

Christian Family Living

*"Establishing and Maintaining a Christian Home is the Greatest
Contribution a Man Will Make in a Lifetime"*

Author: Dr. Edward Watke, Jr.

Dr. Watke is a veteran pastor, effective evangelist, personable preacher, and author of more than two dozen outline Bible study books. Here he redefines basic principles of interpersonal relationships with indepth spiritual truths in this straightforward book.

This astute Bible student uses his deep insight into the Word of God to deal with the root problems and not just surface circumstances which 20th Century Christian families face.

CHRISTIAN FAMILY LIVING presents practical, Biblical instruction in areas dealing with home and family relationships in an outline study format that enables Christians to gain greater understanding from their personal Bible study relating to these subjects.

Get ready to delve into the Scripture as Dr. Watke brilliantly shows you the path of enlightened truth on your quest of Christian Family Living.

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PREFACE

Establishing and maintaining a Christian home is the greatest contribution a man will make in a lifetime.

As a pastor burdened for the homes that make up the church, every year I have either preached or taught a series concerning the Christian home. Those of us who are trying to establish strong Christian homes and to train our children for God know that it takes much prayer, study, and total dedication. Family success rests on a vital relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and then an application of the principles from the Word of God.

Our authority as parents is empty and meaningless unless we lead with authority. We must lead with the authority of the Word of God. Our authority in our homes will be in direct proportion to God's authority in our lives. Our influence over our children will depend upon His influence in our lives and the extent to which our lives are saturated with the Word of God.

Our responsibility is to minister lovingly to the needs of our families and to give priority to spiritual things. May God help us to do just that.

In dedication to every true Christian family, we print this series of studies. May God crown it with blessing in your life.

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Chapter One

THE CHRISTIAN HOME

Psalm 128; Matthew 18:1-6; Colossians 3: 12-17; Genesis 1:26-27; Genesis 2:18-25

INTRODUCTION

A house is not necessarily a home, and a home is more than a house. We tend to confuse the two today. A house may be a building for any purpose: for business, entertaining, lodging, or living. A house in which a family lives is called a home. Homes do not just happen; they must be built. A home is not so much an outward thing to be built, as an inward thing to be created.

To succeed in family life should be an absorbing goal. A father is the householder, and mother is the homemaker, with the chief task of making a house a home.

God made the family to be the basic unit of life (Genesis 7:27, 28); and in every known culture since that day, the family has remained the foundation of society. Since the home is of God and since godly living—Christ-honored living—should be the result of the right kind of home, we ought to be much concerned about having a home that is based on the Word of God.

In this series we are concerned about a study of the home that pleases God, and how to establish such a home.

THE CHRISTIAN CONCEPT OF MARRIAGE

God made man and woman for each other. Their bodies, their minds, and their temperaments are to complement one another. The love of a husband and wife is as normal as eating, sleeping, working, playing.

A. Christians Accept Three Purposes of Marriage as Intended by God for All Mankind

1. A deep and lasting companionship between husband and wife for their mutual enrichment, happiness, and welfare (Genesis 2:20-24; I Peter 3:7)
2. The management of the dynamic and explosive function of sex in such a way that it may serve rather than disrupt human life (Genesis 2:24; Hebrews 13:4; I Corinthians 7:2-5, 9)
3. The bringing of children into the world and the adequate provision for their care—body, mind, and soul (Genesis 1:27, 28; Psalm 127; 128; Proverbs 22:6)

Normal sexual relations between husband and wife belong to God's order of creation. The Scriptures teach that marriage includes the marriage bed and that sexual relationships between mates is not only a blessed privilege but also a conjugal right.

Sex is planned by God to be good, holy, beautiful, and a bond of spirit and soul, as well as body. Man's misuse of sex has resulted in evil and much unhappiness and trouble. Sex is in God's plan for happiness and for the fulfillment of one of man's purposes on earth. Let marriage be held in honor by all.

It is impossible to have a Christian home unless we have the right view of marriage.

B. Christians Accept Three Basic Principles of Marriage

1. Marriage is to be monogamous (Matthew 19:4-6).
2. Marriage, to be Christian, demands fidelity on the part of both husband and wife. God has given us a standard of morality and holiness that guards the sacredness of the marriage union. Both fornication and adultery are condemned (Proverbs 6:20-33; I Corinthians 6:9-20).
3. Marriage that is Christian is for life; the bond is not to be dissolved (Matthew 19:6; I Corinthians 7: 10, 1 1).

THE DISTINCTIVES OF A CHRISTIAN FAMILY

A. A Right Attitude About Parenthood

1. Children are a gift from God (Psalm 127:3). A desire for children is normal and natural. God planned it that way. To Christian couples, children are indeed a blessed gift of God. They are to be held in sacred trust and to be looked upon as "belonging to God."
2. Having children brings fulfillment, brings opportunity for spiritual growth for husband and wife, brings greater responsibilities as they teach and train their offspring to be useful, dedicated, fruit bearing Christians. Such brings personal growth while the parents recapture and restrengthen their own faith and Christian walk as they train their own children (Deuteronomy 6:5-9, 17-25; Genesis 18:19; Ephesians 6:1-4).

B. A Seeking for the Will of God

1. That God may get the glory in all things (I Corinthians 10:31, 32)
2. That self may be out of the way (Galatians 2:20)
3. That His will is sought out and lived (Proverbs 3:5, 6; Colossians 4:1 2)

Christians have one major goal in life . . . "To glorify God and to enjoy Him forever." Life is looked upon as a stewardship for which man is accountable to God. It is to be invested for the fullest development of every God bestowed gift, endowment, and opportunity.

"Christians measure success in terms of God-centered lives and Christ-like character, rather than in material possessions. They live . . . in the spirit of Christian love which sees God as a third Person in every human contact" (Vieth).

C. A Submission to the Word of God

The Word of God is not just read a bit, taken to church, loved and revered. It is really to be studied and applied to the home and to each life in particular.

1. Yielding the life to the Word of God (James 1:21-25).

2. Being under the "directives" of the Word (II Timothy 3:16-17)
3. Submitting to its teaching in every area of life (Cf. Titus 1:9; 2:1-15)
4. Owning it as the abiding Word (Colossians 3:16). (Cf. John 8:31; John 15:7; Psalm 119:105, 130; I Timothy 4: 15, 16.)

D. A Reliance on the Providence of God

1. Cf. Philippians 2:13-16; Philippians 1:6.
2. Christians approach life differently than the unsaved do. Christians live daily under the providence of God and in resignation to the will of God in all things. They recognize that the wisdom of God, the Ruler of the universe, is greater than the wisdom of men.
3. Christians walk in the "inner strength" that God is working out in their lives His will and plan.

E. A Reflection of Christ in the Home

1. Christ must be Lord of all (Romans 14:9). A Christian home is one where husband and wife live a life submitted to Christ.
2. Christ must be loved, honored, obeyed (Cf. Colossians 2:6, 7; 3:14-17).
3. Christ must be the center; with all yielded to Him, home will be a place with "One" in control (Cf. Philippians 3:7- 10, 14; 4:13).

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Why is there so much concern about the American home today?
2. What kind of home did Timothy have? (II Timothy 1:5-7; 3:14,15)
3. What remarkable thing did God say about Abraham? (Genesis 18:1-9)
4. What is God's order for the home according to Colossians 3:18-21?
5. Why do a lot of homes fail today? (Cf. Colossians 3:16.)
6. Do you think that every problem we could ever face in the home is truly answered in the Word of God? Why? (Cf. II Timothy 3: 16, 17.)
7. What was the concern of Samson's parents? (Judges 13:8)
8. How would you define a "Christian home"?

Memory Verse:

"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." —Galatians 2:20

Chapter Two

THE HUSBAND'S PLACE IN THE HOME

Ephesians 5:23-33

INTRODUCTION

Tonight almost everybody in the world will go to a place he calls "home." The very basis of life is built upon the home. Rich, poor, black, white, cottage, or mansion—we all have a place to call home. There are many problems facing the home today. None are so great but that the needs could be met. It depends largely upon the leadership in the home.

Many problems face America, but none are so terrible as the breakdown of the American home. We should fear disloyalty, contention, strife, and disintegration at the level of the home more than we fear any political force. God will judge America because of the moral deterioration. The greatest force against the deterioration of America is strong homes.

The person with the greatest responsibility to the success of the home is the husband. Let's see what God has to say about it.

THE RELATIONSHIP OF LOVE (Ephesians 5:25-33)

The pattern of love in the home is the pattern of Christ and the church. Christ used His relationship to the saved, the bride, as an example of the relationship in the home. How holy! What a responsibility! What a pattern to imitate and emulate!

A. Initiative in Love

1. In salvation Christ took the initiative.
2. He "first loved us" (I John 4:19).
3. He first gave Himself (John 10:1 1, 14-18).

There would never be a church, a "bride of Christ," or saints if He had not first revealed His love by death for us. There would never have been salvation and sweet fellowship with Him if He had not taken the initiative and come to die for us. None of us could have repented and left our sinful, unlovely, hostile state (Eph. 2:1-3) if He had not given Himself first (Cf. I Peter 1:8).

4. The man must take the initiative in love (Cf. Ephesians 5:25, 28; Colossians 3:19).
5. The man's love (husband to wife) must spring from what he can do for her rather than from what she is to him, or can do for him (5:29-32).
6. As Christ's love was self-sacrificing, self-devoting love, so the husband's love is to be.
7. As Christ's love was . . . peculiarly for His own, . . . exclusively for His bride, the church, . . . intimate (Cf. John 13:1), so that we are "in him" (Colossians 2:6), so should the love of the husband be for his wife (Col. 3:3).

Christ's love was a delighting in the special objects of His love. He longs to be united with His own (Cf. John 17), and will be in the marriage supper of the Lamb. He is now through the sweet fellowship of the Holy Spirit.

B. Pattern of Love (or type of)

1. It is not just affection for, or fond of, or physical passion.
2. This is the divine "agape" love. It is a spiritual, selfless, sacrificing love.
3. It is the love that is enduring, indestructible in nature.

