate of judgment upon his heart, when he goeth in unto the holy place, for a memorial before the LORD continually.”* We must bring our children's names to the Lord continually in prayer. Sometimes only God Himself can give answers and intervene in perplexing circumstances.

We can be assured of His faithfulness if we are diligent to do as He has instructed us.

Protection in the Home

The world abounds with all kinds of negative and harmful influences which we cannot control or change for the present time. However, one realm where we do have control and carry the influence to make changes is in our home. God has intended our home to be a sanctuary from the world. The presence of God and His joy should permeate the atmosphere where we live. We must never allow into our home anything that would cause the presence of God to flee from our dwelling place. Our dwelling place must be His dwelling place. He is a holy God and dwells among those who are holy.

In consideration of what we allow to enter our home, we must remember Paul's admonition: "*Abstain from all appearance of evil*" (1 Thessalonians 5:22). King David, who was a man after God's heart, made this declaration in Psalms 101:2-3: "*I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way. O when wilt thou come unto me? I will walk within my house with a perfect heart. I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes: I hate the work of them that turn aside; it shall not cleave to me.*"

Our modern world has so many inventions that can be used for good or evil. To maintain a godly atmosphere in our home, we must strictly control TV, videos, books, magazines, music, and computer usage so as not to set any wicked thing before our eyes. Our bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit, and we never want to do anything to offend Him and defile ourselves.

Moral Protection

God wants us to provide a spiritual covering for our children that will give them moral protection. All too often parents tend to be naïve to dangers that exist and do not set up proper defenses.

First of all, we must be certain that everything is pure in our own lives, both past and present. If the parents are not free from iniquities of immorality, how can the children be unaffected by the same? Parents must seek the Lord to become free from iniquities that can affect children to the third and fourth generations (Exodus 34:7). Sometimes people feel that a hidden sin in their lives will not have an effect upon the children. However, if we understand the spiritual realm, we realize that hidden sin allows an opening for an unclean spirit of immorality to influence the children. Strong demonic powers, whose forte is illicit sexual lust and perversion, seek openings to destroy the children and family life. Pornography is empowered by enticing and deceptive spirits. It can open the door for terrible things to happen to the family. Do not allow it into your life.

King David chose to sin with Bathsheba. Scripture teaches us that sin is deceitful (Hebrews 13:3) and causes a certain blindness and insensitivity. This was certainly the case with David. Even though he had repented, he was not perceptive to the danger to which his daughter, Tamar, was to be subjected. Second Samuel 13:6 tells us, *“So Amnon lay down, and made himself sick: and when the king was come to see him, Amnon said unto the king, I pray thee, let Tamar my sister come, and make me a couple of cakes in my sight, that I may eat at her hand.”* When you read this scripture,

don't you immediately feel an alarm go off in your spirit? David should have sensed that Amnon's spirit and motives were not right. This was actually an odd request and should have alerted David, but his spiritual senses were dulled by his own past immorality.

Parents must be aware that the children are susceptible to molestation. Studies show that many incidents of molestation involve family members or friends. Children need to be warned. At a young age they should be instructed that if anyone tries to touch them in an improper way (which should be explained to them) they are to come to you and tell you right away. Parents need to be mindful of where their children are and what is happening at all times.

Before age five, children are unaware of their surroundings and are vulnerable to many kinds of danger. Their parents must be aware of them at all times. We realize that we must trust the Lord to care for them, but He has given us the responsibility to guard and protect them.

Older children are often allowed to be in situations that are potentially dangerous. Genesis 34:1-2 shows us this: "*And Dinah the daughter of Leah, which she bare unto Jacob, went out to see the daughters of the land. And when Shechem the son of Hamor the Hivite, prince of the country, saw her, he took her, and lay with her, and defiled her.*" When Dinah was allowed freedom to be with these other girls, she was also placed in a vulnerable situation in which she was raped. Parents should be very mindful of who their children's friends are and should monitor their activities.

Often parents feel uneasy about situations but talk themselves out of cautions that are often provoked by the Holy Spirit.

Parents can be overly protective, but we have observed that most parents are not cautious enough in providing proper safety for their children. We are living in a perverse world that is quickly approaching the intensity of the wicked atmosphere found in Sodom and Gomorrah. Parents must adjust to the times in which we live and provide adequate protection for each child.

Setting a Goal

According to custom in the Western world, in a marriage ceremony, the father walks his daughter down the aisle in her white dress and, at the appropriate moment, presents her to the bridegroom. All of this is very symbolic and is indicative of several points we want to consider. The father is demonstrating by walking her down the aisle that this girl has been his responsibility, and he has the right to give her to whom he thinks best. He is making an unspoken declaration that he has cared for and guarded his daughter diligently. He has trained her and protected her so that she is pure.

Many in this adulterous generation place little or no value on remaining morally pure for marriage. Virginity is almost despised by some, but God knows what is best and emphasizes the importance of remaining pure. We strongly encourage parents to set a goal of training and protecting their children in such a manner so that they can remain pure for marriage or for whatever other purpose God may have for them. First Thessalonians 4:3-8 says,

For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour; Not in the lust of

concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God: That no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter: because that the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also have forewarned you and testified. For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness. He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God, who hath also given unto us his Holy Spirit.

God expects us to learn self-control so that we do not give ourselves to concupiscence or uncontrolled lusts as the world does. This is a matter of honor—honoring God, honoring our own body as the temple of the Holy Spirit, and honoring the girl and her father.

Fornication defrauds or takes something that belongs to someone else. It takes away a girl's right to be a virgin for marriage and her father's responsibility to keep her pure, and despises God and His laws. Leviticus 21:9 says, "*And the daughter of any priest, if she profane herself by playing the whore, she profaneth her father: she shall be burnt with fire.*" If a girl plays the whore, she dishonors her priestly father. All Christians are called to be priests unto God (1 Peter 2:9).

If a girl who becomes involved in fornication eventually marries another man, the man who took her in fornication has stolen that which belongs solely to the man she marries. When fornication has occurred, problems usually are created for the marriage. A certain distrust and questioning can create tension. So often a woman who has been involved in fornication finds it difficult to respond to her husband later in marriage. Her husband, instead of leading her to respond, is accustomed to just taking what he wants. It seems that Satan

has purposed to make sex look inviting before marriage, but then he seeks to make it look ugly or destroy it in marriage. God wants to spare His people all of this. True love can contain itself and wait. Genesis 29:20 tells us, “*And Jacob served seven years for Rachel; and they seemed unto him but a few days, for the love he had to her.*” Because he loved Rachel, Jacob found that the necessary time of waiting passed quickly.

Courtship - Keeping Pure for Marriage

How can a person abstain from fornication and remain pure for marriage? Western world dating practices lead a couple on a pathway that often ends in fornication because a couple is allowed to go out alone. Even Christian couples are often allowed to do as they please, as long as they do not step over the line and become involved in fornication.

The couple often say to their parents, “Don’t you trust us?” as though the parents have a God-given responsibility to blindly trust their children. Years ago as a youth leader, I was confronted with this thinking. I quickly assured the young people that I certainly did not trust them in this regard. I do not trust any flesh. The spirit may be willing but the flesh is weak. Often, Christians feel that they cannot fail because they are Christians, but Christians are made of flesh and flesh can fail. If they do not understand certain principles, they will certainly violate God’s laws and bring judgment and difficulty upon themselves.

We previously stated that children should share their hearts with their parents and not with other young people. When a man and woman share their hearts with one another in communication, it can lead to touch which can lead to

sexual intimacy. Samson shared his heart with Delilah and lost the power of God (Judges 16:4-17). Proverbs 23:26 says, “*My son, give me thine heart, and let thine eyes observe my ways.*” Young people must share their hearts with their parents until they are formally engaged to be married. Successfully married couples have learned the importance of opening all thoughts and dreams to one another, but this must not take place until a couple knows that they are for one another and have committed to each other with an engagement for marriage.

