

THE KEYS TO HAPPY



MARRIAGES AND FAMILIES!

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Many marriages and families are in desperate need of repair, especially in this Western society where we have endless cycles of marriage—divorce—remarriage. Living together without being married has come to be the accepted norm while healthy, lasting marriages, and solid, happy families are notable exceptions.

Why do we find marriages in such a state of disarray in this Western society, today? First, understand that human relationships in life are a **product** of the principles we apply—if we apply wrong principles, we get bad results and if we apply right principles, we get good results.

Have we, then, overlooked vital keys that would unlock the understanding of how to **produce** happy marriages and families? Indeed, we have!

Surprisingly, these keys are not new. They have been available, in written form, for thousands of years. They simply have not been uncovered or understood, let alone practiced. And many who find these keys, “lose” them again by not having full regard in applying them to their lives.

These important keys can be found in a book that has been owned

by more people than any other book. That book is the Holy Bible—the Word of God in print. Yes, the knowledge of how to have happy and lasting marriages, and successful and close families comes directly from our Creator! For too many people the passages relevant to human relationships have been a mystery. But it is time for this mystery to be unlocked. Do *you* know where in the Bible you can find these keys?

Part 1

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THE CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE

With regard to biblical principles for a happy marriage, present-day Christian churches teach a variety of ideas, some even to opposite extremes. Some ministers advocate totalitarianism of the husband and blind submission of the wife. Others teach the opposite—blatant liberalism of the wife—casting aside leadership of the husband, and even anarchy within the marriage. We see a lack of respect, a lack of love, and brutal abuse of responsibilities. And in our “throw-away” society, we discard the very thing that would make us happy—our family relationships.

Too many marriages face serious difficulties based on an improper understanding and exercise of the different roles and functions of husbands and wives, ending their relationship in divorce or legal separation. But we are called upon to return to the clear teachings of the Bible to **produce** happy, healthy, successful Christian marriages. Are we willing to listen to God and actually do what He says?

Divorce—a Solution?

Realize first of all, that *God wants* our marriages to succeed. *God hates* divorce (Malachi 2:16). A couple that faces difficulties and looks at divorce as an easy “solution” to their problems may make a serious, and even fatal mistake. Divorce is seldom a positive solution. Biblically, divorce with the freedom to subsequently marry someone else is permitted only under very limited circumstances. God created the marriage unit and He intended that it should flourish and endure (Matthew 19:4–6). Two truly converted married *Christians* (as long as both remain alive and converted throughout their marriage to each other) must *never* divorce and subsequently marry somebody else! Their marriage, which has been *bound* by God, is for life (1 Corinthians 7:10–11; Romans 7:1–3; Luke 16:18).

What about a married couple

where one mate is a true Christian, making every effort to apply God’s principles, and the other mate is not? Even in such a case, divorce and subsequent remarriage is not biblically permitted, unless the “unbelieving” mate *departs from the marriage, by not fulfilling his or her marriage duties, and the “unbeliever” is no longer willing to live with the converted Christian mate* (cp. 1 Corinthians 7:12–16). Such total departure from the marriage by the “unbeliever” can be seen in serious continuous violations of his or her marriage duties and responsibilities, such as the sinful *practice* of “sexual immorality” (Matthew 5:31–32; 19:9). But even then, counseling with one of God’s ministers is highly recommended, with the goal *to restore*, rather than to *sever*, the marriage.

The purpose of this booklet is to help the readers *improve* their marriages and family relationships by directing them to the clear instructions given in the Word of God on this subject. Application of these spiritual principles in a marriage and in a family will assist in the avoidance of separation, divorce and broken homes, thus helping these to become things of the past.

We All Need Improvement

In exploring God’s instructions on marriage in the Bible, let’s look at the roles of husbands and wives

separately. Let's be faithful in applying those principles which apply to us, and let's not assume that one particular point only applies to our mate or to another couple. Let's not judge one another but rather *examine ourselves*. And, if we do have problems with our mates, let's remember, first of all, to heed the admonition of James 3:2, "For *we all stumble* in many things."

Recognize that we ALL need to improve. No matter how long we have been around, there is always something we can and should learn to make things better.

The Roles of Husbands and Wives

Notice in Ephesians 5:2, 8, 10, 15, 21, "(verse 2) And *walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us...* (verse 8) For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. *Walk as children of light...* (verse 10) *finding out what is acceptable to the Lord...* (verse 15) *See then that you walk circumspectly [or: carefully], not as fools but as wise, redeeming [or using profitably] the time, because the days are evil...* (verse 21) *submitting to one another in the fear of God.*"

Let us carefully analyze this! Whatever the roles and responsibilities of husbands or wives are, they must be examined and carried out based on what we just read. Unless we walk in the "*fear of God*" and "*in*

love" toward the other person, any role carried out, even if done perfectly according to the letter, will not **produce** a happy marriage. Further, we must concentrate on *how* to carry out our roles. We must do so as "*wise*" persons—*not as fools*—and we must try to find out what the "*will of God*" is in any given situation—not, what *we* may want to do. Finally, we must make the *best use of the "time"* that God has given us—again, using our time to the **glory of God** and in submission to His will, not to ours. **In doing that, we will "walk in love"**—in love toward God and in love toward our mate.

And if we walk in this kind of love, we will be *able* to "**submit one to another.**" That is, we will be looking at the interests and needs of the other person—not just at what *we* may be interested in. **Submitting one to another does not mean that we have anarchy—no leadership whatsoever—but it does mean that the one who is to lead is the one who is expected to serve the most.** Does that surprise you?

Notice Philippians 2:3–5, "Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit [desire for vain glory], but *in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better [higher, standing above us] than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.* Let this mind be in you which was also in Jesus Christ."

THE ROLE OF A HUSBAND

Now we can begin to examine the biblically-ordained role of a husband in a Christian marriage. As we will see from the pages of the Bible, the husband is to be the *leader* in the marriage. But notice in what regard the husband is to lead. Ephesians 5:25 reads, “Husbands, *love your wives just as Christ also loved the church...*”

Husband Is to Love His Wife

When husbands **love** their wives, wives **will** respond in kind. God and Christ loved us FIRST (cp. Romans 5:8). We are to respond in kind by loving Them back (cp. James 1:12; 2:5). We just read that Christ esteemed others, in *lowliness* of mind, as being “*higher*” than Himself. He was willing to lower Himself to the point of death, so that others could live. That’s the kind of love a husband must have for his wife. Greater love, Christ says, has no one than he who gives his life for his friends (John 15:13). That’s the kind of love that the husband is to give to his wife—his best friend—in words *and* in deeds. The wife needs to know, and she needs to know that she knows, that her husband would even *die* for her to protect her. With *that* kind of love expressed to her, the wife’s response can then be one of willing submission to her husband.

The wife will see a loving husband

who is concerned for her—not a tyrant who takes pleasure in exerting authority over her. Wives have become very sensitive in that regard because *authority has been abused* by men. When women get the impression that the husbands are “lording it over them” they become discouraged, frustrated, and defensive. A husband *must* be aware of this. He should never belittle his wife and he should never speak harshly to her, trying to show that he is in command.