C. Purpose of Love

1. Christ's purpose of love to us
 - a. To sanctify and cleanse us (Ephesians 5:26, 27)
 - b. To set us apart to Himself
 - c. To present us to Himself a glorious church, no spot, or wrinkle (5:27)
 - d. To make us holy
2. A husband's purpose in love
 - a. As a channel of grace and help to his wife (I Peter 3:7,8)
 - b. As a spiritual leader, to bless, cherish, encourage, fellowship

D. Enduring Quality of Love (I Corinthians 13:4-8; Ephesians 5:25, 30-33)

1. Christ loves us perfectly, as our Savior, and then He protects, guides, nourishes, cherishes, directs, and perfects in us the best for us.
2. The husband's love ought to be "after" the pattern of Christ's love.

The word husband means "house-band." He is responsible to bind the home together, to support it, to cherish and build it. He is to band the marriage together with his ministry materially, spiritually, physically—meeting the need of his wife and family.

LEADERSHIP THROUGH LOVE (Ephesians 5:23; Genesis 3:16; I Corinthians 1 1:3, 7-9; I Peter 3:1, 6)

"The husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church" (Ephesians 5:23). This is by divine appointment, divine decree. A woman ought to be glad of this. It relieves her of much primary duty. Husbands ought to be slow to exalt about this, but it ought to bring humility and trembling rather than pride and boldness. Such leadership is not of superiority or advantage, but of responsibility.

A. Directional Duties

1. As Christ leads and guides us (Psalm 32:8), so the man is held responsible to lead.
2. The law recognized this place, involving vocation, location, etc.
3. The husband must lead as Christ leads and is Head of the church.

B. Provisional Duties

1. As the stronger, he is responsible (Cf. I Peter 3:7-12; I Timothy 5: 8).
2. Cf. Jacob, David, Abraham, etc., who led their homes (Cf. I Peter 3: 5-6).
3. Just as Christ gives every provision necessary for His own—for the bride, the church—so should the husband provide for his own (Cf. Romans 8:32).

C. Spiritual Duties

1. Like Christ—as a priest in the home
2. As leader, chief intercessor, and teacher of prayer
3. As leader in devotions and spiritual growth

This position is ordained of God, patterned by Christ, and commanded from the dawn of creation and the fall of man into sin (Cf. Genesis 1, 2, 3).

THE RESPONSE TO LOVE

A. The Wife's Response to Love

1. What wife would not respond to love?
2. What wife, dearly loved, would not find that submission to such love is sweet and precious?
3. Would not a husband find a blessedness in this relationship of love?

B. The Child's Response to Love

1. Many children are starved for love. Nothing can substitute for parental love.
2. The "too busy" act on the part of many parents hurts the home and destroys the children. They need warm, tender affection, fondness, and love that gives.

C. Our Response to Love

1. We ought to respond to Christ's love, which is a pattern for the home (Ephesians 3:19; I Peter 1:8).
2. How do you react to Christ's love?
 - a. Romans 5:8
 - b. John 14:21-24
 - c. John 15:9-14, 17
 - d. 1 John 3:23; 4:7-21

Memory Verse:

"Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it." — Ephesians 5:25

Chapter Three

THE WIFE'S PLACE IN THE HOME

Ephesians 5:27-24, 33; Colossians 3:78;1 Peter 3:7-8

INTRODUCTION

Equality with men is a terrible burden for women to bear. Equality really is not the question. Women are neither inferior to men nor superior to them. They are simply a different creation. Another pulse beats in their veins, another way of thinking, of feeling, of being. God made it that way. God did not make a woman to be like a man. That is why women are wonderfully different, wonderfully good at being women; superior, if you please, at being "feminine" but tragically poor in assuming man's role.

Every woman needs to understand what God wants of her. Herein lies her happiness, her fulfillment and satisfaction. To step out of that God-given place and seek to fill another role brings untold misery to all involved.

First of all, there is no substitute for a life given over to Jesus Christ, for a genuine relationship with God. A Christian wife is one who has gotten off the throne of her own life and let Jesus Christ reign there.

For the success of a home and husband-wife relationship, there must be not only his leadership in love but her submission. The Word clearly teaches the wife's place in her relationship to the husband. Anyone who does not submit to this will bring untold havoc and sorrow. Anyone who does submit will bring untold blessing in her own life. Not only the husband but also all who touch her life will see the beauty of her personality.

Let us consider the main role, position, and place of a wife—to be in subjection.

THE FACT OF SUBJECTION (I Corinthians 11:3)

This is considered a distasteful subject to most wives. Most do not want to accept the God-given teaching, or yield in daily life to that which is God's will. But herein lies a woman's strength and beauty spiritually.

A. The Fact in Creation—Woman Made for Man (Genesis 2:18; I Corinthians 11:8, 9).

B. The Fact Seen in the Fall (Genesis 3:16)

C. The Fact Seen in God's Plan and Purpose (Colossians 3: 18; Ephesians 5:22-24; Titus 2:3-5; I Peter 3:1-6)

D. The Fact Seen as the Divine Key to any Woman's Happy, Faithful, Successful Wifehood

This is not an isolated truth but one which occurs repeatedly.

THE NATURE OF SUBJECTION

A. To Be Spiritual, as unto the Lord (Ephesians 5:21, 22)

- B. To Be Obedient to the Husband as Part of Obedience to the Lord**
(Ephesians 5:23)
- C. To Be Cause for Rejoicing and Thanksgiving, Not Sorrow This lays the "responsibility" on the husband in every way.**
- D. To Be the Complementary Teaching of the Husband as Head—Head in Love, by Love, Through Love**
- E. To Fulfill God's Plan for an Ideal Marriage and Home Life To be in submission becomes part of the wife's spiritual walk.**
(Cf. Ephesians 5:25-28).

THE GROUND—FOUNDATION—OF SUBJECTION

- A. Commanded of the Lord**
- B. Based on Man's God-Ordained Position as Head** (Cf. Genesis 3:16)
- C. Not Forced**—Submission of the wife is like unto Christ and the church (Cf. Ephesians 5:24). It arises from loyal attachment, from conscious need of support.
- D. Exists on the Ground of Eminency of Husband, Superiority in Those Attributes Which Enable and Entitle Him to Command**
 1. Larger, stronger, bolder
 2. Mental, emotional qualities that are in a leader

THE EXTENT OF THIS SUBJECTION "In everything . . . in all things."

- A. Subjection in Everything**—Home, Money, Control of Children, her Dress, and her Company.
- B. Not Man's Unlimited Authority.** Both always under higher authority of God's Word

The wife sets the example of submission. The husband can take the proper place as the head of the house only as the wife respects and honors the husband, thereby giving the children the example to do likewise. The obedience given by children will be in direct proportion to that which the wife gives the husband.

The four main areas of conflict in the home are money, direction of children, sex, and occupation. In everything the wife is to be in submission. Husband and wife ought to discuss and pray about every major and minor thing; and the wise, loving husband will ask the wife her opinion. The final decision for action, however, is the husband's. He is responsible to do what God tells him. He has a "right" to delegate any authority and leadership to the wife as under his direction. They should work like a president and vice president of a corporation, each giving total loyalty, respect, and cooperation, but one still in command.

PURPOSE OF SUCH SUBJECTION

A. To Bring Glory to God (Cf. I Corinthians 10:30-32.) God commands it, it is right, and it is His will for the wife.

B. To Have the Best Impact. God knows that since this is the wife's place, she will reflect her true beauty by it, through it, and in it. She will thereby have a tremendous impact upon the husband and the home.

1. The husband is to be treated as "lord" (Ephesians 5:33; I Peter 3:5, 6).
2. Her adornment is to be that "of a meek and quiet spirit" (I Peter 3:1-4).

C. To Avoid Basic Problems

1. Love is lost, happiness gone, the true glory of the wife lost, the "love and respect" from a loyal husband lost.
2. Faith and love fail. For a woman to have her own way does not make the home happy. When trust and respect are gone and the husband's leadership is rejected and thwarted, he will give up. The wife will find herself out "in the cold." She will find him placing upon her all of the directions of the home, children, money, etc. She is not so constituted to carry this load. She fails in it. The children lose the correct "father image" and all is lost.

D. To Be a Picture of Christ and the Church

The "highest, greatest pattern" of the home is Ephesians 5:21-33. The wife is to submit to the husband as the husband submits to the Lordship of Christ. Such lovely submission brings beauty of character which causes the husband to "fall in love" fully with his sweet, yielding wife.

CONCLUSIONS (Reflections)

1. Prayer life is hindered when the home is not right (I Peter 3:7).
2. Husband's love toward the wife is not based on her beauty outwardly, but inwardly.
3. The wife's submission is based on the clear *"thus saith the Lord."*

Memory Verses:

"Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God. Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord." — Ephesians 5:21, 22

Chapter Four

HARMONY IN THE HUSBAND-WIFE RELATIONSHIP

Colossians 3:12-27; I Corinthians 7:7-76;1 Corinthians 73:7-8

INTRODUCTION

In all of life there is no relationship that is so close and intimate as that between husband and wife.

The highest and purest friendship between men cannot compare with that of man and wife. It is closer than the relationship of parents to children, for one must separate from parents and leave the parental home. "Woman . . . was taken out of man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and cleave unto [adhere to, be attached or faithful to] his wife: and they shall be one flesh" (Genesis 2:23, 24; Matthew 19:4-6; Ephesians 5:3 7). In this union one man and one woman surrender their rights to a completely private life of their own. This means the tearing down of pretenses, the unveiling of self, body, emotions, and desires to each other, and accepting each other for what he is. It is a closeness which requires courage, trust, and every other Christian virtue.

In marriage the ability of one to bring happiness or frustration to the other is multiplied. They are united for life whether they achieve happiness or not. Whether the marriage attains heavenly bliss or the torment of maladjustment depends upon both of them.

Two people who differ in sex, temperament, abilities, background, and desires must share and seek to mold a life of peace, harmony, and joy together.

We must consider the things which destroy the harmony needed in the home and the things which will bring harmony between the husband and wife. Some of these things are mighty barriers to the attainment of a good marriage.

SEVEN THINGS A HUSBAND SHOULD CONSIDER

These things, if lacking, will be tremendous stumbling blocks to happiness, but they can be stepping-stones to a joyous marriage.

A. Tenderness (Colossians 3:12-14)

1. The lack of tenderness was put at the head of the list by most women as being the number one lack on the part of their husbands.
2. "If only he could be less self-centered," one wife said. "A man full of energy and ability is certainly able to show tenderness to his wife," one wife complained. "If only he would whisper, 'I love you,'" another said. "Why can't he show appreciation when things go well?" asked another.