God has created us so that a couple who loves and cares for one another enjoys holding hands, embracing, and kissing. However, this physical activity quickly lights fires of lust and leads to a couple’s giving themselves to one another completely.

In his book, Not a Sometimes Love, Keith Korstjens gives a very important insight. He expresses the difficulty he had while caring for his quadriplegic wife in responding to her intimately. After caring for her every need, he found it difficult to respond sexually to her until he realized that touch (holding hands, kissing, caressing, etc.) lit the fires of desire toward her so that they could become one and complete in intimacy. How important it is for all married couples to remember this! But parents with unmarried children must understand and remember this also. “*It is good for a man not to touch a woman*” (1 Corinthians 7:1). When couples are allowed to be alone and touch one another before marriage, how can we expect the fires not to burn and get out of control? We are commanded to “*flee fornication*” (1 Corinthians 6:18). Joseph did this very thing when he was entrapped by Potiphar’s wife—he ran as if for his life. Yet, many of

today's Christian couples practice that which speeds them to fornication. God wants to change our thinking and cultural practice.

Angeline and I were directed by the Holy Spirit to handle this whole matter differently with our children. We are so thankful to the Lord and pleased with the results. Before our children entered the teen years, we shared with them our desire to help them find God's choice in a mate and keep them morally pure. We asked each of them if they would be willing to make a vow to us that they would not marry without our permission and approval.

Whenever they became interested in someone in particular, we would invite him or her to our house, usually in a group initially, so that they could have the opportunity to become better acquainted. This was all done in our presence. There was never any becoming serious or "going steady" at this stage. As each of them matured and became prepared and positioned for marriage, we practiced what might be called courtship rather than dating. As it became apparent to all of us the mate that God was choosing for each of them, we provided family activities so that not only they but also we could have opportunity to fellowship and get to know this person. They were not allowed physical touch lest the fires burn out of control. They were always escorted in the car when traveling anywhere.

The initial goal of a couple's spending time with one another should be to edify and encourage one another in the Lord. Everyone has social needs for interaction with others, but it is of utmost importance to find out where someone is spiritually. If a couple is not on the same wave length spiritually, it would be foolish for them to entertain any

romantic ideas. God forbids a Christian to marry a non-Christian (2 Corinthians 6:14) but other differences often exist that make a couple not right for one another. God wants a couple to be equally yoked together.

When parents are involved in the couple's friendship, they can all become friends together. Even though the parents, when their children marry, must keep boundaries and stay out of the children's marriage, God has intended a lifetime friendship to develop. Angeline and I have the joy of having our children and their mates as best friends. Our children's mates are like our own children in many respects.

If children are willing to commit to not marrying without both sets of parents' approval, God can help them receive His choice of a mate for life. God has intended that a couple not marry without receiving consent from both sets of parents. The parents know their own child and can see positive and negative attributes in a potential partner. Even unsaved parents are sensitive to realize if their child is not matched properly.

Children are to honor their parents always. They are to obey their parents before they marry and be under their spiritual covering. Perhaps the last step children take in submission to their parents is concerning the confirmation of whom they marry. If a person is seeking God's best and is under obedience to his or her parents, God will cause everyone to know His choice.

CHAPTER 17

The Permanence of Marriage

God's Original Plan

In the beginning of this world, God created Adam and placed him in the Garden of Eden. After a time, God saw that it was not good that man should dwell alone. In His wisdom and care, God created Eve to be Adam's wife. God gave Adam no options but made Eve to the specifications of what was needed by Adam. God created only one woman for Adam because He intended that Adam have only one wife. Had God created several women for Adam, one could assume that God intended him to have multiple wives. God fully intended marriage to be a monogamous, heterosexual relationship.

If conflict arose in their marriage, divorce was never a consideration. Remarriage to another partner was impossible because there were no other options. God arranged all the circumstances like this because He wanted Adam and Eve to be a pattern marriage.

When it comes to conflicts in marriage, it seems that so many people opt for the unknown. The option of escaping out of the problem or starting afresh with someone else is all too inviting for many. Rather than seeking God for answers and working through the difficulties, so many venture into the unknown territory of divorce or, even worse, remarriage.

From the beginning God never intended mankind to consider a way out of conflicts that arise but rather to work through

them to harmony and continuing commitment to one another. In the community where I grew up as a child, divorce and remarriage were rare. How times have changed! How people have changed! God-ordained family life is unknown to multitudes in these days. Generations of children are being devastated as parents in broken homes toss the children back and forth like inanimate possessions. The church certainly must bear its share of responsibility for this deplorable situation. In the mid to late 1960's, much of the church began to change its view of marriage permanence, resulting in wide-scale destruction of marriage and family life.

God has not changed His mind! He established marriage to be a permanent covenant and commitment broken only by death. Marriage is referred to as "holy matrimony" because God calls it honorable (Hebrews 13:4).

God's View of Divorce and Remarriage

So compelling is our responsibility to maintain the unbreakable covenant of marriage that divorce and remarriage to another is called adultery by God. Each of the following verses declares specifically that divorcing your mate and marrying another constitutes adultery. There can be no honest controversy on these scriptures whatever.

"But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery" (Matthew 5:32).

"And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery" (Matthew 19:9).

“And he saith unto them, Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her. And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery” (Mark 10:11-12).

“Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery: and whosoever marrieth her that is put away from her husband committeth adultery” (Luke 16:18).

“For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man” (Romans 7:2-3).

God hates divorce. *“For the LORD, the God of Israel, saith that he hateth putting away”* (Malachi 2:16). Jesus confirmed that which God established in the beginning. In Matthew 19:4-6 Jesus quoted Genesis 2:24 and then added, *“What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.”* Scripture is consistent with itself. God’s Word cannot contradict itself.

Many have sought scriptural basis for their desire to divorce and remarry. The “exception clause” found in Matthew 5:32, “saving for the cause of fornication” and again in Matthew 19:9, “except it be for fornication” is often cited and interpreted to mean that Jesus allowed divorce in cases of adultery or moral uncleanness. The controversy centers in the interpretation of the Greek word *porneia* which is translated

“fornication” in these verses. We will look at several different views concerning the so called “exception clause.”

Modern Thought on Divorce

Erasmian View

The view allowing divorce and remarriage was originally set forth by Desiderius Erasmus of Rotterdam in the 16th century. Before this, the church consistently held the view that the marriage covenant is permanent until death, that divorce is prohibited by God, and remarriage while one’s mate is alive is adultery.

Erasmus introduced a contrary doctrine that is held by many today. He used the exception clause to declare that Jesus allowed divorce and remarriage in cases where adultery had taken place and that the “innocent” party was free to remarry. Many are perhaps unaware that this concept was introduced by Erasmus to the church reformers such as Martin Luther. But who was Erasmus?

“In a brief survey of the life of Erasmus, T.F.C. Stunt speaks of him as ‘a humanist par excellence’ with a message that centered on Christianity as a quality of life rather than outward observances or doctrinal subscriptions” (Heth, & Wenham 1985). Erasmus’ teaching stemmed from the humanist concept.

Martin Luther at first embraced the teachings of Erasmus but later rejected them. In his book Erasmus, Preserved Smith quotes Luther as writing this about Erasmus: “He thinks the Christian religion either a comedy or a tragedy, and that the things described in the New Testament never happened, but

were invented as an apologue. Erasmus is worthy of great hatred. I warn you all to regard him as God's enemy. He inflames the baser passions of young boys and regards Christ as I regard Klaus Narr (the court fool)." (Smith, 1962). Can one consider a doctrine formed by such a humanist to be from God? Erasmus was seeking scriptural means to justify divorce and remarriage rather than a couple's remaining together in misery with one another. When Erasmus died, Luther expressed the opinion that he did so "without light and without the cross." (Smith, 1962).