Husbands are to love their wives just as Christ loved His church. And how did Christ love His church? Let’s continue in Ephesians 5:25, “...and gave Himself for her...” Christ was willing to die for her. He was willing to give up His state as a glorified, immortal God being to become a human. He was willing to go through the terrible ordeal of suffering as a human, of being tempted in all points as we are, of being forsaken by all his friends, of being betrayed, tortured, and finally crucified. He was willing to do that for the church. In fact, although God the Father and Jesus Christ had complete confidence that Christ would not sin, it was nevertheless *possible* for Him to sin. So we see that Christ was even willing to give up His eternal Godhead for the church, His future wife. If Christ had sinned, the Father would not have resurrected

Him back to eternal life, as only the death of Christ's sinless life was decreed by God as being sufficient to forgive human sin. If Christ had only sinned once, He would not have been restored to His former glory as a member in the God Family, and there would have been no hope for mankind to ever become born-again members in God's Family, either.

Can we really see *how much* Christ loved the church, and *to what extent* He was willing to prove to *us* His love for *us*? Fully understood, it should not be too difficult for us to submit to Jesus Christ, our Lord, seeing all that He went through for us. If a husband *loves* his wife and *gives his life* for her in the same way, then the wife should have little or no difficulty submitting to her husband's leadership.

What Does It Mean for a Husband to Give His Life for His Wife?

For a husband to give his life for his wife, as Christ gave His life for the church, is so much more than to be willing to die for her when, or if, the moment arises. Giving one's life the way Christ did is a life-long practice. Jesus Christ gave up His immortal and eternal life as a God being to live as a human. He lived as a human for over 30 years. Any sin committed by Him would have ended it all. He, in the truest sense

of the word, *gave His life* for us.

Likewise, a husband must do the same for his wife. *It is a life-long endeavor*. If a husband wants to be "master" of his wife, then he must be the "servant" of his wife (cp. Matthew 20:25–28). Christ said that He came to serve. He also taught His disciples that if they wanted to be great, they needed to serve.

Using this principle then, a husband gives his life for his wife by serving her—by looking after the things that his wife wants, not just the things that he wants. A husband is to view his wife with honor and respect, and he is to show it in the way he treats her. A Christian husband is to have one goal in mind—to help his wife reach her full spiritual potential. If he constantly criticizes her or scrutinizes everything she does, she will become fearful of using her God-given abilities and talents, and, indeed, her very spiritual growth will be hindered.

Notice Ephesians 5:26–29, "...that He might sanctify [set her apart] and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. *So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but*

nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church.” When a husband loves his wife, he also loves himself. We read in Ephesians 5:33, “Nevertheless, let each one of you in particular so love his own wife *as himself*.”

This includes, as we just read, *nourishing* her and cherishing her—both physically and spiritually. Barring extraordinary circumstances, the husband is supposed to be the breadwinner—providing the financial support for the family—showing his wife thereby how much he loves her and that he is willing to nourish her physically.

And he is to *cherish* his wife—like a treasure—like the most precious treasure this world has to offer. On a physical level this means he is to look after her needs. He is to compliment her for the good things that she does. He should never take his wife, and what she does, for granted. And on a spiritual level, he is to teach his wife. This requires that he develop a close relationship with God, learning to lead his wife and family in God’s way by setting a right example himself.

The Proverbs 31 Husband

Much can be said about the Proverbs 31 wife, but notice what is said about the husband in Proverbs 31:28–29, “Her children rise up and call her blessed; *Her husband also, and he praises her: ‘Many daughters have*

done well, But you excel them all.’”

When we study the famous passage in Proverbs 31 on the “virtuous woman,” we might be surprised to learn all that the virtuous wife does. But, notice also that her husband allows her to do these things! He is not a controlling person, preventing her from accomplishing good things. Rather, we read that he “safely trusts her.” (verse 11). She rises early to “provide food for her household,” (verse 15), and she “considers a field and buys it.” (verse 16). She plants a vineyard “from her profits.” (verse 16). Notice, it is *she* who does that—not her husband. She is capable of making wise decisions. “She makes linen garments and sells them, And supplies sashes to the merchants.” (verse 24). Finally, she “watches over the ways of her household.” (verse 27). She is productive and is capable of directing the activities of her home.

We read that she acts “willingly” (verse 13). She cannot act “willingly” if her husband does not show his love for her by giving her room to express herself in her personal interests, again, manifesting the kind of love that *submits one to the other*.

Husband Is Not to Be Bitter!

Let’s notice some additional biblical admonitions and guidelines for the husband. Colossians 3:19

reads, “Husbands, love your wives and do not be bitter toward them.”

We are told that we need to give up all bitterness. *All* of us have to do that. Bitterness is like cancer. It will eat us up internally, until our light within us has become darkness. If we love another person, we cannot really be bitter toward that person. If there is still bitterness in our hearts toward another person, and especially, if a husband has bitterness toward his wife, then one has not come to the perfect love that is required of us. Notice Ephesians 4: 31–32, “Let all bitterness... be put away from you... And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as Christ forgave you.”

Are husbands kind and tenderhearted toward their wives? Are they willing to forgive them? Or do husbands feel offended, and do they feed on that offense? Will they allow bitterness to creep into their hearts? If husbands do that, then they are walking on dangerous ground and unless quickly overcome and removed, that bitterness will quench their love for their wives. And then, it is the husbands who are in violation of God’s commandments *not to be bitter towards their wives, and to love them as themselves*.

Notice the kind of love that God requires of the husbands toward their wives. “Love does no harm to a

neighbor.” (Romans 13:10). If husbands really love their wives, they will not hurt them physically nor emotionally—they will not harshly “lord it over them.”

How a Husband Should Love His Wife

Let’s look now at 1 Corinthians 13, the famous “love” chapter of the Bible, and see what we can learn from it in regard to the relationship between husbands and wives. Let’s analyze *how* the husband is to *love* his wife.

We read in 1 Corinthians 13, beginning in verse 4, “Love suffers long...” If husbands love their wives, they will have patience with them. They might even suffer for a while, or even for a long time, enduring the wives’ shortcomings without blowing up and responding in kind. God is very patient with us. Husbands need to share Godly patience with their wives.

“[Love] is kind...” Godly love is kind even in the face of trials caused perhaps by misunderstandings—when something does not go the way we want it to go. Can husbands be kind to their wives when they forget to do what they were asked to do? When they did something wrong? God is kind toward us. He does not condemn us when our hearts are right. A husband needs to be kind to his wife, appreciating what his wife desired to do for him, even though it

might not have worked out as planned.

“[L]ove does not envy...” How much strife would cease, if *that* aspect of Godly love would be practiced more often? The envy-less spirit of a husband permits the wife to continue in her efforts. The spirit of envy, however, is anxious to put down and even stop her accomplishments. Godly love, though, does not know envy. The husband’s love permits his wife to continue with what she is doing. Husbands need to have that kind of Godly love for their wives. Husbands need to allow them to do what they are good at. Husbands must not envy them for, or feel threatened by, the qualities and abilities that God has given their wives.