B. Common Politeness (Romans 12:9, 10, 14-17)

1. Any marriage would be successful if the partners were as polite to each other as they are to total strangers.
2. Husbands are often impatient but see no reason why the wife should be.

3. Often he is tired but cannot see why she should be.

C. Sociability—Companionship (Philippians 4:8; 2:1-4)

1. A wife wants a husband who will talk to her.
2. She often needs his attention, but many husbands are grouchy or silent when they arrive home.
3. He ought to be good company in the home and outside the home.

D. Understanding (I Peter 3:7)

1. Understand her temperaments and peculiarities.
2. A husband knows in theory that his wife goes through a cycle, or perhaps several cycles, of fluctuation of moods in the course of a month.
3. He should have longsuffering and thoughtfulness to bear this in mind. (I Peter 3:7, 8).

E. Fairness in Financial Matters (I Timothy 6:6-12)

1. Some wives must beg; he doles out a bit along the way. She is expected to do wonders with "but a bit."
2. Together they should learn good money management. They must seek to work out the budget together.

F. Kindness at All Times (I Cor. 13:1-8; Eph. 4:30-32)

1. Sneers and snide remarks in company or before children are definitely wrong.
2. Many husbands continually "poke fun" at the wife, ridicule, and scorn, or abuse with words.
3. This does not make sense, nor a good marriage.

G. Honesty and Truthfulness (Ephesians 4:23-25)

1. When a wife cannot trust her husband, she will find it hard to love him.
2. The husband must live "above reproach."

Remember: "Two shall be one flesh." Remember that the husband is commanded to love his wife "even as Christ loved the church." When a husband sins against his wife, he sins against his own body, against himself, for the two shall be one. He hurts himself as he hurts his wife.

The husband must show courtesy to his wife, thoughtful consideration under every conceivable circumstance. This means that one of the most devastating things that can occur in marriage is for the husband to become critical toward his wife, to treat her with scorn, or to be sarcastic toward her. This is one of the important causes of disintegration in marriage, for such an attitude threatens the basic nature of a woman.

SEVEN THINGS A WIFE SHOULD CONSIDER

Most wives bring into their marriage certain preconceived ideas of how life was going to be; then comes grim reality. It was not the way she had dreamed. And she was not always that loving, patient, starry-eyed, adoring young woman that he married. To keep her marriage happy, a wife should consider certain things.

A. Learn the Real Meaning of Love (Cf. I Corinthians 13:1-8)

1. If you want love, you must make yourself lovable—not just for a day—but always.
2. Love is basically love of life, love of God, proper love of oneself, love of others, and the expression of that love in manifold ways.
3. Give mature love in a way meaningful to your husband.
4. Learn to express love through patience and tolerance of the failings of your husband. Meet his needs, avoiding criticism. Love does not demand—it gives.

B. Do Not Expect a Perfect Marriage—Work for a Good Marriage

(I Peter 3: 1-7; Colossians 3:9-17)

1. There are no perfect marriages.
2. Teenage expectations of marriage are not realistic. A good or a nearly perfect marriage is the work of years.
3. Marriage requires tact, skill, patience, and emotional and spiritual growth.

C. Discover Your Husband's Personal, Unique Needs, and Try to Meet Them

(Ephesians 5:21-24)

1. He has needs, failures, strengths, virtues, and preferences which are in combination like those of no one else.
2. Study his needs and pray over them.

D. Abandon All Dependency upon Your Parents, and Do Not Criticize His Relatives

E. Give Praise and Appreciation Instead of Seeking It

1. You cannot command your husband's approval. You cannot make him more thoughtful by complaining.
2. Offer the same kind of praise recognition that you expect of him. He will learn by your attitude (Ephesians 5:33).

F. Greet Your Husband with Affection

1. Do not greet him with complaints or demands.
2. You should show warmth and affection when he comes home. He may have some heavy burdens from work.
3. Do not begin the evening with bad news.

G. Abandon All Hope of Changing Your Husband Through Attack or Criticism

1. We can only change ourselves; when we change, others change by their reaction to us.
2. You will not change your mate by direct action but by getting the proper reaction. Love changes people. Love begets love.

Memory Verse:

"And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." — Ephesians 4:32

Chapter Five

THE HUSBAND AS A FATHER

Genesis 28:70-22; 32; 33; 35:9-75 "God . . . answered me in the day of my distress, and was with me in the way which I went. " — Genesis 35:5

INTRODUCTION

Many fathers of the Bible have left their footprints on the sands of time. Some, they made carelessly; others, deliberately and with close attention to duty. Many of the fathers of the Bible were selfish—some even cruel; some lived wickedly, yet others walked with the Lord and on holy ground. Some were giants in the faith. What a father Moses, Joshua, Nehemiah, and others must have been! (Joshua 24:14, 15). Many of these fathers were loved, revered, and copied. Others who pattern their lives after them walk in the path of the fear of the Lord, or folly. Their trails were left for all to observe, to avoid or to follow.

The "pivotal place" of the fathers is clearly seen in the Scriptures. It is the fathers who are mentioned. Children find their place as the son or daughter of some certain man. Mothers are named as the wife, or daughter of a certain man or husband, never as a daughter of some certain mother. It is the earthly or natural fathers who are set forth dramatically in the Word of God. It is interesting to note that over one thousand times a father is mentioned in the Old Testament, with less than ten times referring to God as "Father." In contrast, the New Testament puts emphasis on the Heavenly Father.

We have chosen Jacob as the father whose life we want to study in this lesson to glean truths for the fathers of every age. Jacob's failings, sorrows, and aspirations speak to us. Jacob was an imperfect father with an imperfect personality. He could be called the greatest schemer of all times, yet a man of deep spirituality and seeing faith who was made so by strenuous and lifelong discipline (Genesis 49:18).

THE PURPOSE OF A FATHER

Jacob is a wonderful example of a man to whom God spoke often, whom He always led, and on whom He conferred the title, "Prince with God." A father is a many-sided person.

A. Provider, Protector, Citizen, Leader, Follower, Educator, Disciplinarian, Counselor, Good Husband, Sage Grandfather

B. Source and Prototype of Life -- He is the source of strength—or lack of it—according to how he provides materially and spiritually for the growth and development of his children.

C. Provider for the Needs of His Family

1. He can be neither a father nor a Christian if he does not provide (I Timothy 5:8).
2. A father should know the needs of his children and supply them (Luke 11:11; 12:29, 30).
3. Jacob supplied well for the material necessities of his family. He started out with only his staff and a cruse of oil, but he built steadily through toil and business acumen (Genesis 32:10, 30:25-43; 32:36-42).

4. Sad indeed is the family where the spiritual needs are not cared for. Such was Eli's family (Cf. 1 Samuel 2:12,17, 22-24; 3:13).

It is especially a father's duty to teach his sons, potential fathers, how to manage money and business and how to be good providers. Jacob taught his sons to be successful cattlemen and shepherds (Genesis 46:32). Zebedee's sons learned the fisherman's craft; Joseph's sons learned to use the hammer and chisel. Fathers today should encourage their sons to seek the will of God for their lives in employment.

Wise parents will teach children early what they can afford to want and how not to torment themselves to attain the luxuries which would plunge them into debt.

5. Fathers ought to be good stewards of all that God has given, to teach tithing, etc. (Genesis 31:9, 42; 28:22).

D. The Source of the Moral, Spiritual, Mental, and Social Standards Through Discipline

Discipline is love. Jacob had to learn that "whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth" (Hebrews 72:6). He wanted him to live in a way that would bring happiness, peace, and contentment to himself and his family (Hebrews 12:6-11). Jacob had to be made receptive to God's power, love, discipline, and direction. He had to learn to enjoy the fellowship of his Heavenly Father, and to look to Him in every need (Cf. Genesis 28:15, 20, 21; 31:42; 32:36-31).

1. If discipline comes from love, it will result in security.
2. Pointless, arbitrary commands and discipline to satisfy personal whims will bring insecurity and produce unstable children.
3. Double-minded, selfish, temperamental parents will irritate children, annoy them, hinder them, and arouse their enmity (Colossians 3:21).

Punishment just to show authority, to ridicule, to blame, to compare unfairly, or to make petty slights is not worthy of a Christian father. Discipline should be for the "highest good" of the child and for the glory of God.

4. Discipline must be firm, sure, God-honoring, and Bible based (Read the Book of Proverbs for truths about this.)

THE PERSONALITY OF A FATHER

The Old Testament largely shows a fatherhood marred by sin, by physical, material, and spiritual inadequacy.

What kind of father a man is depends on his personality and on how closely he lives to God. By the grace of God, man can grow into competent fatherhood. It took Jacob twenty years from the night he met God at the "gate of heaven" (Genesis 28:77) until he was named and characterized Israel, "Prince with God." It was a great day when he clung, crippled, to the Man from Heaven, sought God's power, and was given his new name. He was loved and highly respected by his family (49; 50: 1-13) and by the nation that proudly called him "our father Jacob. "

Consider a few of the important characteristics needed.

A. Humility

1. Humility consists not simply in thinking lowly of oneself so much as thinking not of self at all but of Christ more.
2. The need of humility (I Peter 5:6; James 4:6-10).
3. It should be "put on" (Colossians 3:12).
4. We should walk in it (Ephesians 4:1, 2).

B. Purity

1. Consider what "fleshly lusts" do (I Peter 2:11).
2. Who are blessed before God? (Matthew 5:8)
3. Notice to what we are called (I Peter 1:15, 16).
4. What goes along with a lustful mind? (Ephesians 5:3)
(Consider Proverbs 6:23, 24; 5:3; 6:25; 7:12, 21, 22, 27;
I Thessalonians 4:3, 7.)

C. Honesty—Truthfulness

1. What does God hate? (Proverbs 6:16-19)
2. What does God want? (II Corinthians 8:21)
3. What should be put away? (Ephesians 4:25) (Consider Colossians 3:9, 10; Proverbs 13:5; 12:19.)