We will look at several reasons why one could not rightly embrace the concept Erasmus put forth.

1. Had Jesus been speaking of adultery taking place, why did He not use the Greek word *moicheia* which is normally used for adultery rather than *porneia* which is fornication? The fact that Jesus did not use this word *moicheia* indicates that He is speaking of something other than adultery. The situation of the prophet Hosea taking back his wayward wife, Gomer, also strongly suggests that God is against divorce in the case of adultery. Hosea was manifesting to Israel God's faithfulness and commitment to them, even though they had backslidden and committed whoredom against Him.
2. Erasmus' view contradicts Jesus' teaching in Matthew 19:6: "*What therefore God hath joined together let not man put asunder.*" It also violates that which Paul taught in 1 Corinthians 7:10-11 "*And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from her*

husband: But and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband: and let not the husband put away his wife.” Clearly, a husband or wife was not to break the marriage bond. If that had already taken place, they were to remain unmarried or reconcile. Paul goes on to clarify in verses 12 through 15 that in cases of an unsaved mate, the Christian was not to depart. If the unsaved departed, the Christian would not be able to fulfill all he or she had vowed and was not under bondage to try to fulfill it, but was to remain unmarried as stated in verse 11.

3. Erasmus’ interpretation of the exception clause opposes what Jesus taught in Mark 10:1-12 and Luke 16:18. In this teaching there is no exception clause. Early Christians would not have had all four of the gospels and this would have raised different standards depending on which gospel was available to the people.
4. *“For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven”* (Matthew 5:20). Jesus consistently showed how God’s standards are higher than those of the Pharisees. Notice how John contended with the Pharisees in Luke. This is one continuing thought:

And the Pharisees also, who were covetous, heard all these things: and they derided him. And he said unto them, Ye are they which justify yourselves before

men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God. The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it. And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail. Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery: and whosoever marrieth her that is put away from her husband committeth adultery (Luke 16:14-18).

In this passage, verse 14 speaks of the Pharisees, who were covetous. Initially this seems to have no connection with the thought of divorce and remarriage in verse 18, until one considers the tenth commandment, in which God commands that one should not covet his neighbor's wife (Exodus 20:17). Then in verse 15 Jesus speaks about the Pharisees' propensity toward self-justification. They readily practiced divorce and remarriage. The practice of putting away one's wife in order to marry another was highly esteemed, with several differing views among the rabbis as to how minor the excuse for divorce might be! But Jesus declared that the thing which was highly esteemed (i.e., their covetousness for their neighbor's wives as well as divorcing and remarrying in verse 18) was an abomination in the sight of God. They freely practiced that which God condemned. The Pharisees used as a foundation for their practice the Law of Moses

found in Deuteronomy 24:1-4. This portion of scripture was not given by God to commend divorce but to regulate their abominable practices, as in their hardhearted state they had already destroyed the marriage relationship. Jesus took them from their corrupted concepts back to God's original command (Mark 10:2-12). Jesus quoted Genesis 2:24 in response to them: "*Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.*" God's purpose has always consistently declared that one man and one woman should be joined together in covenant until parted by death. If Erasmus' view was correct, Jesus would not have been lifting the standard for marriage higher than that of the Pharisees.

Anyone seeking the truth and wanting to please God and have His best will readily recognize that the teaching of Erasmus, which is embraced by so many today, is inconsistent with scriptural evidence. Other interpretations of the exception clause, as will be shown, do not conflict with the scriptures.

The Unlawful Marriage View

This view of the exception clause centers around unlawful marriages that take place contrary to Leviticus 18:6-18. This scripture itemizes various close family relationships that must not be joined in marriage. The phrase "uncover the nakedness" refers to sexual intercourse and indicates marriage. God's law forbids marriage in near family relationships spelled out in this portion of scripture.

This view holds that the word *porneia* is used in this context in I Corinthians 5:1. It is assumed that the man had

married his father's widow. Paul was upholding the law of Leviticus 18 in forbidding this incestuous relationship. According to this view, Jesus is teaching in Matthew, which was written for Jews, that if incestuous marriages had taken place, then they should be separated by divorce. To allow divorce for other reasons commonly attributed to the meaning of *porneia* would be in conflict with other portions of scripture.

This would also explain the situation with John the Baptist and Herod in Matthew 14:3-4. John was declaring that according to Leviticus 18:16 it was illegal for Herod to marry his brother Philip's wife. This was a forbidden marriage to a close relative.

The unlawful marriage view certainly gives a viable explanation of the exception clause that does not contradict other scriptural teaching on marriage.

The Betrothal View

Another view that can be considered as an interpretation of the exception clause centers in the Jewish cultural practice of betrothal before marriage. Approximately one year before consummation of marriage was to take place, a dowry was paid to the bride's father and a promise of marriage was made. This promise was legally binding and could be broken only by divorce or death. The bridegroom returned home to prepare a place for his bride-to-be while the bride prepared herself for marriage. After approximately a year, when he had completed his preparations and had received his father's direction, he returned to receive his bride with a procession of his friends, the marriage ceremony took place, and their physical union consummated the marriage.

According to the betrothal view, Jesus was teaching that in cases in which fornication had taken place or the bride was not found to be a virgin on the wedding night, a divorce which was necessary to break the Jewish betrothal, could be obtained. This was to be Joseph's course of action when he found out that Mary was with child. In order not to make a public example of her, he would divorce her privately (Matthew 1:18-20). The Lord spoke to Joseph, revealing to him the true situation and Joseph took Mary to be his wife. Once the marriage was consummated, only death could break the marriage covenant.

The exception clause was found only in the Gospel of Matthew and was written to the Jews for their practice of betrothal according to the custom at that time. The word *porneia* would be limited to the thought of premarital sex. This situation would not apply to modern marriage in Western culture.

Summary

The point we wish to convey in all of this is that there are very reasonable explanations to the exception clause that are not contradictory to other scripture. Jesus was not giving any cause other than death for ending the marriage covenant. "*What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder*" (Mark 10:9). One only need look at the ravages of divorce and the tragedies brought about by divorce and remarriage to realize that the results are not consistent with God's ways. May the church experience revival and return to God's established order so that His blessing may once again come upon nations, married couples, and their children.

We are not seeking in any way to condemn those who have experienced divorce or divorce and remarriage. We have

too often witnessed the ravages of the demonic spirits that encourage divorce. Because those involved in marital conflict often do not receive support to keep their vows, their hearts become hard and divorce becomes a consideration. Jesus makes clear the concept that divorce is always perpetrated because of hardness of heart. Many other situations usually exist but this is the root cause (Matthew 19:8). The devastation left by divorce leaves deep wounds and scars. God wants to bring restoration. Pointing the finger at a mate and passing the blame to them will never bring restoration, but coming to God and repenting will begin the restoration process. No matter who did what, divorce is condemned by God. It is sin. But divorce or divorce and remarriage is not an unpardonable sin; there is forgiveness with God if we will confess our sin (1 John 1:9). Of course, if we have violated God's ways there will be consequences. As a person is willing to forsake making excuses and acknowledge his or her own wrongdoing, God will begin to restore.

Some people involved in divorce have not desired divorce but found it forced upon them by their mates. We have witnessed the powerful grace of God to help those in this situation to remain single or be restored to their mates (1 Corinthians 7:10-11). The Lord Jesus Himself has become their focus, and He is always faithful.

One of the great joys of pastoring is to behold people who have been through marital destruction and have met with God and received grace to keep His ways. Let me share with you some of the victories that have greatly encouraged us.

John and Bev's marriage had deteriorated and ended with divorce. Both of them sought help independently and God began to help them work through problem areas. We had the

joy of witnessing the renewal of their vows to one another. They are seeking the Lord to fulfill all His will as they walk together as heirs of the grace of life.