“[L]ove does not parade itself...” True love is not boastful. We are not to be boastful and proud of what WE can do. Godly love is humble and looks at the qualities and accomplishments of others. When we do good things, are we looking to make sure that others saw it too so that we can get praise and glory from them? If so, God says we will then have received our reward—from men—not from God (cp. Matthew 6:1–4). Husbands need to have that kind of *boastless* love for their wives. Husbands are to do good things for their wives because they *want* to—because they love them—not BECAUSE they want to be praised by their wives. We

should praise each other for accomplishments, but that is not the reason WHY we do good things for the other person.

“[Love] is not puffed up...” or “arrogant.” True Godly love is selfless. It wants the best for others. Arrogance, on the other hand, is introverted. It’s the “me-me” attitude that says, “I’m first, and I don’t care about others.”

“(verse 5) [Love] does not behave rudely...” This includes behaving with good manners. Husbands are to behave in a friendly, socially acceptable way towards their wives, and not just when others are around to notice.

“[Love] does not seek its own...” Love is not motivated by selfishness. Love entails the way of give, not of get. Love *wants to serve*, not to be served. Love will motivate others to give and contribute, yet, love does not know envy or jealousy, but rejoices when someone else accomplishes something that is good. If love is not focused on the good and welfare of others, it is empty, selfish and useless.

“[Love] is not provoked...” Godly love is not easily angered. When a wife does something wrong, her husband who is living the way of love, will not blow up like a volcano. If a husband truly loves his wife, as Christ loves us, he will be patient with her, trying to understand what happened, and why, and he will try

to help her to overcome whatever weakness caused the problem.

“[Love] thinks no evil...” If husbands truly love their wives, they will not treat them with suspicion, scrutinizing their every decision. The heart of the husband “safely trusts” the virtuous woman, as we read in Proverbs 31:11. The *New International Version* translates this passage in 1 Corinthians 13:5 (Love “thinks no evil”) as, “Love keeps no record of wrongs.” The *Living Bible* says, “Love holds no grudges.” Other translations have here, “Love keeps no score of wrongs,” or, “Love does not store up grievances.”

How true that is. We read that love covers all sins, but that hatred stirs up strife (Proverbs 10:12). It is the ungodly person that digs up evil (Proverbs 16:27). On the other hand, it is the one who *covers* a transgression who seeks love (Proverbs 17:9). It is to his glory to *overlook* a transgression (Proverbs 19:11). It is an honorable thing for a man to stop striving (Proverbs 20:3). How much better would our marriages be if that principle of NOT keeping records of wrong would be applied. But sadly, just the opposite is true in so many cases.

“(verses 6 & 7) [Love] does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.” If husbands have such an

attitude of love toward their wives, and they show it, how could their wives not respond in kind?

Husbands Need to Understand Their Wives

We have seen that husbands are expected by God to express true Godly love for their wives—the kind of love the world does not generally know. In order to really and truly love someone, one must *know* his or her needs. One must understand how the other person thinks—what his or her desires are, his or her dreams, his or her wishes, his or her likes and dislikes.

And so we read in 1 Peter 3:7, “Husbands, likewise, dwell with them with *understanding*, giving *honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel*, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered.”

Husbands need to *understand* their wives. If a husband doesn’t understand his wife, he needs to *ask* her, what she would like to do—what her dreams are, her preferences, and her dislikes. A husband needs to spend a lot of time communicating with his wife, as with his closest friend. He needs to respect her—to show her honor, to praise her for what she does. A husband must never put her down before others. Nothing hurts a woman more

than being shown disrespect by her husband, especially in front of others. All husbands have done that at times. All husbands must repent of such disrespect.

The husband's guidance must be given with love and honor and respect for his wife. And, what is the purpose for such guidance? Is it so that HE can be regarded by others as the "RULER" of the household? So that HE can glory in front of others in the fact that he is "obeying God's commandments" and his wife is obeying him? Far from it! That's the kind of vain glory that we must **not** have!

The reason why the husband is to give loving guidance to his wife is that God ordained that the husband and wife are one flesh—they are one entity, spiritually. Their Christian goal is to enter the kingdom of God together—to become inheritors of eternal life together, of which they are already heirs. So, the husband is to act out of true Godly love for his wife, and his wife, knowing that this is the reason why he acts the way he does, will be much more willing to overlook the shortcomings of her husband. If her husband shows that his love for her is so great that he is willing to lay down his life for her, on a continuing, life-long basis, and that he is *concerned* for her—spiritually and physically—then what Christian woman would not willingly respond

to the leadership of her husband?

On the other hand, when the marriage is on the rocks, then even our individual and personal relationship with God is impaired. That's why Peter says to husbands to "dwell with your wives with understanding, give them honor and respect, *so that your prayers may not be hindered.*" (1 Peter 3:7). Peter places the responsibility on the shoulders of the husband to see to it that the prayers of husbands and wives are not hindered.

THE ROLE OF A WIFE

If there is *one* area in the role of a husband that is responsible for the downfall of the marriage, it is the lack of the husband's expression of true Godly love for his wife.

And if there is *one* area in the role of a wife that is responsible for the downfall of the marriage, it is the lack of the wife's willingness to submit to her husband.

The Bible makes it very clear, however, that the husband is supposed to be the leader of the family—not a dictator, not a tyrant, not a proud and arrogant brute—but rather, he was *made* by God to *lead* the family. And if he leads in a Godly way, the wife will have little or no difficulty in following.

A Wife Needs to Submit to Her Husband

Notice 1 Corinthians 11:3, "But I

want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.”

Notice what is being said here. As *God the Father is the head of Christ, so the man or husband is the head of the woman or wife.* God the Father and Jesus Christ are totally one—totally united in mindset, in goal, in purpose. *And they love each other perfectly.* God the Father said, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” (cp. Matthew 3:17). God LOVED the Son (John 3:35). And Christ LOVED the Father (John 14:31). He submitted to the Father, even to the point of death, knowing that His Father loved Him deeply, and that He would never ask Him to do anything that would be bad for Him. *If a man wants to be the head of his wife and family, as he should be, he needs to act as God the Father acted toward Christ, and, in turn, his wife is to act toward her husband as Christ acted toward the Father.*

In order to have the same kind of relationship that the Father and the Son had and have, we need to read and learn about that relationship and how we can apply it to our marriage relationship between husband and wife.