D. Generosity

1. What does Acts 20:35 teach us?
2. What is the Christian principle under which we should live?
(II Corinthians 9:6-8)
3. What is our Lord's promise? (Luke 6:38)

Every Christian characteristic that should be in our children must be first in us (Cf. II Peter 1 :3- 12). Every father should consider very seriously his personal life, personality, habits, and attitudes. Our children should see Christ in us; they should be able to follow our faith and practice.

Memory Verse:

"But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever. Amen." — II Peter 3:18

Chapter Six

THE WIFE'S ROLE AS MOTHER

Titus 2:7-5; 1 Peter 3:1-7

INTRODUCTION:

It is extremely important that you examine the "roles" that are yours in life. You should become aware of each role that falls to you and study carefully how you carry it out in order to put your life into proper balance.

Having "balance" in life is not an easy thing. It is not easy to put everything in its right place, but it must be done. A careful examination of the Word of God on the part of husband and wife will help immensely IF they will then apply God's truth to their lives.

The roles of a woman (mother-wife) would include the following, and she must keep her roles in balance if she is to lead a happy, wholesome life:

wife	mother	neighbor,	friend		
homemaker	relative	citizen	daughter	churchwoman	person
daughter-in-law	career	woman	(maybe)	grandmother	

"Sixty years ago domestic life was virtually the only goal of a woman. Today, a woman can be as self-sufficient as any man. She has a wide variety of careers to choose from. In addition, a vast world of clubs, social services and church work beckons."

"The challenge of a varied life, continuous emphasis on the equality of the sexes, easy mobility and the telephone all contribute to making the role of a "wife" as difficult for the woman to keep in balance as the role of "husband" is for the man." —Dr. Homer Brandt

There are certain things the wife must keep in mind.

A RIGHT ATTITUDE TOWARD MARRIAGE (Matthew 19:3-6)

In our day the wife faces a major change as she begins a marriage. Often she must interrupt a career—a busy, fascinating, varied life involving contact with many interesting people. She assumes the role of a wife and has a startling change of life. Many wives indulge in self-pity, longing for their former ways of life rather than making the adjustments that are necessary.

Experience shows that marriage is a step up, not a step down. Submission to the task of being a wife is not the end of freedom, but the beginning of one of the highest and most challenging of professions (Proverbs 31 :10-31). God does not mean it to be just "a weary routine" of work, but a blessed life of losing oneself "in others" (Proverbs 31:10-28).

A RIGHT ATTITUDE TOWARD HERSELF (I Peter 3: 1-4; Ephesians 5:2 1 -24)

Her desire must be the "hidden" beauty of a sweet, victorious, dedicated life to the Lord. Being overly concerned about the "outward" painting of the face, makeup, hair arrangement, etc., will become a snare to her. She should seek to be beautiful but realize that true beauty is from the inside.

She should desire to have about her an inner serenity, a calmness, and a peace that are attractive to others.

She should desire to be "modestly attired" so as not to give excitement to someone of the opposite sex. She should keep her "body" covered except in the privacy of her own home.

A woman should watch her emotions, for basically she is an "emotional" being. She should seek to be emotionally mature.

A. Deal Constructively with Reality

Learn to live without being overwhelmed by the anxieties that surround her all the time (Ephesians 5:21-24). Learn to lean on her husband.
(Psalm 34; 61:2)

B. Have the Capacity to Change

Parents must learn to accept challenges and changes (Philippians 4:4-7).

C. Be Free from Tension and Worry Symptoms (Col. 3:14, 15; Isa. 26:3; Isa. 40:31; 41:10, 13; 11 Tim. 1:7)

D. Find More Satisfaction from Giving Than from Getting (Acts 20:35)

A RIGHT ATTITUDE TOWARD MOTHERHOOD (Titus 2:2-5)

There is no higher calling nor a more noble, challenging profession than that of being a mother. There must be a "balance" in her duty as mother and her role as wife. Mothering must not become all-absorbing. At the same time, she should not neglect the children, but . . .

A. Know them well

B. Understand them

C. Guide them

D. Love and mold them

Three big problems are apparent today. We have become afraid of our children (in America). We have surrendered to a permissiveness that is both unworkable and devastating. We adversely react to our own failures and deficiencies.

A RIGHT ATTITUDE TOWARD HOMEMAKING (Cf. II Thessalonians 3:11-13 and I Thessalonians 4:11)

To make a home is more than to keep house. The homemaker's program is to promote harmony and happy family relations and to bring into the home a sense of well-being, peace, and joy. A homemaker's efficiency in doing housework is only a small part of her measurement as a wife and a mother. Her attitudes, orderliness, efficiency, manner, and organization are extremely important too. (Ecclesiastes 9:10; I Corinthians 10:31; 14:33, 40; Psalm 51:1 o.)

A RIGHT ATTITUDE TOWARD THE COUPLE

Marriage is permanent, while parenthood is only temporary. The leaving-cleaving relationship of a man and woman is the essence of the family. Children are not the "hub" of the family. Their place is on the periphery, sheltered and loved but respected as children and expected to act that way. The center of a family is the relationship between the husband and wife. All else revolves around that.

A marriage begins with two people and will end that same way. It runs the cycle of parenthood and returns where it started.

It will help if you . . .

A. Determine to Keep Your Partner First in Your Affection— Ahead of Your Children

1. Revive your love; renew your vows.
2. Show affection at home—in front of the children.
3. Speak your love; let them hear it. (Husband, don't call her Mother; call her what she is to you.)
4. Cook and dress for your partner, not for the children.
5. Find your emotional satisfaction and support in your sweetheart so that you will not need to seek it from your children. Continue the courtship.

B. Do Not Allow Yourself to Become a Slave of Your Children's Lives and Activities

Time must be made for the couple to "be together," to keep close communication, to "stay in love."

Do not let nursery school, little league, music lessons, athletic events, parties, etc., make you a "robot" for the sake of the children. Children must learn that not everything others do is necessary to full living. Having a "family night" for all would be much better.

How you treat your mate is more important than how you treat your children. You cannot really love your partner and neglect your children. A child's basic security is in knowing that his parents love each other—that is even more important than their love for the child. He is assured by their love for each other that he will never be abandoned, and this is part of a strong, satisfying relationship.

C. Always Take the Long Look (Ps. 18: 1; Matt. 22:37)

1. The future is the result of the past.
2. What is done now will determine the quality of your relationship later.
3. Your love should be deepening. You should be sharing your prayers, dreams, and ambitions with each other and with God (Proverbs 23:7; Galatians 5:13).

Marriage is not wrecked by a "blowout" but rather a slow leak of continued negligence and inattention.

Memory Verse:

"Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised." —Proverbs 31:30

Chapter Seven

CHILDREN AND THEIR PARENTS!

II Samuel 13; 15:1-6; 19:1-10; 1 Kings 1:5-10; 2:12-23; Ephesians 6:1-4;
I Samuel 3:12-13; Genesis 18:19 "O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom!
would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!" — II Samuel 18:33

INTRODUCTION

A certain man is the father of five children. He is familiar with the mass production of automobiles in the highly mechanized factories of his home town, and also with a small shop turning out fine furniture in a nearby village. A recent trip to the furniture shop reminded him of rearing children. In the size of his family, he concedes, his case may be more like the mass production of the automobile. But the process of raising it is like the craftsman's furniture making. Each of the products is custom built and requires his patient shaping, sanding, fitting, molding, and polishing.

The thing that is destroying America's youth is "Juvenile Delinquency." The prevalence of crime, drugs, and wickedness among youth today is astonishing. While there are millions of wonderfully adjusted, happy, obedient youth, we as parents must realize just what destroys youth. Then being "forearmed" and "forewarned," we must do what is necessary to save our own youth.

We want to study some of the problem areas which have brought about the ruin of many children.

THE PROBLEM OF NEGLECT

A. Results of Research A research team investigating juvenile delinquency in a New York City slum learned the following:

1. The fathers were not to be found. That area was a world where there were no fathers.
2. Much of the "welfare" area of the United States is a fatherless world where fathers have just abandoned their offspring.
3. Fathers abandon their children in a variety of ways . . .
 - a. Some literally desert their wives and children. They disappear and their families never receive one cent from them.
 - b. Other fathers practically desert their families by staying away from home a great deal. They support their families, but their children seldom see them (Cf. Samuel's family, I Samuel 7: 15-17; 8: 1-5). These allow business and professional life to take their time and attention.
 - c. Others are ordinary dads who support their families well and are home but fail to be real fathers. They have nothing in common with their children. They seem withdrawn, preoccupied, and selfish.
 - d. Far too many fathers are in all practicality abandoning their children. They sit for hours with magazines, newspapers, or television and let their children know they do not want to be bothered. They may have a hobby, but they are not interested in "molding" their children's lives. As the years go by they are not in communication with their children, and they grow further away from their father. This is very serious.

B. Parents Too Busy

1. One young person wrote, *"My parents surely made a serious mistake when they had kids. They don't take time for us. About the only way I can get to talk to them is to make an appointment."*
2. A young lady wrote, *"It was a rare occasion when our family did anything together. Our kitchen was like a cafeteria. Seldom did we have a meal together. I'll bet I ate six thousand peanut butter sandwiches in five years."*
3. Children and youth must have shown to them
 - a. Security
 - b. Attention
 - c. Love
 - d. Interest

C. Parents Not Interested

1. *"Okay, okay, now scoot along and don't bother me,"* was the stock answer to a need one mother always gave.
2. *"Yeah," "Okay," "Leave me alone! I'm busy now,"* etc., shows what we parents are really like.
3. *"One of the things most lacking in our families today is the exchange of really deep, warm feelings between parents and children,"* says Dr. Despert, author of *Children of Divorce*.
4. There are nine goal values which cause people to act. Among them are
 - a. Recognition or favorable reputation
 - b. Response and affection
 - c. Security or self-preservation
 - d. Workmanship—desire to create and do things well

THE PROBLEM OF PERMISSIVENESS

The United States Children's Bureau some years ago listed thirty-four separate conditions of delinquent behavior. Most of these were adolescent protests against parental control and adult authority. They included smoking, frequenting pool rooms, going beyond parental control, sexual experimentation, and drugs.

Many Christian parents are reluctant to admit that their children may be delinquent. They prefer to overlook or excuse the problems of their children; they hope that they will "outgrow" their bad habits. Too often parents do not dare to face the waywardness of their children because this might admit failure in themselves. Delinquency is an old problem, and the Bible tells us many stories about the sins of parents and their problem children. A complete study of David's home and Eli's home would reveal many facts and illustrations of failure. The basic problem was "permissiveness" and "neglect." Look at some facts about David's family.