We have rejoiced to see how God has been a faithful husband to Gabrielle and Karin as they have each raised children alone after their mates left them. Each of these ladies has a greater depth of relationship with the Lord because of meeting God in difficult circumstances.

We know of another man who raised his four children alone. He coached their sports teams and reared them through their college years. Raising children alone is no reason to violate God's Word and remarry.

Terry turned to the Lord when his wife forsook him. From the beginning he set his heart to respect God's ways. Even though, as with many others, he faces times of loneliness, he has committed himself to keep the boundaries of God's Word. He has been harassed many times, (especially by Christians, oddly enough) to find himself another woman. He often replies that sex is not worth an eternity in hell. God has met him and these others in a wonderful way.

Many who have been forsaken by a mate and left with children have the attitude that no one could possibly raise children without a mate. Their thought is that they must remarry for the children's sake. Rarely can someone raise, as their own children, those who are not their own. They usually seem to be unable to become a parent to a child who is not theirs. Abraham and Sarah decided to have a surrogate mother when Sarah was unable to conceive. Sarah had planned to take Ishmael as her own but found this impossible to do.

We realize that standing against divorce and remarriage is like trying to swim upstream in a swift current. There is much controversy in the church today, but if one desires to know the truth and walk in that which is pleasing to the Lord, God will confirm to us His holy purpose. This book is not intended to be a study on divorce and remarriage. We would recommend further study on this subject in an excellent book written by J. Carl Laney, The Divorce Myth, Bethany House Publishers.

Divorce Before Receiving Salvation

Many seek to make a distinction in divorce when it has occurred before a person received the gift of salvation. A verse that is commonly used to justify such action is, “Therefore if any man *be* in Christ, *he is* a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (2 Corinthians 5:17).

We know from experience that even though a man who receives Christ is fully justified in God’s sight, his life is not immediately transformed in every area. This verse is declaring the beginning of God’s process of working in a life which results in complete transformation if a person continues to cooperate with the Holy Spirit over a period of time. God is not saying that everything in a person’s life before salvation is irrelevant. If a person owed money to someone before salvation, he is still responsible to pay his debt after salvation. If he is married and has children before salvation, he is still married and the children are still his after he receives Christ as Saviour. If he had been drunk and was in an accident resulting in the amputation of his leg before salvation, he is still without his leg after salvation even though he is in the process of becoming a new creature in Christ.

Considering the whole counsel of God, how could anyone believe that marriage before salvation is insignificant? If a person was divorced before salvation, receiving Christ as Saviour does not qualify him for remarriage. If possible, because he is becoming a new creature in Christ, he should seek to be restored to his wife. If restoration is not possible, he can obtain grace, or power from God, to keep himself pure from fornication and adultery because he is becoming a new creature in Christ. Let us remain true to the counsel of God's word.

A Word to Pastors and Missionaries

We strongly urge those in ministry who are responsible to direct and counsel people to seek God and get the mind of God on this subject. So many ministers have led people astray and created havoc in homes and marriages by giving ungodly counsel. So many, without true conviction from God in these matters, are swept away with emotions and personal situations that move them toward wrong decisions.

Through the years we have witnessed many who once had a firm stand against divorce and remarriage crumble in their position as they faced the matter with family or friends. Their basis for changing their doctrine was that they did not want to see their loved ones face such suffering by having to remain alone. In reality, much more suffering is created by violation of God's holy laws.

A pastor and his wife whom we knew had a clear stand against divorce and remarriage. When their daughter-in-law divorced their son, they began to be somewhat weakened in their position. Later they broke through all boundaries when

they declared that, although they had always felt their son should not remarry, they just knew “he had to marry her” when he met this certain girl. This pastor then performed their wedding ceremony. Where was the Word of God in all this? Major eternal decisions were made on the basis of how they felt about circumstances, not on what pleased God and what He has declared. We have observed many parents make major changes in doctrine or moral standards because they wish to condone or allow the misconduct of their children. God rejected the priesthood of Eli and his posterity because of this very situation.

When a pastor forsakes God’s standards on divorce and remarriage, his church becomes vulnerable to marriage failure as never before. In desiring to be “merciful” to those choosing or experiencing divorce, a door is flung wide open that will result in the destruction of many homes. People tend to take what they consider to be the only solution to their marital conflicts, rather than realizing that they must remain true to the vow that they have made to their mates before God.

Show Them Mercy

True showing of mercy is to hold to God’s truth. In the tabernacle of Moses, the mercy seat was where God chose to manifest His shekinah glory. God’s mercy is His greatest attribute. The mercy seat sat upon a wooden box overlaid with gold, called the Ark of the Covenant. The two tables of the law were inside. The foundation that upheld the mercy seat was the Ark of the Covenant and the law of God. Many forsake the law to extend what they call mercy. It is God who decides who will receive mercy and the judgment He has chosen in the matter. (Romans 9:15-16). His mercy does

not forsake His law but is founded upon His law. *“Mercy and truth are met together”* (Psalms 85:10).

When decisions are made founded upon emotions and opinions, it may seem like the most “merciful” choice has been made. However, as time passes, the results of breaking God’s law bring sorrow to all the lives involved. Many churches degenerate to the point of allowing divorce and remarriage to take place within the church. Divorce and remarriage has been declassified by many as sin. God calls it adultery. *“Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God”* (I Corinthians 6:9-10). True showing of mercy is encouraging people not to violate God’s laws and damage their lives and the lives of others.

We welcome to our church sinners who have been cleansed by the blood of Jesus, who allow the Holy Spirit to bring them to full repentance, and who do not defend their old ways. We seek the Lord to help them be restored to God and His purposes. If people defend their past failures in marriage, divorce and remarriage, and have no heart to come to true repentance, they never seem to move on and grow spiritually. True restoration will never take place by compromising God’s holy standards.

Consider another factor when a pastor forsakes God’s standards in this matter. What about the pastor’s family? How secure can his wife feel when she sees his willingness to endorse a remarriage to a new partner? She must surely consider that if her husband would allow it for others, that he

would also, in the right circumstances, allow it for himself. So often when a pastor opens to divorce and remarriage in the church, it eventually takes place among his own children. The spiritual covering over the church is damaged, allowing in spirits of immorality and unfaithfulness that destroy marriage and family life.

When people devastated by marriage failure and divorce come to a pastor, he must seek God with them for God's solutions to the problem. Many seek to find their own way out of difficult situations which they have helped create for themselves. Often when we are teaching on this subject, we are asked what to do in hypothetical situations. God's Word gives us direction on how to make marriage work and keep our vows. Once we violate God's Word, God does not give principles to follow, but tells us we must seek Him for solutions to specific problems. The solution He gives for one situation may not be His answer for a seemingly similar circumstance.

God has chosen the marriage relationship between a man and his wife to be a type to demonstrate the relationship between the Lord Jesus Christ, the Heavenly Bridegroom and His bride, the church. How can Christians properly relate to Christ as members of the church if marriage is allowed to be destroyed? It is time to build marriages once again according to God's Holy Word.

If you have wandered away from God's design for marriage, cry out to God for the gift of repentance and look to Him for restoration. *“And they that shall be of thee shall build the old waste places: thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations; and thou shalt be called, The repairer of the breach, The restorer of paths to dwell in”* (Isaiah 58:12).

Blessed is every one that feareth the LORD; that walketh in his ways. Behold, that thus shall the man be blessed that feareth the LORD. Yea, thou shalt see thy children's children, and peace upon Israel.

Psalms 128:1,4,6

CHAPTER 18

Glorious Grandparenting

God promises the man who fears Him and walks in His ways that he will see his grandchildren. *“Blessed is every one that feareth the LORD; that walketh in his ways. Behold, that thus shall the man be blessed that feareth the LORD. Yea, thou shalt see thy children’s children, and peace upon Israel”* (Psalms 128:1,4,6). What a privilege it is to see and have a part in the lives of our grandchildren! If we are granted this opportunity we can further make an investment as a grandparent to help ensure the inheritance that is gained through our posterity.