How Submission Is Possible

We can glean much from the book of John concerning the rela-

tionship that God the Father had and has with His Son, Jesus Christ. Notice the principles of submission revealed in the following verses:

- John 3:35, “The Father loves the Son, and *has given all things into His hand.*” Godly love shares! Husbands need to share their possessions with their wives. *This willingness to share creates mutual trust.* There cannot be an attitude of ‘This is mine and that is yours!’ Notice Christ’s words in John 16:15, “*All things that the Father has are Mine.*”
- John 5:20, “For the Father loves the Son, and *shows Him all things that He Himself does.*” Godly love communicates! The husband needs to let the wife know what he is doing. *This openness creates mutual trust and a common bond.*
- John 5:22–23, “For the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son, that all should *honor* the Son just as they honor the Father.” A loving husband wants his wife to be honored by others. He is willing to share his honor with her. He does not belittle her and put her down in front of others, thereby dishonoring her. And he does not stand idly by when others dishonor his wife.
- John 5:43, “I have come in My Father’s name.” The wife acquires the name of her husband. This

shows the *oneness* of the two. They are no longer separate, but the two have become “one.” That’s how God intended it to be—ONE Family—ONE marriage. The TWO have become ONE flesh. And what did Christ say about His relationship with God the Father? We read in John 10:30, “I and My Father are *one*.” They were—and are—totally united in will, purpose and goal. And as Jesus could act for His Father, so the wife *can* act for her husband. *This oneness between the two creates mutual trust and confidence in and for each other, and shows the world, “here is a happy couple that is truly united.”*

- John 8:29, “The Father has not left Me alone, for I always do those things that please Him.” A loving husband will not leave his wife alone either, if the wife does what pleases her husband. And the wife will do what she knows is pleasing to her husband, if her husband shows her *Godly* love.

- John 8:49, “I *honor* My Father.” Likewise, the wife is to honor her husband. The wife does not honor her husband, though, if she belittles him or puts him down in front of others. The wife does not honor her husband, either, if she usurps his authority or leadership role, especially in front of others, or if she takes it upon herself

to make decisions that her husband should make. Christ LOVED the Father, and the Father LOVED the Son. Still, Christ knew that the Father was His Head, and He honored Him. He respected Him. He did what was pleasing to Him. And the Father honored Him for that in return, as we see in the next verse.

- John 8:54, “It is My Father who honors Me.” As Christ honored His Father, so His Father honored Him. In the same way, both husbands and wives must honor each other. This shows *mutual* love and respect for one another. We do read in Ephesians 5:33, “...let the wife see that she respects her husband.” We see, then, that honor and respect must be mutual. It goes both ways. If the husband, though, behaves in a way that totally *abrogates* his responsibilities—if he is a drunk, if he abuses his kids, or if he constantly yells at his wife, then it is very difficult for his wife to respect him. So, husbands must behave in such a way that *inspires* respect by their wives.
- John 10:15, “As the Father *knows* Me, even so I *know* the Father.” How well do *husbands and wives* actually know each other? Only if they really know each other, can they grow in love of and respect for each other. And they *must* do

so, if they want their marriage—a relationship of true Godly love—to succeed. Christ accepted the Father as His Head because He *knew* Him. He knew that His Father would never abuse His authority over Him. Do wives know the same about their husbands?

Submissive Women ARE to Teach—Here Is HOW!

Notice Titus 2:4, “...[Older women are to] admonish the young women *to love their husbands...*”

Again, God demands mutual love from both husband and wife toward each other. As we read earlier, husbands are to love their wives. Now we are told that the wives are to love their husbands. If the husband *truly* loves his wife, then his wife *WILL* love her husband in return. The problem arises when the husband does not love his wife, and when he instead abuses his authority over his wife.

Continuing with verse 4, “...to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed.”

Notice the context. Paul is talking here about older women teaching **YOUNG** women with young children. In such a case, it is not advisable to work outside the home. Rather, it is better to stay at home—

to focus on being a mother and homemaker. Young children need their mother at home. We also read that older women are to *teach* younger women to be obedient to their husbands so that the word of God may not be blasphemed. Why would the word of God be blasphemed if wives were not obedient to their husbands? Because it is God who says that they *should be* obedient and submissive to their husbands! And, if their husbands love their wives with *Godly* love, they will not require anything of their wives that is not good for them and the family. Therefore, the wives **CAN** be joyfully obedient to their husbands.

Can we see how all these commandments go together? One complements the other. These are not isolated rules. A husband and a wife are a team, and a successful marriage requires a team effort.

Submissive Women Are Not to Preach in the Church

Notice 1 Timothy 2:11–15 where Paul says, “Let a woman learn in silence with all submission. And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence. For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived fell into transgression. Nevertheless she will be saved in

childbearing if they continue in faith, love, and holiness, with self-control.”

Notice, too, the parallel passage in 1 Corinthians 14:34–35, “Let your women *keep silent in the churches*, for they are not permitted to speak; but they are to be submissive, as the law also says. And if they want to *learn* something, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is shameful for women to speak in church.”

We find described here the aspects of the role of the woman that deal with submission, including submission to her husband.

Wives are not to speak, teach or preach *in church*, but they are to ask their husbands at home. This requires, of course, that the husband *can* be asked—that he is approachable and not too busy to talk to his wife, and that he is knowledgeable enough to give his wife the answers that she needs. If he does not have the answers, he should ask those who know.

It is true that there were prophetesses in the Old Testament (Exodus 15:20; Judges 4:4), and it is also true that some women prophesied in New Testament times (Acts 21:9). There will come a time, when young women will prophesy again (Joel 2:28). These passages cannot be used, however, to justify women preaching *in church*, as Paul made it clear that this should not be permitted.

Some quote Acts 18:24–26 as

authority to permit women to preach in church. In that passage, Aquilla and Priscilla took Apollos aside, whom they had heard preaching in the synagogue, and “they explained to him the way of God more accurately.” (verse 26). It is not clear from that passage, to what extent Priscilla did the teaching, or whether she was just agreeing with her husband. In any event, it is noteworthy that they *took Apollos aside*. Priscilla, especially, did not teach Apollos *in front of others*.

In today’s world of mass communication, churches often use radio, television, the printing press or even the Internet to publish spiritual material. Women should not deliver sermons on radio or television, either, nor should they write biblical, prophetic, ecclesiastical or spiritual articles. They could write articles in addressing topics such as child rearing, homemaking, cooking, or other matters relating more to our physical lives, thereby avoiding a possible conflict in writing about spiritual matters.

Let’s take a look at some interesting commentaries on this subject.

Rienecker’s Lexikon zur Bibel points out, under “Women,” “The relationship between man and woman, ordained by God, can also be seen in the role of service and function within the church. Women do *prophecy* (1 Corinthians 11:5; Acts 21:9), but only men are specifically

referred to as *prophets* (v. 10). Paul does not allow the women to teach, that is, to fill the office of teacher in the church (1 Timothy 2:12). It is different when Apollos is introduced more fully, in a *personal* conversation with Aquilla and Priscilla, to the teachings of God. (Acts 18:26).”

Jamieson, Fausset and Brown state in regard to 1 Corinthians 14:34–35, “For women to speak in public would be an act of independence, as if they were not subject to their husbands (cf. Chapter 11:3; Ephesians 5:22; Titus 2:5; 1 Peter 3:1)... Women may say, ‘But if we do not understand something, may we not “ask” a question publicly so as to “learn”?’ Nay, replies Paul, if you want information, ‘ask’ not in public, but ‘at home’: ask not other men, but your own particular (so the Greek) husbands.”

Jamieson, Fausset and Brown comment on 1 Timothy 2:11–12, “Learn—not teach... She should not even put questions in the public assembly... She might teach, but not in public (Acts 18:26).”