A. Facts of the Family

1. He had nineteen sons and one daughter by his wives, seven of whom are named (II Samuel 3:2-5; 5:13-16).
2. He had sons and daughters born to him by his concubines. Some of these wives later deserted him and dishonored him (II Samuel 5:13; 12:7-9; 16:22).

3. We read of his family and are impressed with how little there was to give him joy and how much there was of anxiety and grief.
4. While he was a hero and beloved king, he was a troubled parent by his own fireside.
5. Of his four sons with whom we are best acquainted, only one was a wise, God-fearing, and obedient son, the kind who would make a father glad (Proverbs 10:1).

B. The Folly in the Family

1. Amnon, the oldest son, could not control his passion for a beautiful princess, his half-sister Tamar. (She was probably a teenager, was distinguished for her piety, modesty, domesticity, obedience, and tenderheartedness (II Samuel 13:1, 7-14).
2. Amnon was bent on having his own way; he committed a terrible sin and "folly" in Israel (II Samuel 13:3-6; 1 1-14).
3. Then he turned to "hatred" for her (II Samuel 13: 15-17).
4. The result was that Absalom, who now hated Amnon, vowed in his heart to kill him (II Samuel 13:20; 23-29). He worked things out to take Absalom's life.
5. Absalom went from bad to worse—deceived his father again and again and conspired to take the kingdom and his father's life (II Samuel 15—18).

C. The Failure of David

1. David was only angry when he heard about Amnon's terrible sin and did not punish him for his criminal assault upon Tamar.
2. David, an affectionate father (and overpermissive), found it easier to give in to Amnon's whims and desires than to control him.
3. This leniency with Amnon kept hate brooding in the heart of Absalom, who was Tamar's brother.
4. After the terrible troubles with Absalom, yet David said, "Deal gently, for my sake, with the young man" (II Samuel 78:5). That seems strange when Absalom brought trouble and war to Israel. Yet Absalom died in battle, and David mourned inconsolably for another wayward son (II Samuel 18:18 33; 19:4).

There must have been some terrible faults in the upbringing of David's family before such results as these would come to pass. David's discipline, instruction, correction, and guidance were not much better than Eli's (I Samuel 3:13; 2:12-17). He lacked the firmness and faithfulness of Abraham, of whom God had said, "I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him"(Genesis 18:79). This permissiveness as we named it today, was David's weakness to the end. When Adonijah, the brother of Absalom, turned traitor (I Kings 1:5-10), David knew about it and ignored it even though he had been told that the Lord would have Solomon reign after him (I Chronicles 22:6-19). Adonijah—brilliant, proud, scheming, deceitful, bold, lacking in piety and respect for his parents—also met defeat and a violent death (1 Kings 2: 13-25).

D. The Favor of a Good Son

Only Solomon gave David pleasure and happiness.

1. He heard his father's instruction (Proverbs 13:1).
2. He served the Lord "with a perfect heart and with a willing mind" (I Chronicles 28:9).
3. He was studious, observant and diligent (Ecclesiastes 1:12-13; 12:8-14).
4. He was obedient and honored his parents (I Kings 2:19, 20; I Chronicles 28:1, 5; 22:9, 10).

E. The Facing of Basic Facts

1. The delinquency in children and youth lies at the door of parents. "Delinquency" means "anything lacking; omission of duty; a misdeed." Delinquency is sin (James 4:17).
2. All parents and children are morally responsible. Delinquency is punishable and also forgivable. When Achan stole, it was called iniquity and sin against God (Joshua 7:19-26; 22:20). His whole family was judged.
3. The solution is pardon, a clean heart, a right spirit within (Psalm 51:1-10), and a new life (Ephesians 4:22-32).
4. The answer is basically. . .
 - a. Direction to the family from the Word of God (Deuteronomy 6:6-18).
 - b. Nurture of the family in the things of God (Ephesians 6:1-4).
 - c. Example of a godly, holy, separated, Christ-honoring life.

CONCLUSIONS

Guard Your Home We are being robbed without knowing it. Check your home. It may have already happened. Some things are missing; others substituted.

What about. . .

1. **BIBLE:** If not in its proper place, there is uncertainty, confusion, weakness, and trust in man instead of reliance on God.
2. **VALUES:** Fun is substituted for joy. Self becomes paramount; Christ is crowded out of the heart. Maybe your sense of values has been stolen away.
3. **FAMILY ALTAR:** Does the family gather to read and pray? What binds your home together?
4. **DISCIPLINE:** Both self-discipline and that of the children may have been taken. Check.
5. **PURPOSE:** What is the purpose of your home, love, children, the church? Has it been stolen? (Cf. I Corinthians 10:31, 32; Colossians 3:15-17.)

Memory Verse:

"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 Eight

TRAINING YOUR TWIGS (Part One)

Galatians 5:22, 23; 1 Corinthians 70:11;

Colossians 3:14-17; Proverbs 4:1-11

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

— Proverbs 22:6

INTRODUCTION

The Christian method of training children, which is just as clearly given as other directions in the Christian life, is very much neglected and disregarded. Many parents neglect the direction of the Word of God in guiding their children. Many a Christian farmer takes better care of his cattle than many parents do of their children. A Christian mother may take better care of her house than of her children. Many people are guilty of following the directions closely on some equipment which they may buy but carelessly follow the Word of God in respect to child training. If training had no influence, God never would have commanded it (Proverbs 22:6). Christian parents are not left to their own wisdom in this important task. The Word of God prescribes the method for us.

TRAINING BY BIBLICAL ADMONITION IN THE HOME

A. God Trains Us by Admonition

1. God admonished Moses about building the tabernacle. (Cf. Exodus 25–36; Hebrews 8:5)
2. He gave us His Word to admonish us (Cf. I Corinthians 10:11; II Timothy 3: 16, 17; Psalm 32:8).
3. We are to practice brotherly admonition to the saved around us when they fail in walking and living as God desires (Cf. Colossians 3:16; Romans 15:14, 15; II Thessalonians 3:15).

So we are taught to admonish a disobedient brother to try to get him to see his error and to repent and obey Christ. Isaiah's method of admonition was, *"Precept must be upon precept; . . . line upon line; here a little, and there a little"* (Isaiah 28:10).

B. God Wants Fathers to Use Admonition (Ephesians 6:4)

We are to bring up our children in the admonition of the Lord. We are to fulfill Proverbs 22:6.

1. Solomon admonished his sons (Proverbs 1:8, 9; 2:1-5; 3:1-4; 4:1-4, 10; 6:20-23).
2. Joshua admonished the nation of Israel when he spoke to the men as a father to sons (Cf. Joshua 24:14-25).

From the above we want now to see . . .

C. How God Wants Us to Practice Admonition

1. The Value of Admonition

It means to set straight; to instruct; to warn; to remind us; to guide from error; to set forth the right; to teach "line upon line"; to rebuke; to bring about repentance.

2. The Source of Admonition

It must be the Word of God. It must be the *"thus saith the Lord."* How we train up a child in the way he ought to go is clearly set forth in Deuteronomy 11:18-22.

- a. ***"Lay up these my words in your heart"*** (v. 18). We are saved by the Word, grow by the Word, and are to live by the Word of God. Christian character comes by the Word of God. (Study Romans 10: 17; I Peter 1:23; I Peter 2:2; II Peter 1:3-9; Matthew 4:4; Psalm 1.)

Parents are to "lay up" God's Word in their hearts—to memorize it, meditate upon it, hide it in the heart. We cannot teach our children something we do not know. (Note Proverbs 4:23; Matthew 12:34-37; Proverbs 23:7.)

The tongue is the organ of the heart, and what we put into our hearts is what will come forth.

- b. ***"Ye shall teach them to your children"*** (v. 19). The Word of God hidden in the heart must flow out in loving instruction to the children. We must use every means to instill the principles of the Word into their minds and hearts. It must be diligent teaching, the practical application when we sit in the house, when we walk by the way (in the diversions of life), and when we lie down and rise up. There should be a definite time when we teach the Word of God to the family. It must be presented in all of its wonder and preciousness, and be made attractive, blessed, and practical.
- c. ***"Write them upon . . . thine house"*** (v. 20). Part of bringing children up in the admonition of the Lord is our living the Word of God out in daily life. When they came home from the feast days (like days of revival where the Word of God was preached), they brought the Word of God home with them (Cf. Nehemiah 9: 1-4). It was inscribed on frontlets, on wristbands, on items to put on the door post, etc. This means that the "life style" of the Christian home should prove that we love Christ. The kind of music we listen to, the mail we receive, the things we read, the pictures we have on the walls should prove that Christ is Lord of our lives and of our homes. Would the Lord be pleased with the music in your home? with the television watching? with the radio listening? with the kind of recording that you have?
- d. ***"Ye shall diligently keep all these commandments"*** (v. 22). We "train up a child in the way he should go" by admonition, by discipline, and by example. Our example goes a long way in the daily training. The parents must "diligently keep" the Word of God in daily living. The parents must "do" what the child is taught to do. The parents must "live out" in life the precepts and commands which they so freely give.

A strengthening of convictions comes where there is the right kind of admonition, where there is teaching of why, and where there is consistency on the part of the parents.

The wisdom of experience can be passed on to others through admonition. One must be careful that it does not become nagging. It must be accompanied with helping the children to do right or to correct the bad habit.

If there are don'ts (and there will be), they should be accompanied with explanation. There must be intelligence in admonition. The child has a mind and must be able to reason with the parents (as he gets older) and know the "why." In whatever form the admonition is given—talking, preaching, teaching, counseling—it must be such that the child can receive it and profit from it (James 4:17; Colossians 2:6; Ephesians 6:6).

D. The Foundation of Admonition Is Christ (John 15:1-10).

The very purpose is that Christ might be the Lord in our homes. Children must sense the very presence of the Lord in our homes. They and we must know the power of Christ in our lives so that we will not be weak, stumbling Christians. Does Jesus live in your home? Is your home a place where people sense His very presence? The purpose of a godly home is to bring glory unto God in all things (I Corinthians 10:31-33).