Angeline:

The experiences that I had learned in carrying our children, and seeking God for a word concerning their lives now became our desire for our grandchildren. My mother had also taught me, by her example, how important it was as a grandmother to help with the care of a new baby. She was so faithful to come and be with us after our babies had been born. Her instruction to me became valuable again with our grandbabies. When our son Rob and his wife Val first gave us the thrilling news that they were going to have a baby, our hearts leaped for joy. They had been married for over four years and we were starting to wonder if we were ever going to have grandchildren. We realized that having children was our decision, but having grandchildren was out of our control. Desire for them was in our hearts, but that was the extent of our say in the matter. Now, the exciting news.....we were going to be grandparents. The

clicking of knitting needles and crochet hooks began to produce little creations for our little one in the womb. Finding a bassinet and making a beautiful skirting for it was also a very beloved project. Val's mom and I helped in getting the nursery ready. Finally the big day arrived. Our precious Val had been in labor for many hours and was ready to deliver, but the baby was very high and had to turn. Our son spoke to Val's tummy and said, "Baby, this is daddy, you must turn to be born. Now turn." She obeyed her daddy's voice, and in an hour our precious Krystal Rachelle arrived. She was and is such a joy to all of us. Even at birth she was very attentive to our voices. She certainly had heard them many times while in the womb. At the time of birth, we were all fascinated in watching Krystal's hand movements. She would move her hands in such a graceful, elegant way. She is now ten years old and does very beautiful signing for the deaf. Even this little activity that marked her at birth was an indication of a mark of purpose for her life.

Fourteen months later we were thrilled to have Audrye Jean join our family. Her arrival was 2 ½ weeks later than we had anticipated. We were in the Philippines at a pastor's seminar when she made her entrance into the world. She was a large baby in the womb and she was positioned for a breach delivery. This was a very difficult situation for Val and Rob to go through. They had their first child naturally and with this baby Val had to have a Caesarean delivery. We had all trusted the Lord that the baby would turn. We had experienced that with the first baby, so God surely would do that again. Wrong! God is God and His choices and ways are not our ways. After Audrye's birth we all realized that God's choice in the matter was the best. She was a large baby and a natural delivery for her and her

mom could have resulted in one of their deaths. The Lord was so gracious to give us a verse from Psalms 71:6. *“By thee have I been holden up from the womb: thou art he that took me out of my mother’s bowels: my praise shall be continually of thee.”* This brought such peace to Rob and Val that the Lord had even designed this type of delivery for Audrye. Even to this day, Audrye hates any sort of activity of tumbling or being upside down. It is amazing to see these little attributes from birth that continue on in their lives.

As a little girl, our daughter Tamara always had a desire to have twins. Twins do run in our family. Both of my grandfathers were twins, so this could have been a very natural desire for her. My sister’s daughter has identical twin girls also. After Paul and Tam had been married for a year they announced to us that we were going to be grandparents once again. YEAH! Excitement was running high. In her twelfth week of pregnancy the doctor suspected multiple births. Ultra sounds indicated that she was carrying twins. On the day of their arrival, as Paul and Tam were in the operating room, we heard a code pink announced. We knew that was for our babies. Bob and I just kept crying out to the Lord to be merciful and to intervene in the situation that was happening.

The twins made their appearance. Our precious Joel and Jared were born. The first few days were very critical because they were identical twins and they had the twin blood exchange between them. Joel did not have enough blood and Jared had too much blood. We were in a new experience. God was faithful. They are both now very active boys with the zest of life as their portion. God wants us to be involved in the lives of the generations that follow

us. Our very presence and genuine concern to help mold and shape their lives is very important.

The Completed Task

The full cycle of a family encompasses not just two generations but rather three. God's call upon Abraham helps demonstrate this truth. God called Abraham as an individual and promised that he would become a great nation. The foundation of the nation was to be Abraham's family. In scripture, the nation of Israel referred to their founding fathers as Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Israel). These three were the family upon which the nation was founded. Jacob's sons became the tribes that formed the nation. God has determined a complete family cycle to be parents, children, and grandchildren.

Many parents feel their job is finished when their children marry. But look at what God declares in Proverbs "*Children's children are the crown of old men*" (Proverbs 17:6). One line of an old hymn declares "And when the battle's over we will wear a crown." The crowning comes for a man when his grandchildren are established and walking in God's ways. A man does not receive his final grade on raising children until his grandchildren are raised.

This concept is strengthened even further by Psalms 103:17: "*But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children.*" God is saying to the man who fears Him that the righteousness God works in his life will influence not only that man's children, but also his grandchildren. When a person has met with God and walked in His ways, this affects the complete family cycle even to the grandchildren. Of course, when we allow our iniquities to go undealt with

by the Holy Spirit there is also a negative affect to our grandchildren and sometimes even great-grandchildren. *“Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children’s children, unto the third and to the fourth generation”* (Exodus 34:7).

In the New Testament, Paul makes reference to the effect of godly grandparents upon their grandchildren. *“When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also”* (2 Timothy 1:5). Paul testified that the unfeigned faith of Timothy’s grandmother, Lois, had come through his mother, Eunice, and was now influencing Timothy. Paul uses this fact to stir up Timothy to press on in the purposes of God. In verse 6 he uses a conjunctive word “wherefore” meaning “for which cause.” Paul is indicating that Timothy should consider the vested interest of his grandmother and mother into his life. Part of their spiritual inheritance was dependent upon how Timothy carried on and gained further inheritance.

The works of the grandchildren have an effect upon the eternal reward of their grandparents. For this reason, Naboth refused to sell his vineyard to King Ahab, as we read here:

And it came to pass after these things, that Naboth the Jezreelite had a vineyard, which was in Jezreel, hard by the palace of Ahab king of Samaria. And Ahab spake unto Naboth, saying, Give me thy vineyard, that I may have it for a garden of herbs, because it is near unto my house: and I will give thee for it a better vineyard than it; or, if it seem good to thee, I will give thee the

worth of it in money. And Naboth said to Ahab, The LORD forbid it me, that I should give the inheritance of my fathers unto thee (1 Kings 21:1-3).

Naboth understood that he could lose the inheritance entrusted to him by his father and grandfather. He held on to this sacred trust even though he had to give his life to do it. A negative example of this concept is given in Psalms 109, which is prophetic of Judas Iscariot and those like him.

Let his posterity be cut off; and in the generation following let their name be blotted out. Let the iniquity of his fathers be remembered with the LORD; and let not the sin of his mother be blotted out. Let them be before the LORD continually, that he may cut off the memory of them from the earth. Because that he remembered not to show mercy, but persecuted the poor and needy man, that he might even slay the broken in heart (Psalms 109:13-16).

Instead of blessing and a godly inheritance being gained for his fathers, Judas caused his fathers iniquities to be brought up in God's remembrance. Instead of turning from the iniquity of his father and grandfather, Judas brought forth multiple fruit of that root of iniquity. May God give us a willing heart to forsake our iniquities before our children or grandchildren have the opportunity to multiply them.

Angeline:

However, that would be the perfect scenario for life. But, we as humans do have defects that are not evident because of the lack of wisdom and understanding of our behavior as we are growing up. With grandchildren God once again gives us a chance to deal with iniquities. There are some things that I see in our grandchildren that are

iniquities that were not really evident in the lives of their parents. Viewing life with more years of observation brings an awareness of iniquities. There were things that my mother saw in my children that she shared with me so that I could be sensitive to these situations which I had not seen or noticed. We also can pick up some concerns that we see in our grandchildren that we share with their parents. With the added people observing the lives of our offspring, God can reveal a fuller picture of situations in their lives that need to be considered or verbally confronted and corrected. When the parents of our grandchildren are present, it is better to let them deal with situations that need correcting. My husband and I have had the privilege to care for our grandchildren sometimes for weeks at a time, while their parents were traveling to other nations. During these times we used our delegated authority given by their parents to instruct and correct them.