The Scriptures make it very clear that a woman is not to assert authority over her husband. God chided Old Testament Israel for having permitted women to rule over men (Isaiah 3:12). Husbands are to exert proper authority over their wives. They must do so with Godly love and they must never

abuse that authority. But, as it is shameful for a wife to exert authority over her husband, and especially in public, so it is shameful for the husband to let his wife exert authority over him.

In 1 Corinthians 11:7–8 we read, “...woman is the glory of man. For man is not from woman, but woman from man.” The woman was created by God to be a helper of her husband—not to take over her husband’s role and exert authority over him. God did *not* create the wife to tell her husband what to do, and to become angry when her husband selflessly decides, after careful deliberation, meditation, and prayer, not to do a particular thing.

Submission to God Comes First!

Notice Colossians 3:18, “Wives, submit to your own husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.” Note the fact that it would not be fitting or pleasing to the Lord, if the husband gave unreasonable orders; if he acted selfishly; or if he ceased to love his wife. Although the command to be submissive is directed to the wife, it presupposes that the husband himself submits to God first and that he does not require of his wife things that are *ungodly*. For instance, **if a husband asks his wife to lie, the wife is not to do that.** God’s commands always come first. **We have to obey God**

rather than man (cp. Acts 5:29). **Wives must not sin in “submitting” to their husbands. They must not violate their biblically-based conscience (cp. Romans 14:23).**

The application of that principle can sometimes be difficult and may require individual advice from one of God’s ministers. It is *very* important to handle any such conflict with love and respect for the mate, rather than with an arrogant, self-righteous attitude.

Notice Ephesians 5:22, “Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord...” Note again that we do not submit to God if we break His commandments. Likewise, wives are not to submit to their husbands if doing so would mean breaking one of God’s commandments *in the letter or in the spirit*.

Verse 23, “...For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body...” Consider that, as Christ is Savior of the body—the church—so the husband is to be “savior” of his wife, in a manner of speaking. He is to do everything he can to see to it that his wife will be successful in her spiritual life.

Verse 24, “Therefore, just as the church is *subject to Christ*, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything.” That is, as long as that does not violate any of God’s commandments.

Let’s also note that this command is directed to husbands and wives in the Church—it does not require that *any* man has authority over *any* woman. Otherwise, consider the paradoxical conclusions, as this would mean that a grown son (a man) would have authority over his mother (a woman). We must understand that the Bible does not treat women as “second-class citizens” in society. Rather, both men and women are “equal in Christ.” We read in Galatians 3:28–29, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.”

Submission to Unbelieving Husbands?

It is true that 1 Peter 3:1–6 requires of the wives to be submissive to husbands who are not obedient to the word of God. Notice, though, the wording and the advice: “(verse 1) Wives, likewise, be submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, *without a word*, may be won *by the conduct of their wives*, (verse 2) when they observe your *chaste conduct* accompanied by fear...”

This is not talking about *fear* or torment because of *the husband*, but

rather that women should live in the *fear of God*. Notice Proverbs 31:30, “But a woman *who fears the LORD*, she shall be praised.” We have already read in Ephesians 5:21 that we are to submit to one another “in the fear of God.” Peter is not saying here that wives need to live in fear and torment of their disobedient husbands, but rather that they need to submit to their husbands in the *fear of God*. Again, they would not obey their husbands if the husbands require of the wives to do something that would be contrary to the word of God.

Let’s continue with 1 Peter 3:3, “(verse 3) Do not let your adornment be *merely* outward—arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on fine apparel—(verse 4) rather let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a *gentle and quiet spirit*, which is very precious in the sight of God...”

Notice here a parallel passage in 1 Timothy 2:9–10, “[I desire...] in like manner also, that the women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with propriety and moderation [or, discretion], not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly clothing, but, which is proper for women professing godliness, with good works.”

Continue with 1 Peter 3:5, “For in this manner, in former times, the holy women who trusted in God [that’s the “fear” or respect talked

about here—fear of and respect toward God] also adorned themselves, being submissive to their own husbands, (verse 6) as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, whose daughters you are if you do good and are not afraid with any terror.”

Notice how the *New Revised Standard Version* renders the last two verses, “It was in this way long ago that the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves by accepting the authority of their husbands. Thus Sarah obeyed Abraham and called him lord. You have become her daughters as long as you do what is good and never let fears alarm you.”

THERE IS ALWAYS HOPE!

In light of these passages, we should all realize that none of us—whether husbands or wives—have fulfilled our responsibilities perfectly. We ALL have failed in many different ways. But there is always hope. God forgives, and He gives us the power to go on and to do better.

If you have reached an eroded and troublesome relationship in your marriage because of mistakes that might have been made, please ask God for His help and for a change of heart. If you can, do it together with your mate by laying your situation before God in prayer. Please ask Him to help you with a willingness to

accept His guidance in order to forgive past mistakes and to heal the relationship.

In that spirit, let's read Philippians 3:12–14, “Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but *I press on*, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, *forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal* for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”

OUR SPIRITUAL MARRIAGE—STILL AHEAD!

Our physical Christian marriage foreshadows a most glorious eternal marriage relationship between Jesus Christ, the bridegroom, and us, His church and bride (Compare Ephesians 5:30–32 where Paul applies the institution of marriage to our spiritual relationship with Jesus Christ, who is identified as the bridegroom in Matthew 25:1). What a tremendous future lies ahead of us. Let's see to it, then, that we make every effort to create and maintain happy and successful marriages now, looking forward to the soon-coming fulfillment of our destiny—to *marry* our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, when He returns (cp. Revelation 19:7–9; Hosea 2:19–20).

Part 2

THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY

As the Bible gives clear instructions as to the individual roles and functions of husbands and wives, it also explains the duties and responsibilities of fathers and mothers toward their children, and of the children toward their parents.

As we have far too many marriage problems, we also have FAR too many family problems. Too often, parents know little about proper parenting, and rebellious children are the result. Children who are victims of divorce are expected to be resilient when someone they love suddenly disappears from their life. More often than not, they grow up with multiple mothers, fathers, and grandparents due to remarriage, and yet are left to fend for themselves too much of the time, because no one has time for them.

We read, in fact, a startling and sobering prophecy in the Bible for the very last days—just prior to the return of Christ—that addresses the tragic reality of broken families. Sadly, this situation HAS also affected the attitudes of true Christians, and God says that unless these conditions change, something terrible will happen to this planet.

OUR FAMILY LIFE MUST IMPROVE!

Let's read in Malachi 4:5–6, “Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet Before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD. And he will turn *The hearts of the fathers to the children, And the hearts of the children to their fathers,* Lest I come and strike the earth with a curse [utter destruction].”

In verse 1, this “day of the LORD” is described as a day “Burning like an oven, And all the proud, yes, all who do wickedly will be stubble. And the day which is coming shall burn them up.”

We are reminded of Christ's words in Matthew 24:22 that says that no one would be “saved,” or better, *saved alive*, if God would not intervene. In other words, if God would not shorten those days, no one would *physically survive*. That includes you and me. We ALL would die! But God IS going to shorten those days “for the elect's sake” (same verse). There IS going to be a group of people that WILL be spared from the terrible days to come, and BECAUSE of them, the earth will NOT be totally destroyed.