Memory Verse:

“Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life: but teach them thy sons, and they sons’ sons:” -- Deuteronomy 4:9

Chapter Nine

TRAINING YOUR TWIGS (Part Two)

Galatians 5:22, 23; 1 Corinthians 10:11;
Colossians 3:14-17; Proverbs 4:1-11

TRAINING BY INDIRECT NURTURE IN THE HOME

"Bring them up in the nurture . . . of the Lord" — Ephesians 6:4

INTRODUCTION

"Indirect nurture" emphasizes the silent example of the parents of the child. Consider Hannah, who loved children and longed for a child. (Mother instinct and affection are a divine endowment. They are honorable and lovely and cause her highest joys.) She is an outstanding example of a positive influence (I Samuel 1, 2). She was a woman of prayer, of praise, of faith, and of great dedication. She promised to give back her child to the Lord. She was an honest woman who kept her word. What a contrast to Eli, whose neglect to admonish and nurture his sons caused them to become very evil!

Nurture is defined best by consideration of what it means to care for plants. Nurturing is often what makes the difference between a poor and a good plant. Two areas we can control:

1. The atmosphere must be right; for the atmosphere of the home affects the child's feelings. Feelings are powerful in molding his character. This kind of nurture is continuous in its effect.
2. The environment must be right; for by the arranging of the child's environment he is being nurtured. He is very much affected by this indirect training (Proverbs 22:3).

Nurture must begin in the home. There must be a warm, spiritual atmosphere. The child is but loaned to the parent; he or she must be trained for God.

*Our children are what we are. They are good when we are good and bad when we are bad. They are clever, modest, witty, agreeable, amiable if these are the parents' qualities. **Remember, "instruction begins, but example accomplishes."***

A. Nurture by Love (I Corinthians 13:1-8; I John 3:18; 4:7-21)

1. Love not "in word only" but in "deed and in truth."
2. We do not truly love our children when we allow them to do wrong without chastisement. We do not truly love them and allow them to disobey. Permissiveness is not love; we may think it is, but what will the end result be?
3. As a loving mother will listen to the child's sorrows, woes, and needs, she will show love.

B. Nurture by Joy (Philippians 4:4)

1. Joy makes an outstanding mark on a child. It will help shape his personality.

2. Spirit-filled, radiant parents will have a home of joy. Such environment will bring about cheer in the inner life of the child.
3. Cheer is very contagious, and it does not cost anything.

C. Nurture by Peace (Isaiah 54:13; John 14:27)

1. The peaceful atmosphere of the home can bring about well-adjusted, happy children.
2. This will mean an orderly home for the glory of the Lord.
3. This will mean the end of strife, envy, jealousy, frettings.

D. Nurture by Patience (Galatians 5:22,23; Hebrews 10:35-37)

1. This will end nagging and yelling at the children. Unchristian attitudes by parents really hurt children.
2. Obedience should be taught by firm, quiet handling.
3. Lovingly punishing and spanking are one thing; nagging, screaming, and yelling, and anger is quite another (Ecclesiastes 9:17).

E. Nurture by Gentleness (Galatians 5:22, 23; Romans 13:7)

1. Gentleness in the home is very contagious.
2. What a lack of courtesy, respect, and reverence there is in the average Christian home!
3. What a blessing there is when all, youngest to oldest, show a gentle spirit (Colossians 3:21; Ephesians 4:32)!
4. The manner in which reproof is given makes a big difference (James 3:17, 18).

F. Nurture by Goodness (Proverbs 31:26) Careful with the truth; honest; etc.

G. Nurture by Faith (I Corinthians 13:7; Colossians 3:21)

Many children are discouraged to do right because they just "can't please their parents" (Philippians 1:6). H. Nurture by Meekness (I Peter 5:5, 6)

"Be clothed with humility."

"God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble."

"Humble yourselves."

TRAINING BY DIRECT NURTURE IN THE HOME (Deuteronomy 6:6, 7)

Nurture includes the proper environment, atmosphere, spiritual food, and the best care that love, patience, and labor can give.

The child must have spiritual food for the development of the mind and spirit. The parents must see that his spirit, mind, and soul are fed what is nourishing for growth, digestible for his age, and well prepared.

It must be given in such a way that it will increase his appetite (Cf. I Peter 2:2; Hebrews 5:12-74). It must be spiritual food which he can digest.

A. By the Right Kind of Reading

A famous Christian leader said, *"Every evil act of my pre-conversion life I can trace to something I read. The transformation of my life and every notable spiritual victory since my conversion is the result of what I read in the Bible or some other book."*

1. Evil books, movies, radio, and television are accountable for many awful crimes, all done through suggestion.
2. Good books produce wholesome images which are springs to wholesome conduct. Parents ought to know what their children read and do the choosing for them.
3. Reading to children can be a time of communication, mutual affection, and molding of lives.
4. Reading can be contagious. Love of reading cannot be forced upon a child; it ought to be "caught early from the parents." Good books—biographies, poetry, nature books, books on how to do things, especially good Christian books — should be in the home.

B. By the Right Kind of Music

1. Music is a force for good or evil. Satan can use it mightily for wrong.
2. Music is a force which can change and mold the life and bring love for the right things. It can sweeten the mood, lighten the labor, and work off unhealthy emotions. Happy is the child who grows up listening to the great hymns, who early learns to sing and enjoy the best of musical art.

C. By the Use of the Word of God

Most important and effective in direct nurturing is the teaching of the Word of God in the home.

1. The Word of God is quick and powerful (Hebrews 4: 12).
2. It is a lamp to the feet (Psalm 119:105, 130).
3. It is the way of cleansing for the young man (Psalm 119:9-11).
4. It is strength for the heavy soul, a sword for Christian warfare (Ephesians 6:10, 17).
5. It is the secret of prosperity and success and is the only way a young person will prosper (Joshua 1:8, 9).
6. Read the Book of Proverbs carefully and listen to the Word of God attentively. It will tell you how to nurture the child. (Cf. Proverbs 6:21-23; Isaiah 55:10, 11)

Proper methods are important. More care should be used when giving the Word of God to children than when giving them secular instruction since the Word of God will more effectually work to develop Christian character.

For years children have been taught the Scriptures and often with little apparent results. This fault is not because of weakness in the Word of God. It is the failure of our method of teaching it. The "atmosphere" or "environment" (or indirect nurture) may counteract direct teaching. If the home is not right, and the teaching not backed with parents living for the Lord as the right example, no amount of teaching the Bible will avail to nurture the child.

D. By Exercise of the Will

1. As the body grows by exercise, so does the soul by self-activity.
2. It is important that children learn for themselves by doing as much as possible, with strict guidance.
3. Often parents will not allow the child to develop but will make all the decisions for him.
4. A child is "born in part," "made in part," but in a great part he must make himself.
5. We must encourage children all we can to help them develop in the way they ought to go.

E. In the Use of Money

1. They must learn the value of money, being allowed to spend some foolishly in small amounts.
2. Developing the inner life in the use of money is a worthwhile investment.

F. In Giving of Self in Service (Matthew 20:28)

1. We learn to serve by serving.
2. Even the little child should be nurtured in the doing of kind errands, in sacrificing something from his garden or flower beds, his gifts, his toys, his money, or his time.
3. The selfish child (Are not all of us at times?) can be taught to be unselfish. We cannot blame the child's inherited nature for this but our indolence in training.

G. In Expression of Interest in Spiritual Things.

1. Most children will express themselves in the classroom.
2. Being taught to get the **most out of** Sunday School, worship, and prayer services will cause the child to grow through opportunity for self-expression.

Christian homes are for the purpose of nurturing the child in the "love and fear" of the Lord. We must study to do a good job. We must read good, spiritual books and helps in this task. We must secure good reading materials for our children, good music, and good helps of various kinds. Above all, reading the Book of Proverbs often will be a great help.

Memory Verse:

"And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." -- Ephesians 6:4

Chapter Ten

FACING CHILD DISCIPLINE

INTRODUCTION

1. What does God want in child discipline?
2. What does the Bible teach about disciplining a child?
3. How should we handle children?

First of all, we must understand just what discipline is. *The word means "training which corrects, molds, perfects, strengthens; training in self-control and obedience to given standards." This is the whole Christian life: training in self-control and obedience to the given standards of God's Word. The child learns his pattern of obedience to God from the pattern of obedience to his parents. We also understand how to discipline our children from a study of the way the Lord disciplines us.*

For discipline to be effective, it must have authority behind it. *We have all the authority of God behind us. The authority of the Word of God should be the authority with which discipline is administered. Remember, God is behind you; and more specifically, the authority is "in" you, for He dwells in the saved. So all that He is, you are as you yield to the working of His Spirit through you. Do you remember the authority of Jesus Christ as He cleansed the temple? Do you remember how He spoke as one having authority and not as the Scribes (Mark 1:22)? His power is our power. "All authority is given unto me" [Jesus] (Matthew 28:78); and in a similar manner, His authority and power are ours in getting out the Word of God. God's will is twofold: that His power and authority (of the Word of God) come through your voice, and your actions; that His dignity and poise rest upon you in a way that commands obedience.*

"God has not given us the spirit of fear, but of power [His authority], and of love [His love], and of a sound mind [His wisdom to administer the authority and the love]" (1 Timothy 1:7).

Discipline then is not just to punish the child for stepping out of line but especially to teach the child the way he ought to go.

DISCIPLINE INVOLVES PUNISHMENT

God holds us accountable for discipline. Much of it will be "punishment" tempered with love, directed by the Holy Spirit, and accompanied by instruction and exhortation (Cf. I Samuel 3:13, 14; Proverbs 4: 1,3). The child must be taught with an enforcing of the commands. Discipline should begin when the child is very young. An infant knows whether he or she can manipulate the parent, and if he can, he will. Do not be afraid to be boss. Children must know that there is someone stronger and wiser.

Scriptural discipline is simple and sure . . . "the rod."

A. The Rod (The way of love)

"He that spareth the rod hateth his son, but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes" (Proverbs 13:24).

1. If we love our child, we will discipline him often.
2. It is sentimentality, not love, that withholds the rod.

Teaching which is not backed up with Bible discipline does not convey love and understanding of the child.

3. Why the laxness and the softness which neglect the rod? It is of the devil, of Hell, of the ideas and philosophy of this world, and because of the teaching of evolution.