Insuring Our Investment

As we recognize in the life of Abraham, God often fulfills a promise given to a father or mother through their posterity. Angeline's father had a call and burden for China. He died before he was able to fulfill that call of God. Angeline and I have also had a burden and call to China that we hope to fulfill one day. Our son, Rob, when he was 8 or 9 years old had a special meeting with God. At this time God put China on his heart also. We expect to see greater fulfillment of the call given to Angeline's father in our son and his family.

Because our inheritance and that of our progenitors is so intricately involved with our children and grandchildren, we must make a major investment into their lives. It is not enough to invest only in our children. "*A good man leaveth*

an inheritance to his children's children" (Proverbs 13:22a.). God wants us to make a further investment in a generation beyond our children to ensure our eternal inheritance. Many grandparents have moved to retirement villages where they rarely have contact with their family. Scriptural evidence proves God intended us as grandparents to have a much more active role with our grandchildren. Our role changes from that of parenting as our children fulfill that function. As we faithfully minister an inheritance to our grandchildren, our responsibility and crowning is complete.

God spoke a wonderful promise to grandparents through the prophet, Isaiah. *"As for me, this is my covenant with them, saith the LORD; My spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the LORD, from henceforth and for ever"* (Isaiah 59:21). Again we see that what God works in a man's life is able to affect his children and grandchildren. These three generations complete a family cycle.

Providing an Enduring Inheritance

How can we invest in our grandchildren and give them an inheritance of eternal value? First of all, we should seek to attract God's love with our love for Him that He might love and bless our children and grandchildren. *"And because He loved thy fathers, therefore he chose their seed after them"* (Deuteronomy 4:37). *"But as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers sakes"* (Romans 11:28). When we draw near to God and delight His heart, He moves with favor upon our children and grandchildren. As we noticed earlier, God blessed David's seed because David was a man after God's own heart (Acts 13:22; 1 Chronicles 17:11-14).

Let us as grandparents seek the Lord with our whole heart, walk fully in His ways and give ourselves wholly to Him that He may abundantly bless our posterity.

Another important investment we can make in our grandchildren is to help in teaching them God's ways.

I will open my mouth in a parable: I will utter dark sayings of old: Which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us. We will not hide them from their children, showing to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, and his strength, and his wonderful works that he hath done. For he established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children: That the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born; who should arise and declare them to their children: That they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments: (Psalms 78:2-7).

We must first instruct our own children in the ways and laws of the Lord so that they will instruct their children. God has intended that truth and holiness be imparted from one generation to another in an ongoing cycle. Grandparents can help fortify the teaching and instruction of the parents. When the grandchildren sense the unity and evidence of God's ways in such important people who surround their lives, they are further moved to embrace the truth. At times we must encourage our children in their responsibility as a parent. Our welcome guidance can be such strength to them in teaching and training their children. Our presence at major events in the lives of our grandchildren heightens their respect for us.

Angeline:

Our days of watching sports did not end with our children. In the lives of our grandchildren, our presence at events they are involved in is very important not only for them but for us too. We are also making memories. To see the joy in their eyes when we are there as they perform in their special events is worth it all. Our children are also pleased that we are interested in their children. A complete circle of relationships and satisfaction is formed.

Previously we quoted Proverbs 13:22: “*A good man leaveth an inheritance to his children’s children.*” This truth is beautifully demonstrated in Genesis 48 through the life of Jacob with two of his grandsons. First of all we notice that Joseph came with his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim, to present them to his father, Jacob. It is noteworthy that none of Jacob’s other sons presented their children to Jacob. This action on Joseph’s part took faith and trust in God. Everything did not transpire as Joseph expected. When Jacob began to bless the boys, he crossed his arms and gave the right hand (greater) blessing to Ephraim, the younger, and the left hand (lesser) blessing to Manasseh, the elder. Joseph objected but he was overruled because it was the mind of the Lord in the matter being spoken through Jacob. Then Jacob did a most unusual thing. He elevated Ephraim and Manasseh a generation and gave them an inheritance among the tribes as one of his own sons (Genesis 48:5-6). He then gave Joseph a double portion of the inheritance. “*Moreover I have given to thee one portion above thy brethren, which I took out of the hand of the Amorite with my sword and with my bow*” (Genesis 15:18-21). Jacob had battled these enemies of the Lord and gained an inheritance to pass to his sons and, in this case, his grandsons.

God wants us as grandparents to meet with Him and battle spiritual enemies both within ourselves and without. He wants us to gain victories and buy the truth that we can pass on to our children and grandchildren. Even though my great-grandmother lived on a widow's pension, she practiced giving 50 percent of her income to the Lord's work. She was able to do this because she kept her own vegetable garden until she was nearly 100 years old. This enabled her to invest as she did in the spread of the gospel. But she did more than that! She left an inheritance to her posterity in her example of giving that has made it easy for many of us to freely give. I have watched some Christians struggle for years trying to learn to be free to give for the sake of the gospel. What a rich inheritance she left us! If we as grandparents can gain ground and press into new areas of truth, the way can be open for our seed to progress far beyond what we have ourselves. Their advancement becomes part of our inheritance for eternity.

The last concept we want to consider is this: If we will not be self-centered and move away to some retirement community, but rather remain near our grandchildren if possible, we can see their needs and be there to pray for them. If we cannot be near, we can still pray diligently for them. *"The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much"* (James 5:16).

Angeline:

Keep up with the advances, in this high-tech society that we now live in, takes much effort on the part of grandparents. But to have even your grandchildren teach you things on the computer is an activity that can be fulfilling for both you and them. We use the E-mail mode of communication. With our children traveling to different nations and even living

there at times, E-mail is such a godsend. Proverbs 25:25 says, *“As cold waters to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country.”* With the new technology that is now available, good news can be received so very quickly. However, for those of you who do not have this available to you, cards, little packages and phone calls can minister that “good news” to your loved ones. When our granddaughters were the age of two and three, they lived overseas for a year. During this time we would send them tapes of us reading to them. We sent them loving messages that we were so very anxious to be with them again. They listened to these tapes and continued to have the knowledge that their grandparents missed them and loved them so very much. Never use the phrase that “they are too busy.” That is an excuse that older people can grab on to and use as an excuse not to communicate. Your love, concern and growing appreciation for them is imparted by your communication to them.

Before we close the chapter on grandparenting, there is another little story of a baby whose only existence on this earth was in the womb. His name was Gregory. He was the third child of Greg and Cindy, a precious couple in our church. His arrival was greatly anticipated by his two sisters and his parents. During the whole pregnancy the mother kept experiencing a feeling of uncertainty concerning little Gregory. However, they continually talked to him and ministered to him the love that they had and the excitement they had in wanting him in their family. Cindy carried him full term and then a week after her due date she suddenly realized that she was not feeling the baby move. Upon examination it was confirmed that Gregory had died. We received a call from Greg late at night and immediately went to the hospital to be with them. It was a very difficult

situation to face. He was a perfectly healthy little boy that had heard his name called by the “Great Shepherd” and was received into heaven. The big question was “WHY?” God’s ways are not our ways, and many times it is so difficult on this side of heaven to understand why.