Malachi 4:2 tells us more about that group of people that will be different, “But to you who fear My name The Sun of Righteousness shall arise With healing in His

wings.” If we fear God, we WILL experience healing. Healing is still necessary. It requires God's healing to bring about a turning of the hearts of the parents and children toward each other. It is GOD who leads us to repentance (Romans 2:4; 2 Timothy 2:25). *Repentance* toward God and toward each other will bring about a restored or *healed relationship* with God and with each other.

This presupposes, then, that even among those who fear God, the relationship between parents and children NEEDS healing—it is NOT as it should be. And it will get worse, before it will get better! It is therefore high time that we focus on the clear biblical instructions to parents and children to see what we can and must do to participate in the Godly process of healing our marriage and family relationships.

THE ROLE OF THE PARENTS

Let us begin with the role of the parents toward their children. As we will see, the biblical concept of the father does include the mother as well—that is, both parents are to participate in the process of child rearing and education.

Ephesians 6:4 tells us, “And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.”

Train Up Your Child In The Lord!

Fathers and mothers are to raise their children in a Godly environment. They are to *continually* teach their children God's principles. How? Children learn by what they see. We teach by our actions, as well as by our words. We are not teaching or properly training if our actions do not match our words. We don't teach Godly principles either, if our words and actions don't correspond with God's commandments.

So, if we teach our children by our words *or* by our actions that it is sometimes justified to lie, to steal, to kill, to commit adultery, or to use God's name in vain, then we are not teaching our children *God's word*—we are not bringing them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.

Notice in Deuteronomy 6:25 what parents *should be* teaching their children, “Then it will be righteousness for us, if we are careful to observe all these commandments before the LORD our God, as He has commanded us.”

This presupposes, of course, that parents keep the commandments diligently themselves (cp. Deuteronomy 6:17). If they do, then this will prompt the child to ASK the parents WHY they are doing what they are doing (verse 20). And once a child asks, the parents are to

respond (verse 21). They are NOT to let this golden opportunity go by. In addition, parents are to teach their children even if they don't ask.

In order to be able to teach God's word effectively, it must first be settled in the hearts of the teachers themselves. Notice Deuteronomy 6:6–7, “And these words which I command you today *shall be in your heart*. You shall *teach them* diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.”

If the words of God are NOT in our hearts, HOW CAN WE teach them diligently to our children? If we ourselves are not sure whether God's instructions *always* apply in *every* situation without fail, how CAN we teach our children or teens that they do? **If we doubt whether it is ALWAYS right NOT to lie, NOT to steal, NOT to kill, NOT to break the Sabbath, NOT to cheat on our wife or husband, how CAN we bring up our children or teens in the admonition of the Lord?**

Don't Provoke!

Remember, we read in Ephesians 6:4 what NOT to do. We are NOT to **provoke** our children to **wrath**. We can do that in many different ways. At the same time, we often do provoke them in such a way that

they become **discouraged** (Colossians 3:21).

This could happen if parents expect too much from their children all at once. Our children are still learning, they are not yet mature, and we need to have patience with them. If we give them the impression that we are never satisfied with what they do, they may become angry or discouraged. They may even come to the point where they become willing to give up this way of life. They may say, “I can never please my parents, no matter what I do, so why even try?” Parents could also provoke their children to wrath, *leading* to their discouragement, by *never complimenting* them for the good things they do, or by not *comforting them* when they do badly, and by not *encouraging them* to do better next time.

Notice how, according to the apostle Paul, a father and a mother **SHOULD** train their children in the admonition of the Lord. We read in 1 Thessalonians 2:10–12, “You are witnesses, and God also, how devoutly and justly and blamelessly we behaved ourselves among you who believe; as you know how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged [or implored] every one of you, **as a father does his own children**, that you would walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.”

HOW To Train Up Your Child In The Lord!

A father and a mother who want their children to walk worthy of God need to *exhort, comfort and charge or implore* their children. But, first of all, fathers and mothers must themselves *walk devoutly and blamelessly and justly*. For instance, in walking “*justly*,” their judgments must be *just*. They can’t be based on preference, where one child is placed before the other. Then, children must see that their parents are walking “*devoutly*” before God—that their lives are *devoted* to Him. And, parents need to keep God’s Law themselves “*blamelessly*,” because they want their children to do likewise.

Following that, parents need to “*exhort*” and “*implore*” their children to *follow their right example*, remembering to “*comfort*” their children along the way. When children feel down because they did not do well in school or in college, their parents need to give them a helping hand and encourage them to go on and to do better next time. Rather than *discouraging* them, parents need to *encourage* them. At the same time, parents must never ever compromise with God’s Law.

The reason, then, why we parents raise our children in the way we do, must be with the expectation and goal that our children *become obedient to God’s Word*.

1 Timothy 3:4 tells us that a bishop or a minister must be ruling “his own house well, having his children in submission with all reverence.”

Titus 1:6 tells us that a bishop or a minister must have “faithful children not accused of dissipation [lit. incorrigibility] or insubordination.”

HOW can a child become a faithful, reverent and submissive child, rather than an incorrigible and insubordinate one?

Just as there are keys for happy, successful marriages, there are also keys in the Bible for successful parenting and happy families.

Keys For Successful Parenting!

Notice Hebrews 12:5–7, “And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons, ‘My son, do not despise the chastening [discipline] of the LORD, Nor be discouraged when you are *rebuked* by Him; For whom the LORD *loves* He *chastens*, And *scourges* every son whom He receives.’ If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten?”

We find listed here numerous principles that are to be applied by a father and a mother toward their children. Let’s take a closer look.

Parents Must LOVE Their Children

First of all, father and mother must LOVE their children because GOD acts with LOVE toward us. Whatever we as parents do with our children, it must be because of LOVE—because we LOVE them, because we want the best for them. We don’t act toward our children with anger because they annoy us and because we want to have our peace. If our children know that we act toward them because of LOVE, as we know that God acts toward us because of LOVE, then, our children may be less prone to despise our actions toward them or to become discouraged because of them.

We sometimes need to correct our children, or as the Bible says, *chasten and rebuke and scourge* our children. But what do those words mean?

Parents Need to “Chasten”

Let’s start with the terms “chastening” and “chasten.” The noun is translated from the Greek “*paideia*,” and the verb is translated from the Greek “*paideuo*.” The literal meaning according to *Young’s* is, “instruction” or “training,” or “to instruct” or “to train up.” *Strong’s* gives this definition under Nos. 3809 and 3811, “tutorage, i.e. education or training; by implication disciplinary correction. . . ; to train up a child, i.e.

educate or (by implication) discipline (by punishment): chasten, instruct, learn, teach.”