A spanking combines the two aspects of love and fear, and this is patterned after our relationship to the Heavenly Father (Cf. Deuteronomy 6:4, 5, 13; Matthew 22:36, 37; Acts 10:1, 2; 13:16; Colossians 3:22). God's discipline of us, His human children, is calculated to inspire fear (Hebrews 12:5-11). This does not signify a failure or a withdrawal of His love. God expects you to spank your children when they rebel or disobey.

B. The Rod (The first response, not the last resort)

1. If you spank as the last resort, you are wrong.
2. Too often parents only spank after reasoning, yelling, pleading, cajoling, sarcasm, and threats have failed; and an irate and desperate parent finally gives up and spansks his child.
3. You have already been training your child . . . you have trained him to do wrong, to get by, to push you around.
4. To bring obedience is the "first" action, not the last when you are finally worn out. *"The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame"* (Proverbs 29:15).
5. Parent, you are the authority to the child.
 - a. You do not plead for obedience; neither do you threaten, but you speak a kind word of authority, a "right word, a well considered word, a word which the child understands and can carry out."
 - b. Then you back up that word and teach obedience to the command. The child must be taught early that the authority of the parent is not to be trifled with.
 - c. Such a child will be a happy, secure, obedient child, living in accord with Divine Order.

C. The Rod (It works)

1. It works because God's blessing is behind it, His authority is behind it, His will is behind it, His direction is behind it.
2. Consider Hebrews 12: 11.

D. The Rod (God's appointed means of discipline)

1. The parent must consider that the "rod" is God's appointed means of discipline.
2. It is the choice of Fatherly love and wisdom.
3. Proverbs 23:13, 14; Proverbs 22:15.
4. Spanking usually is reserved for dealing with rebellion, disrespect, talking back, disobedience, and stubbornness. All of these things are serious to the family, to the child, and in the "eyes of God" (Cf. I Samuel 15: 17-23).

DISCIPLINE INVOLVES KNOWLEDGE

A. Commands and Directions Must Be Clear

1. Be sure that the child understands and that your command is based upon Bible principles.
2. Disrespect, disobedience to direct commands, and stubbornness are serious.
3. Do not have too many commands and limitations. Make the child **keep** what you do set. **Keep Your Word.**

B. Guiding Children Implies a Purpose and Goal

1. Comprehend God's will and know what pleases Him.
2. Know what molds the life of children. Understand them and their process of learning.
3. Children who live in an atmosphere of loving effort can survive many technical mistakes.
 - a. Parenthood is a matter of feelings, dedication, loving concern, firm discipline, and enjoyment of the children.
 - b. Forgiveness and openness are also very important.

DISCIPLINE REQUIRES ADULT CONVICTION (Cf. Proverbs 29:15; 29:17; Revelation 3:19; Romans 14)

A. Convictions That Are Founded on the Word of God because our purpose is to build character, our convictions must be founded on the Word of God.

B. Training That Is Bible Based

Our training must be based upon the Word of God, not upon our whims or our past limitations due to our lack of Bible training as children.

C. Parents Who Stand on Convictions

Parents must be careful not to become soft and give in. A child has the right to expect that his parents know better than he and that they lead the way. He should expect them to possess a conviction strong enough to carry him along.

D. Parents Whose Actions and Methods Arise Internally

What you do and the way you do it are a compound of your knowledge, your values, and your inner strengths.

DISCIPLINE INVOLVES SUPERVISION

A. Training Must Be Enacted by Parents

B. Supervision Must Be Performed

Reasoning and telling will not substitute for the supervision that must take place.

DISCIPLINE INVOLVES LIMITS

A. Necessary Boundaries for Our Well-being

B. Specific Limits—Reasonable, Enforceable, God-honoring

DISCIPLINE INVOLVES HELP

A. In Understanding

Children must have help to understand the drive of the sin nature. They must understand the way of salvation, the way of victory, and the way to overcome temptation.

B. In Admonition and Nurture (See Lessons 8 and 9.)

C. In Prayer—For Them and With Them

Family altar, where there is the explanation of the Word of God and its application, is a great help in discipline.

DISCIPLINE INVOLVES PRESSURE

Guiding children involves dealing with resistance. Many times the inclinations of a child or young person are not in his best interest. There must be pressure toward the right, pressure that is as strong and gentle as necessary. Pressure is everything outside the individual that influences or directs him in what he does, thinks, or feels. This is a constructive force that leads him to a knowledge of right and wrong. (There are many pressures of the wrong kind in the public school among peers of the child or youth, and these must be counteracted with the right kind of pressures.)

A. Based on the "Common Good"

B. Based on the Word of God

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. What does God command in Colossians 3:20?
2. What does God want according to Proverbs 6:20?
3. What is the responsibility of parents according to Prov. 4:1-4?
4. What does God promise in Proverbs 22:15?

Memory Verse:

"Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him." — Proverbs 22:15

Lesson Eleven

WORKING WITH OUR TEENS (Part One)

INTRODUCTION

Many people when referring to teens will say, "**Oh, those terrible teens!**" Some years ago I heard a pastor speak very forcibly about the terrible years he experienced as a teen. He said very strongly that he *"would never want to be a teenager again."*

A mother said, *"If only you would stay twelve years old and never become one of those terrible teenagers!"* That statement brought the girl's retort, *"Mom, I don't intend to be one of those 'terrible' teenagers!"* And that settled that!

Many parents would say, *"Babies and children I understand, but when it comes to teenagers, I'm in a fog."*

Mrs. Shirley Rice has written the following: *"The teenage years are the years of weaning the children from our shepherding to following the voice of the Great Shepherd. We carry the little lambs in our bosom; the teenager must learn to walk. There must be the gradual loosing of the strings which bind them to us. We have to know when to tug gently, just to remind them we are there, and when to take our hands off completely."*

Many parents think they are in for seven years of hard labor just as soon as Junior turns thirteen.

Parents labor under some false ideas about young people, among them being that. . .

- A. Teenagers cannot be disciplined.**
- B. Teenagers are only children.**
- C. Teen-Parent conflicts are a sign of weakness in the home.**
- D. Teenagers create problems.**
- E. Teenage life today is no different from when we as parents were young people.**

It is very important that we understand teenagers and that we cooperate with the Holy Spirit and the use of the Word of God in meeting their needs. Let's consider the foregoing points.

TEENAGERS CAN BE DISCIPLINED

1. The same points about discipline as studied in the previous lesson are true about teens.
2. Every point of Lesson 10 is true because God's Word does not change. Never do we read that teens are different and are to be treated as adults.
3. The parents who fail to discipline their teen will hurt that teen for all of life, and will fail to carry out God's direction.
4. It is not always sufficient to take away some privilege, but forceful, corporal punishment ought to be used. Parents ought to realize that disobedience, disrespect, and rebellion are worthy of severe chastening.

5. If such is not applied, we fail the teen and add to his sin the further burden of a lack of his own personal self-discipline. The goal of self-control and yieldedness to the Lord is the chief end of discipline.

Many parents are surprised to learn that most teens want discipline. The right kind of discipline gives the teen a feeling of security. It shows him that somebody loves him enough to risk hurting him in order to protect him from something worse.

Discipline is to the teenager what the guard rail is to the motorist. It protects on a dangerous curve, lets him know his limits, and warns him when he goes too far. A teen must have discipline that protects him from himself (his sinful nature), lets him know the limits, and warns him of going too far.

A. Discipline Must Be Fair

1. They must know the rules.
2. They must know why it is for their good.
3. They must be treated with respect in the application of the rules.

B. Discipline Must Be Consistent

1. Consistency brings security; inconsistency brings confusion in the mind, heart, and life of the teen.
2. If we are easygoing (soft) one day and then hard and dictatorial the next, we will produce unstable, confused teens.
3. Discipline is the expression of our burden, concern, and love for our teen. We must be consistent.

TEENAGERS ARE NOT JUST CHILDREN (Ephesians 6:1-4)

A. They Are Becoming Adults

1. When we say to a teen, "Act your own age," that is exactly what he is doing. He is acting his age, and his actions are the reactions of a person who is becoming an adult.
2. His age is expressed in a burst of maturity sprinkled with lapses into childhood. Therefore, the teen will be very changeable. The teen is "*growing toward, as well as growing from,*" and the very process is not easy. The problem is not just the teen but also the erratic behavior of the parents in their reaction to their teen.

B. They Must Be Accepted as Maturing Adults

1. They must be allowed to grow up at their pace. They will test the values of the older generation to see what is really worth keeping; therefore, at times they will be misunderstood.
2. The Word of God must always be the foundation and standard of training, admonition, discussion, and evaluation toward growth and decisions.

3. On one hand, the teen must not be allowed to grow up too fast; and on the other hand, he must be given the opportunity to develop.
4. The teen is facing the stormy years of growing independence. He is trying to find the answers to three questions .

a. Who am I?

b. What can I do?

c. What am I worth?

Psychologists call these "self-identity, self-development, and self-worth."

5. These questions involve the teenager's inner life, his personality, and his real self as he is wanting to find "his real self" and be himself.
6. Our teens must be **allowed** to be **persons in their own right**.
7. Therefore, we must . . .
 - a. Grow with them.
 - b. Continue to love them.
 - c. Keep lines of communication open (Ephesians 4:30-32)

Lesson Twelve

WORKING WITH OUR TEENS (Part Two)

(Proverbs 8:72-74; 7:7-4)

TEEN-PARENT CONFLICTS ARE NOT ALWAYS A SIGN OF WEAKNESS IN THE HOME

Conflict in the home is not so serious as it may seem to be. What is serious is "how" the conflict is handled and what comes out of it.

A. Conflict Is Normal

1. It is a sign that the teen is growing up; therefore, at times he is in conflict with the older generation.
2. The conflict can be either normal or abnormal.
 - a. Normal conflict is the conflict that comes at varied times and occasionally.
 - b. Abnormal conflict takes place when it is constant and over the same things constantly.
 - c. Normal conflicts will come and go; abnormal conflicts are a constant warring in the home.

A teenager who is always complaining about money, rules, the car, dating, etc., will be heading for serious, terrible trouble.

B. Conflict (Normal) Can Be Healthy

1. It opens the doors of communication.
2. It gives opportunity to learn and grow.
3. It helps us to grow with our teenagers, to get new insights and wisdom.
4. It can help us to accept them as real persons, to accept their feelings, and to respond to them in an understanding way.