King David experienced this when his baby had been taken. His statement was, “*I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me*” (2 Samuel 12:23b). The separation that death brings is very difficult to deal with, especially with a young child. In the sovereign will of God, God knows all and sees all and always does the very best for His people. Little Gregory has safely made his journey into eternity. His total preparation had been complete in the womb. Many people can live to be old and wonder if they are loved. Whether a 100 year old person or a baby from the womb, in their own way both have lived a lifetime. They have fulfilled the allotted time that God had purposed for them. While walking through the experience of losing a loved one, there are many waves of emotion that we must deal with. We do have the great assurance that “Blessed are those that mourn, they shall be comforted.” We must properly mourn so that God can come and comfort us and have our eyes steadfastly set upon our God. If you are a parent or a grandparent of a little one who has made his journey into heaven, let God minister to you and heal your broken heart. You must avail yourself for Him to come and minister to you.

The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree: he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. Those that be planted in the house of the LORD shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing.

Psalms 92:12-14

CHAPTER 19

Caring for Those in Their Golden Years

Near the end of his life, Moses wrote some very interesting truths concerning the brevity of life. He spoke in terms of days and not years (Psalms 90:12). He began this Psalm with an important concept. “*A Prayer of Moses the man of God. LORD, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations*” (Psalm 90:1). We tend to think of this word “generation” as a lifetime, but the root word means “a period and circuit of the years of life.” God’s testimony of Noah was that he “*was a just man and perfect in his generations*” (Geneses 6:9). Life for most people consists of different generations, that is, periods or cycles that are each different from the others. Some find it difficult to adjust to the changes that are a part of each new generation or period of life.

One of the segments of life, the golden years (or old age as it is commonly called) seems to come to most people much sooner than they thought it would. Moses declared that God is our dwelling place in each generation of life. “*Mine age is as nothing before thee*” (Psalms 39:5). He wants to meet each one in our latter end as well as the beginning and everything between. Like Noah, God wants each of us to mature and develop in the lessons and situations in the various generations of life.

As David began to see some of the problems of old age he cried out to God: “*Now also when I am old and greyheaded, O God, forsake me not; until I have showed thy strength*”

unto this generation, and thy power to every one that is to come” (Psalms 71:18). When people have not allowed God to have His full will in their lives, they often are full of fear and insecurity. At a time when they should have developed into spiritual fathers and mothers (I John 2:12-14) providing stability and guidance to these younger, they are floundering and unstable themselves. God intends our latter years to be “golden years.” “The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree: he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. Those that be planted in the house of the LORD shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing;” (Psalms 92:12-14). In His faithfulness, God has purposed to meet us in special ways in each generation of life with old age no exception.

I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread” (Psalm 37:25).

God does not forsake His own in their latter years.

“Hearken unto me, O house of Jacob, and all the remnant of the house of Israel, which are borne by me from the belly, which are carried from the womb: And even to your old age I am he; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you: I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you (Isaiah 46:3-4).

Scripture gives us God’s plan to care for those who become unable to do so themselves. This responsibility falls to their children. “*Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee” (Exodus 20:12).* The fifth commandment, which is the first given with a promise of long life and blessing, indicates

that children are to always honor their parents. “*Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise; That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth*” (Ephesians 6:1-3).

Paul, in writing to Timothy, further clarifies this responsibility.

But if any widow have children or nephews, let them learn first to show piety at home, and to requite their parents: for that is good and acceptable before God. Now she that is a widow indeed, and desolate, trusteth in God, and continueth in supplications and prayers night and day. But she that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth. And these things give in charge, that they may be blameless. But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel (1 Timothy 5:4-8).

Children have the God-given responsibility to care for their aging parents if the parents are unable to do so themselves. The word “requite” has the meaning of making recompense or to repay someone. Parents have cared for their children and, if necessary, the children must repay the parents by caring for them in old age. In this particular scripture Paul is speaking of widows, but children clearly are given responsibility toward both parents if necessary.

Joseph was given the responsibility by God to care for his father, Jacob, in the latter years of his life. This privilege and duty usually fell to the firstborn son. In this situation a change was made that is explained in 1 Chronicles 5:1-2:

Now the sons of Reuben the firstborn of Israel, (for he was the firstborn; but, forasmuch as he defiled his father's bed, his birthright was given unto the sons of Joseph the son of Israel: and the genealogy is not to be reckoned after the birthright. For Judah prevailed above his brethren, and of him came the chief ruler; but the birthright was Joseph's.

Joseph faithfully looked after his father when it was needed. Children cannot force care upon their parents. As with Jacob, it must be a decision that they recognize as necessary and accept willingly. Unless they become mentally incompetent, they are still in charge of their own lives.

An elderly man had a stroke and was unable to talk. His wife, along with his son and daughter-in-law, took over the affairs of the family making decisions that were contrary to his desires. He reacted with distress and there was no peace in the house. I was called to pray with the family and help them. The Lord spoke to me that the husband was recognized by God to be in charge of his family as long as he had the mental capability to do so. When the others accepted this, peace and tranquility returned. He had the direction for his family; the others did not.

When a wife becomes widowed, she often needs different levels of help in various circumstances. Sometimes children tend to take over her life. We have learned that it is best to give only what is really needed.

I usually encourage people not to make any major decisions or moves, unless necessary, until they have had about a year to grieve and adjust to the separation they have experienced. A dear lady in our church experienced such deep loneliness

after the death of her husband. This lady informed me that she was thinking about moving in with one of her sons and his family. They fully welcomed her. I encouraged her not to make such a dramatic change without first visiting them for a whole weekend. That was all the convincing it took. She realized that she was not yet ready to leave the serenity of her senior citizen apartment.

Sometimes situations are such that children are unable to give disabled parents the care that is needed. At times it becomes necessary to have professionals give proper care. Some situations are not as severe and children can care for the parents. This situation can become a blessing that affects not only that responsible child but their children as well. *“The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me: “ (Job 29:13a).*

At times we must give our responsibility to help our parents to others. Jesus gave the responsibility to care for Mary to John, His disciple. (John 19:26-27). For some reason Jesus gave this responsibility to John rather than His own half brothers or sisters (Matthew 13:55-56).

Many years ago as a young pastor, my family and I had the opportunity to experience the blessing of which this verse in Job speaks. We had an older couple in the church that had no children. The husband approached me one day and asked if we would commit to look after his wife, Mamie, if anything ever happened to him. Not long after, he passed from this life gently during his sleep one night. Mamie had cancer previously and needed to be looked after, especially in the winter months. For the next five years we had her living in our home during the winters at first and, eventually, all the time until her death. We all learned so many lessons through that experience.

One thing I now realize that I did not at that time is the different needs of an older person. There was such a gap in our ages that we were unable to understand many of Mamie's needs like we do now as we are aging. Many circumstances were a trial to us as a young family. I am sure that our family was a trial to her many times as well. We are assured, however, that God's grace is available to meet every situation. We do thank God for the blessed experience and many lessons we were able to glean from that time in our life. We always tried to treat Mamie with love so that we would have no regrets after she died. We have no regrets. We will look forward to seeing her in heaven. Angeline will further share many experiences.

I would encourage anyone to find out as much about aging as possible if you are called upon to care for your parents. Be understanding of the "generation" in which they are living that you have not yet experienced. Learn as much from them as possible to help you in your golden years.

Angeline:

Barney and Mamie had been a sweet couple in our church. They had no children and as they aged they began to realize that they might need help from us. When Barney asked Bob and me to look after Mamie if anything happened to him, we knew that we were making a commitment to him. It was not just a mere, "Sure we will." We knew that he was looking for a commitment. It was only six months after this whole conversation that Barney died. Mamie was now a true widow. Having had no children, she immediately looked to us for help. In the summer months she lived in their little mobile home and in the winter she came and lived with us. She had a fear of winter with the northerly snows and cold weather that we experience in Michigan, so during

the months of September through April she moved in with us. There were many adjustments for all of us. She not only had two cancer surgeries through which I had to nurse her, but she was also diabetic. Therefore her foods and medication were very important. Our children were only ten and seven when she came to live with us. It was such a great opportunity to teach them how to respond patiently and graciously to those with special needs. She was included in every special event that we were involved in. At Christmas my mother and my sister and her family were always very gracious to include Mamie in all of the holiday festivities. We received such grace from heaven to minister to her, and she also had to have such grace to keep up with our schedule.