There is nothing biblically wrong with punishing a child if the child behaves wrongly and deserves punishment. The punishment must never be excessive, however, but it must be administered in a consequent fashion, as corresponding to, and fitting the infraction. We read that Christ “rebukes and *chastens*” (Greek, “*paideuo*,” i.e. educates, trains, disciplines) everyone whom He *loves* (Revelation 3:19). He does it because He *loves* us. So we, as parents, must do it because we *love* our children. But even then, we must never forget to be *merciful* and *forgiving*. Christ chose at times not to inflict a certain punishment on people who had sinned. He did not condemn the woman caught in adultery because He saw that the woman did not need any further punishment; she *had* learned her lesson (cp. John 8:1–11).

Parents Need to “Rebuke”

What does it mean to “rebuke”? Christ rebukes us, and so we need to rebuke our children. But how do we do it?

The Greek word for “rebuke” is “*elegcho*.” *Young’s* defines it with “to convince” or “to convict.” *Strong’s* gives this rendering under No. 1651,

“to confute, to admonish, to convict, to convince, tell a fault, rebuke, reprove.”

We see from these definitions that we have to make it clear to our children what they did wrong. It’s not good to punish them for wrongdoing, *without explaining to them* what they did and WHY it *was wrong*.

But note the problem if our actions don’t back up our words. For instance, if we tell our child that he or she should not have lied and the child responds by saying, “But you did the same yesterday,” then we have not been very effective teachers.

When our boy gets in a fight and we rebuke him for that, and he responds by saying, “But you watched TV last night and yelled to shoot the bad guy,” then we have not been very effective teachers.

When our teenage son tells us that he is thinking of joining the army, and we tell him not to do that, and he responds by saying, “But you said only yesterday that this country needs to attack other countries,” then we should not be surprised about our son’s reaction—because we have not been very effective teachers of God’s law.

When our teenage daughter confesses to us that she wants to go live with her boyfriend and we react with anger and frustration, and she

reminds us of our affair with our secretary or the neighbor, then we have not been very good teachers.

When our pregnant daughter explains to us that she wants an abortion, and we tell her not to have an abortion, and she responds by saying, “But you said that an abortion may be justified in certain circumstances,” then—again—we have not been very effective teachers of God’s law.

All the effects that we see in our young people today have deep-seated roots in the past that have led to their present ideas and conduct. Children follow the example of their parents. Abraham lied repeatedly by saying that Sarah was his sister (Genesis 12:11–13; 20:1–2, 13), and his son Isaac later did exactly the same regarding his wife Rebekah (Genesis 26:6–7).

Parents Need to “Scourge”

We have also read in Hebrews 12, that God scourges every son or child that He receives. The Greek word for “scourge” is “*mastigoo*” and means, according to *Young’s*, “to whip, to scourge, and to flog.” But before we draw hasty conclusions, consider how God is scourging us. He scourges us in many different ways. Notice how *Strong’s* defines the word under No. 3146, “to flog—literally or figuratively.”

There is *never* a justification for

physical abuse. On the other hand, to totally ban spanking and define it as physical abuse only shows how liberal and anti-biblical our Western society has become. This is of course the fruit of the anti-authoritarian education that has brought about a curse on our Western world. As parents, we must be aware, though, that in certain countries, spanking is illegal, and could result in the authorities coming in and taking away our children. And even in countries where spanking is not illegal, many governmental officials look at such practice with great disfavor. There have been cases where Social Workers in the United States tried to take away children from Christians, because the Christian parents believed and practiced—in moderation and with great love and care—biblically-endorsed spanking.

Note what the Bible clearly teaches in regard to corporal punishment in Proverbs 13:24, “He who spares his rod hates his son, But he who LOVES him disciplines him promptly [or early].”

Since using the rod is compared with prompt or early discipline, it is clear that this passage includes the concept of spanking, where and when appropriate. Of course, we don’t spank a teenager or an adult, so the spanking needs to be done

early in the life of the child. But note, again, we discipline our children, because we LOVE them. If we discipline our children for *any other reason*, or because of *any other motive*, we do NOT follow God's instructions. Spanking should never cause physical injury to a child. The intent is to break a rebellious spirit, not to bruise skin.

Note how the *Ryrie Study Bible* comments on this verse, "The discipline referred to here is training either by word ([Proverbs] 15:5; 24:32) or deed (23:13)."

Proverbs 23:13–14 reads, "Do not withhold correction from a child, For if you beat him with a rod, he will not die. You shall beat him with a rod, And deliver his soul from hell." The *Ryrie Study Bible* comments, "A wise teacher warns of neglecting child discipline... Discipline may deliver a child from an untimely death."

We have heard a lot about child neglect. But one kind of child neglect is seldom ever mentioned—the neglect to discipline the child, in LOVE, when the child deserves, and must have, discipline for his or her own good.

Proverbs 19:18 says, "Chasten your son while there is hope, And do not set your heart on his destruction." *Lamsa* translates it this way, "Chasten your son while there is hope, and let not your soul share his

dishonor." The *Ryrie Study Bible* comments, "[D]o not neglect child discipline and thereby bring on your son's death."

But why would that be? What is the connection between lack of child discipline and the death of the child? Let's note Proverbs 22:15, "*Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; The rod of correction will drive it far from him.*"

Remove the Child's Foolishness!

Foolishness, if not overcome, can have terrible consequences. The discipline of a child must be administered by the parents with the desire and motivation to HELP the CHILD to get rid of foolishness. If we get angry with our kids and lock them up in their rooms because we "can't" deal with them right now, then we have missed the entire point of child rearing. Rather, as concerned parents, we must try to do whatever we can do to see to it that the foolishness in the child disappears.

Human nature is hostile against God because Satan has been putting *his* thoughts and *his* desires into our hearts from our youth. *Satan's thoughts and desires are foolishness to God.* So, converted parents must help to reverse the process—they must help the child to get rid of that foolishness. If the child lives with and feeds on his foolishness, it will get worse.

As mentioned, both father and mother have responsibilities when it comes to child rearing. Notice Deuteronomy 21:18–20, “If a man has a stubborn and rebellious son who will not obey the voice of his father or the voice of his mother, and who, when they have chastened him, will not heed them, then his father and his mother shall take hold of him and bring him out to the elders of his city, to the gate of his city. And they shall say to the elders of his city, ‘This son of ours is stubborn and rebellious; he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton and a drunkard.’ ”

The final punishment at that time was disastrous, as verse 21 explains, but it was ordained by God. Today, parents are not to inflict *such* penalties. *God*, however, might very well decide, through manifold ways and circumstances, to *directly* bring about harsh punishment for the child if foolishness remains in the child’s heart—and many times, such penalties and punishment are an automatic consequence of the child’s bad conduct.

As we will discuss more fully later in this booklet, no matter how perfect the child-rearing by both father and mother may be, when children become adults they still have their role to play. They are free moral agents and are responsible for the choices they make. One could

not think of a better parent than God, but first Lucifer, and later Adam and Eve chose to disobey God. And, in passing, one couldn’t think of a better husband than God, but ancient Israel—pictured in the Bible as being married to God (Jeremiah 3:14; 31:32)—also chose to disobey God.

Although children have to make their own decisions, it must still be the parents’ ultimate objective to teach their children the ability to make right choices based upon God’s Word.