We must listen with the head and the heart (Cf. Proverbs 15:1; 18: 13; James 1: 19, 20). If we get angry, we will close the doors of communication and do much damage.

Occasionally there will be conflict. This simply means that the teen is attempting to be himself, to understand himself and his role in life, and to grow into maturity. He is "feeling his way" along, building his self-esteem, and testing the values of life which he has been taught to that point.

TEENAGERS DO NOT CREATE ALL THE PROBLEMS

Teens, for the most part, do not create the problems; they just reveal them.

A. He Is Trying to Find His Identity

1. As a teen he has new "eyes." Previously he asked himself, "What is going on?" Now he asks, "Why is this going on? What does it mean?"

2. His maturing and trying to find his personal goals and ideals causes him to question what he has been taught.
3. His questioning reveals or brings to light what his parents really are. Can they . . .
 - a. Face a critical analysis of their standards and beliefs?
 - b. Face a critical view of their Christianity?
 - c. Face a critical attitude of their ideals and motives?

The teen becomes critical of his home. The home has not changed, but the teen now is seeing things with a new perception. If the home and decisions are based on the Word of God and the teen has been taught the "why," then the teen will be stable.

B. He Is Testing the Honesty of Things

1. He is an idealist.
2. He sees hypocrisy now and is much aware of it in the lives of others.
3. He discovers our real true values.

The parents up to now have had their own way and have lived without a youngster's examination of the home. Now the teen is evaluating everything. That very evaluation may seem as if he is the trouble. **The real trouble may be . . .**

- a. The parents'inconsistency.
- b. The parents' poor example compared to commands.
- c. The parents' lack of Bible standards for the home.

Therefore, the teen did not cause the problem in the home; he brought it to the surface. (We may have swept under the rug problems such as fighting, arguing, and clamor between husband and wife; but now the teen will react and bring them to the surface. We must face them.)

Therefore, we must. . .

- a. Face the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15).
- b. Put away lying, hypocrisy (Ephesians 4:23-27).
- c. Confess our faults to one another (James 5:16).
- d. Admit our own mistakes and make amends for them (Proverbs 28:1 3).
- e. Be humble and open-hearted (James 4:6-10).
- f. Control the tongue (James 3:2-18).

TEENAGE LIFE IS VERY DIFFERENT TODAY

Life for teenagers is different than it was for us. Parents are guilty far too often of using their past teen life as the example for their teen today. This can be a serious mistake.

A. Television Has Changed Their Lives

1. Television has given them a much broader knowledge, much of which is rot on the positive side; but they have it, nonetheless, if they come from a strong television-viewing family.

2. The general knowledge is vast compared to the circumvented life of two generations ago.

B. A "Teen, Youth Culture" Abounds

1. We live in a world where being young is worshiped.
2. We live in a world of vocal teens who want to be heard.
3. Teens know much more than ever and are aware of problems. They are not just spectators but actors.

The so-called "generation gap" is best spanned by the unchanging Word of God. When both parents and teens read and obey God's Word, they have a common ground for discussion and a common standard for evaluating life and for making decisions. Life then is based on the *"thus saith the Lord."* What God wants should be the standard. This gives wonderful stability to life and home. Parents are to make the Word of God a normal, natural part of daily family life (Deuteronomy 6:4-18). The Word of God becomes a solid bridge that will span the gap between generations and bring them together in "one heartbeat."

CONCLUSION

According to several specialists who have interviewed many teens, our young people want parents who *"will listen, keep confidences, trust them (but we cannot trust the sin nature), not yell before they hear the whole story, give them freedom to make decisions and loving counsel when they want to make wrong decisions, show concern and not treat them and their problems as childish, be consistent, give encouragement and praise, try to keep up-to-date, respect their privacy, and have an optimistic attitude."*

This seems like an impossible order. We may feel very insufficient for such demands. But "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Philippians 4:13).

"Who is sufficient for these things? . . . Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God" (II Corinthians 2:16; 3:5).

Memory Verses:

"Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God."

— James 1:19, 20

Lesson Thirteen

FACING THE INEVITABLE CHANGES IN LIFE

Romans 8:28; 1 Peter 4:12; 1 Peter 1:7

INTRODUCTION

In this life we can expect the unexpected to happen. One thing is always certain—*"the uncertainty of all things"* about us. Christ warned us that in this world we would have tribulation (Cf. John 16:33). *"Man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward"* (Cf. Job 5:7; Psalm 77:1-7).

Many people are sick and under doctor's care because they worry, fret, and stew over change. Mature Christians approach changes of life with interest, enjoying the variety, meeting the challenges, and accepting *"all from God's hand"* (Phil. 2:12-14).

Every married couple of a few married years (sometimes months) have had to face some terrific changes which could have affected them adversely for the rest of their lives.

Dr. Donald G. Barnhouse in his booklet, *"Tragedy or Triumph,"* tells of visits to two men, each sick with tuberculosis. One became very angry and began to curse, *"Why does God make me spit my lungs into this cup? Oh, God is so cruel to me!"* He cursed God for his sufferings. The second man had to spend twenty-three hours each day in bed. But during short walks in that one hour he entered a place where Barnhouse was preaching and got saved. Many of his friends also were invited to his bedside to hear Dr. Barnhouse preach. He died praising God, going to the Lord triumphantly.

The Christian should be able to say, *"God, You can do anything You wish to me. You redeemed and bought me with Your blood. I am Yours; all things will work together for good since I love You."*

Change and trials test the mettle of the Christian. Every family will face many changes in life. Part of it will naturally come through the "march of time." Consider from the 1950 census the following family's life cycle, based on statistics at that time.

Ave. Age	Ave. Age (<i>These were figures from the 70's</i>)
First Marriage 21	Marriage of Last child 48
Birth of First Child 23	Death of One Spouse 62
Birth of Last Child 27	Death of Other Spouse 74

A careful examination of the above chart will bring to mind many changes: when your first child was born; first child went to school; last child entered school; last child left home; being alone; and death of a spouse.

Then there are job changes, location changes, church changes, health changes, ability changes, and many others. All things can bring tremendous stress in the home.

Changes can bring a severe test of the family's spiritual strength and walk with the Lord. At such a time a family should know by their spiritual strength whether they have made the Word of God real in their daily lives. How we cope with change is based upon the integration of values and beliefs from God's Word. It depends upon our "discipleship" and our concern to be yielded to God.

Let's consider some of the changes we must face:

ENVIRONMENT OR LOCATION (Proverbs 3:5, 6)

In America many families are on the move constantly. The average is a move every four years. Part of it is reflected in population growth, and job problems.

A. What A Move Means

1. It will bring a change in neighbors and neighborhoods.
2. It will mean a change in schools and the children nearby who have a tremendous effect upon your children.
3. It will mean a change in church and in long-established habits.
4. It may mean involvement in racial issues.

Many a family has been swept into the changing city or mushrooming suburb, and many complex pressures have threatened the stability of the home. Moving from rural life to city life has been the ruin of many a home.

B. What A Move Should Mean (For the Saved)

1. That God will still meet every need
 - a. Psalm 33:11
 - b. Hebrews 6:13-19; 13:5, 6
 - c. Psalm 102:28; Joshua 8:9
 - d. Isaiah 41: 1-13

God's Word does not change; the Lord Himself does not change (Cf. Hebrews 13:8; Malachi 3:6). Our "state" may change, but our standing in the blood of Christ will never change. The Christian can look on changing circumstances through eyes that see an unchanging Heavenly Father, who knows best for us.

The saved person should order his life after the directions of the unchanging Word of God. When he does this his life will have security, stability, and strength in the midst of change.

God's power in our lives will give the foundation of strength for the shocks of change which every family must face.

C. What Changes Bring to Mind

1. That this world will change constantly (Psalm 102:25, 26; Cf. Isaiah 34:4; James 4:13-16).
2. That change about us and in us is taking place all the time (Cf. Psalm 90:9-12, 16, 17).
3. That everything "here and now" is temporary. We must adapt to change through the power of God. We must accept it. We must build our house upon the Rock (Christ) so that when the storms come it will stand. Violent storms shall come; that is inevitable (Matthew 7:24-27).

While we are fearful of the unknown, and then at other times may seek "after change," we must put all into God's hand.

SICKNESS AND INFIRMITY James 1:2, 3; 5:13-18; 1 Peter 1:7; 4:13-16

A. Long-term Illnesses

1. This will bring out the best or worst in us.
2. This is the opportunity for the "fruit of the Spirit" to be exhibited in the life of the Christian.
3. How you take the long-term suffering of a loved one can bring great blessing or woe.
4. Do we have love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance (Gal. 5:22, 23)?

B. Accident—Sudden Tragedy

1. This brings drastic change to the whole family.
2. This can bring great grief, burden, and strain for months. Longsuffering, love, and compassion are greatly needed.

SEPARATION

A. New Job—Perhaps Temporary Separation

B. Frequent Traveling

C. Permanent Separation—Marital Conflict

ECONOMIC TRIALS (Philippians 4:11, 12, 13, 19; Matthew 6:33-34)

A. A Pay Raise—This can bring about change as much as a loss of a job or a reduced income.

B. A Change in the Economic Standing— Can be sudden, temporary, gradual, and sometimes with great effect.

C. The Family Values

Those who live on a materialistic plane will experience a great snare (Cf. I Timothy 6:6-19).

D. A Life Within Our Means

We must be content with what we have (Phil. 4:6-13).

DEATH (II Kings 4:1-7, 18-37)

A. No Change—Often as heart-searching and hard to accept as death. Even the most hardened will think a bit.

B. Death To Be Expected

1. It can be sudden or with warning.

2. It should bring a day-by-day faith to live for the Lord and not to take tomorrow for granted (Proverbs 27:1).
3. The death of the father, the mother, or a child can bring a tremendous trial.

Memory Verse:

"Ah Lord God! behold, thou hast made the heaven and the earth by thy great power and stretched out arm, and there is nothing too hard for thee." —Jeremiah 32:17

If you desire more materials concerning teens. . . look at the teen section of the family section. Much will be added during the coming months. (1/2001)

Also you will find a lengthy section concerning working with teens in the materials about counseling. Look in that section, under books bring up *"Caring and Counseling"* for there is much there about the teens years.