As her health began to deteriorate, she began to live with us all of the time. Finally in the last days of her life, we had visiting nurses and nurses aids come to our home to help care for her. My total focus was to keep Mamie clean and comfortable.

We had a hospital bed put in my husband's study which became Mamie's room. The more she suffered the sweeter she became. We know that the love of Jesus continued to change her and meet with her. She was just so precious. Three weeks before she died, a nurse's aid was caring for her when Mamie collapsed and broke her hip. The ambulance took her to the hospital, and the doctor told us the best thing to do was to operate on her. Bob and I did not have peace about this because she had suffered so very much. However, if this was the best, then we wanted the best. The day of surgery came and they took her to the operating room, but were not able to operate because her heart began a rapid beat. The doctor advised us to put her

in a nursing home. Mamie had told us she wanted to die in our home and she did not want to go to a nursing home.

Now this posed quite a problem. Our children were now fifteen and twelve. The thought of someone dying in our home could be very scary to children. God gave us wisdom in handling this whole situation. We had a talk with our children and said to them, "Out of all of the houses in our city, what if the Lord chose to come to our house to take Mamie home to heaven? Would that bother you?" They said, "No, that would be great." To have the Lord come into our home was very special to them. So with them in agreement, we brought Mamie back home with us. The Lord had given me a dream about Mamie going to Heaven. In the dream I was walking with Mamie into the river Jordan and the water was up to our ankles. I said, "Mamie, this is the farthest I can go with you, I can't go any farther." We looked across to the other shore and there was her husband, friends, and Jesus waiting. She let go of my hand and just skipped across to the other side. She had such joy because she was going to be united with loved ones again. After this dream, my husband asked Mamie if she had a fear of death, and she said, "Yes." He then told her the dream and prayed with her that God would remove all fears. She then had a glowing smile on her face. God did take the sting of death from her.

Her physical condition declined and we knew that the time of her "homegoing" was near. The Lord had made real to my husband that Jesus Himself had been anointed for burial. In Matthew 26:6-13 is the account of the woman who anointed Jesus specifically for burial. As Mamie's earthly journey was coming to an end, we would spend time singing and worshiping the Lord at her bedside. Our

whole family would participate in this because we knew that soon she would be leaving us. Bob and I slept on the floor outside of her room for three nights. We were both so very tired. I just wanted to be with her when the Lord came for her. However, God's ways are not our ways. Bob and I were both so physically exhausted, that Bob said, "Tonight we are sleeping in our own bed and if the Lord wants us to know when He is taking her, He can wake us up and let us know." As we tucked her in bed that night we kissed her and said good night. Then my husband said to her, "Mamie, I'll see you in the morning." She was not able to give a verbal response but she looked at him questioningly, and he then said, "Well then, I will see you." She smiled and nodded to him.

At 3:30 a.m. I woke up and asked my husband if he wanted to go down and check Mamie with me. We both went down and the Lord had just taken her. He had chosen to take her privately. She was so peaceful. She had completed her journey into eternity. One concern I had was with Mamie's wishes to die in our home and not in a hospital. I was also concerned about the attention our house would have with the funeral director removing her body from the house. We have a neighborhood of families and I felt the scene of a body being removed would be traumatic. The Lord was so gracious in all of this. She died early in the morning and everything was taken care of while the neighborhood slept. Even our children did not have to witness this. They were sleeping and we were able to have things returned to a very normal condition by the time they awoke.

Our greatest joy was that God let us have the privilege to care for her and that He granted His wonderful grace to us to fulfill our commitment to Barney and Mamie. In James 1:27

the scripture reads, “*Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.*” There were people in our church that were very touched that we cared for Mamie. It made a difference in their life and spoke to them that we did have a pure religion functioning in our home. We had never considered this ourselves at the time, but we do see how God gave us such grace to minister to her in her need.

As we age we consider that God wants us to age gracefully. We are in a generation of life that we have never lived before. God is so faithful to teach us if we are willing to search out His truths. There are two books that have helped me in ageing and also to understand problems of those that are older than we are: [A Divine Blessing](#), by Elizabeth Skoglund and [Caring For Your Ageing Parents](#). . [When Love Is Not Enough](#), by Barbara Deane.

CHAPTER 20

Take Heart and Press On

Throughout this book we have sought to present to you God's order for marriage and family life. We have included testimonies that God's ways are right. As a person seeks God and receives His power to implement His order, the family flourishes.

At times, people have become frustrated or discouraged as they realize how many mistakes they have made in their marriage or family relationships. To some, the pain is too great to face their mistakes, and they give up any idea of trying to change.

God gives us His truth to bless us and not to discourage us. *"And ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free."* (John 8:32). God wants us to be blessed. The lack of godly knowledge fosters destruction in our lives (Hosea 4:6).

When Judah returned from captivity to Jerusalem, Ezra the priest read in the book of the law of God distinctly and gave Israel the understanding of God's purposes. As the people heard the law read, they wept when they realized how far they had drifted from God. However, Nehemiah encouraged the people not to weep and mourn, for the joy of the Lord would be their strength (Nehemiah 8:8-12). Instead of a time of sorrowing, it was to be a time of rejoicing that God had given them understanding.

May we urge you toward this attitude. Because you have been granted understanding, let the joy of the Lord sweep away any discouragement or frustration. Have an expectation that as you realize that your ways have been contrary to God's

ways (Isaiah 55:6-9) and you repent before Him, He will have mercy and begin restoration (Joel 2:25).

Angeline and I have experienced the pain, sorrow, and frustration of coming to realize that our ways are contrary to God's ways. Many times through the years, we have received the gift of repentance and grace to forsake our own ways and embrace His truth. What joy and fulfillment He brings! May you know this same joy in your journey in marriage, as a family, and as an individual seeking His highest purpose.

Stay on Course

In giving people instruction of God's ways, we have often witnessed an initial excitement and diligence to obey and implement what God says. Encouraging results often begin to manifest within a short time. Some become so excited at the changes that their attention is diverted from continuing steadfastly in the right way.

If this is allowed to happen, deterioration of relationships will soon transpire and discouragement can set in. How important it is to stay on course! One must remain focused on what God has said. His results will follow if we will do things His way.

May we encourage you to review often the things that God has made real to you. As the Word of God becomes part of your being, you will be transformed (John 1:14) and the glory of God will be manifest in you. We must each seek the Lord for His grace to enable us to be what He wants us to be.

Your marriage and family can become a testimony of God's grace for others to see. All of this demands much work on your part, but the results will be well worth it.

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, we are so thankful that you are our Father and our God. Out of Your love for us You have given us the keys to life in Your Holy Word. Let each one who reads this book find the abundant life that comes from Your precious Son, Jesus Christ. We ask You to restore marriages and families to Your original plan. Lord Jesus, will You turn the hearts of the fathers to the children and the hearts of the children to their fathers, that a godly generation will be prepared when You return. We ask this for Your honor and Your glory. Amen!

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GOD’S POWERFUL VOICE: Hearing and responding to Him

“The voice of the Lord is upon the waters: the God of glory thundereth: the Lord is upon many waters. The voice of the Lord is powerful; the voice of the Lord is full of majesty” Psalms 29:3-4.

God understands the frailty of mankind and his inability to keep the commandments of God. The power to do what He is asking comes in personally hearing His voice. Many Christians do not know God’s voice or have been deceived into thinking another voice is His.

- How can we come to know God’s voice?
- How can we distinguish it from the many other voices of the world?
- How can we avoid deception?
- What is the relationship between hearing His voice and faith, righteousness and wisdom?

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