Shared Parental Responsibilities

Deuteronomy 21:18–20 taught us that husband and wife have a shared responsibility in rearing their children. BOTH discipline. BOTH give commands. And BOTH take actions to deal with their children’s continued transgressions.

Notice also in Proverbs 1:8, “My son, hear the instruction of your father, And do not forsake the law of your mother.” It is the mother, as well as the father, who passes on the law to the child. And her law must of course be the *law of God*, and it must not be contrary to it.

Now, notice Proverbs 29:15, “The rod and rebuke give wisdom, But a child left to himself brings shame to his mother.” An unrestrained child brings shame to his mother, as she should have restrained the child.

A Child Is A Child!

We read in Proverbs 22:6, “Train up a child in the way he should go, And when he is old he will not depart from it.” The *Ryrie Study Bible* comments, “[It says,] in the way he should go. Lit. according to his way, i.e., the child’s habits and interests. The instruction must take into account his individuality and inclinations, and be in keeping *with his degree of physical and mental development.*”

Our children grow up too quickly. We give them hardly any time to play and to enjoy their childhood. We don’t let them pursue their interests as children, but want them to be young men or young women far too early. This is especially true in the entertainment industry, but this wrong concept has permeated our entire society and thinking. It is customary in the U.S. and in many other Western nations to place a child at the age of five, or even younger, in a preschool for the convenience of the parents. Many educators warn against such practice, saying that this is far too early to be separated from parents.

When we look at our societies, especially in the Western world, we find a totally different way of life than what God intended. We read about the kind of family life that God intended, where the father would be present and available to teach his

son or his daughter. But in our modern world, the father is basically gone all day, working somewhere away from home.

In addition, children are being handed over to preschools at an early age, thereby being separated further from the benevolent teachings of their Christian parents. And when, on top of it, young mothers go to work and place their kids in day care centers, then even the last remaining positive influence of the Christian parents on their children has been abolished as well.

Remember that young women are admonished to love their children and to be *homemakers*, so that the word of God may not be blasphemed (Titus 2:4–5). God tells young women to love their children by staying home with them. Their priceless influence on the children to teach them God’s way of life must not be left to others.

The point is, we need to do whatever we can, in this world that is presently ruled by Satan, to work against Satan’s influences. If there are exceptional circumstances forcing the young mother to work outside the home, she should see to it that she can schedule her work hours in such a way as to be able to be with her young children as much as possible, spending as much quality time as possible with them.

Opportunity and Responsibility of the Young Mother

A young mother has a tremendous opportunity, as well as a huge responsibility to train up her children in the way that they should go. And notice how the Bible underscores that responsibility and challenge in 1 Timothy 2:15 [in the literal rendering], “But she shall be saved through childbearing, if they abide in faith and love and sanctification with discreetness.”

One way of understanding this passage is, that women, through the continuation of bearing children, will be saved (alive)—that is, they won’t die prematurely. In addition, as the *Ryrie Study Bible* points out, the phrase “saved in child bearing,” may also mean, “*that a woman’s greatest achievement is found in her devotion to her divinely ordained role: to help her husband, to bear children, and to follow a faithful, chaste way of life.*”

Paul might also have had the mother’s satisfaction with her children in mind, if they *continue in a Godly lifestyle*. Notice, how this passage is rendered in the *Lamsa* translation, “Nevertheless, if her *posterity* continue in faith and have holiness and chastity, she will live through them.”

In other words, it is truly a joy for a mother to see her children grow up within the guidelines of the Bible

and to remain loyal to the word of God. Rather than bringing shame to the mother, the mother will have a sense of fulfillment for having taught her children the way of God, and thereby experience joy and happiness to see her children remain on the right track.

We can see, then, that the role of the woman in child-rearing is extremely important. The mother is to teach her children good habits and, most importantly, a good understanding of God and His law.

The Role of Biblical Women In Childrearing

Let’s note the influence of **historical women** on their children, as recorded in the Bible. In many cases, their belief in God was not shared by their husbands. Still, they were able to bring up their children in “the fear of God.” When reading those passages, we should not forget that the Scriptures tell us that children ARE holy or **sanctified**, that is, set apart for a *holy purpose*, even if *only one parent is converted* (cp. 1 Corinthians 7:14). This means that children of just *one* converted Christian parent have access to God. God CAN be approached and reached by them—He hears them and they CAN expect answers from God.

Note the following example of

Ahaz in 2 Chronicles 28:1–4, “Ahaz was twenty years old when he became king, and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem; and he did **not** do what was right in the sight of the LORD, as his father David had done. For he walked in the ways of the kings of Israel, and made molded images for the Baals. He burned incense in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, and burned his children in the fire, according to the abominations of the nations whom the LORD had cast out before the children of Israel. And he sacrificed and burned incense on the high places, on the hills, and under every green tree.”

Here we have a description of a very evil and wicked king. But now, notice what happened when he died and his son Hezekiah became his successor in 2 Chronicles 28: 27, and 2 Chronicles 29: 1–2, “So Ahaz rested with his fathers, and they buried him in the city, in Jerusalem; but they did not bring him into the tombs of the kings of Israel. Then Hezekiah his son reigned in his place. Hezekiah became king when he was twenty-five years old, and he reigned twenty-nine years in Jerusalem. *His mother’s name was Abijah the daughter of Zechariah.* And he did what was **right** in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father David had done.”

Surprisingly, perhaps, Hezekiah did well even though he was the son of a very wicked king. This *has to be* attributed to the *positive influence of his mother*, Abijah, who is mentioned by name.

The story continues in 2 Kings 20:21; 21:1–2, “So Hezekiah rested with his fathers. Then Manasseh his son reigned in his place. Manasseh was *twelve* years old when he became king, and he reigned fifty-five years in Jerusalem. *His mother’s name was Hephzibah.* And he did **evil** in the sight of the LORD, according to the abominations of the nations whom the LORD had cast out before the children of Israel.”

Hezekiah had been a righteous king. His son Manasseh, however, turned out to be one the most evil kings in the history of Judah. He became king when he was *twelve* years old. His mother Hephzibah is mentioned by name. It is obvious that her *evil* influence was highly responsible for the evil conduct of her son Manasseh.

Manasseh was followed by his son Amon, another evil king. But notice what happened when Amon’s son Josiah became king, as recorded in 2 Kings 22:1–2, “Josiah was *eight* years old when he became king, and he reigned thirty-one years in Jerusalem. *His mother’s name was Jedidah the daughter of Adaiah of Bozkath.* And

he did what was **right** in the sight of the LORD, and walked in all the ways of his father David; he did not turn aside to the right hand or to the left.”

Josiah was *eight* years old when he became king. His mother is mentioned by name—Jedidah. Although the son of an evil father, he turned out to be one of the most righteous and outstanding kings that have ever lived (cp. 2 Kings 23:25). **It is obvious that his mother Jedidah had trained him up “in the fear of the Lord.”**

Can we see the enormous positive influence that a righteous mother CAN have on her children? Why, then, do so many Christian women feel today that there are more challenging and rewarding tasks to be found outside the home, than “just” being a mother and a homemaker? Women who don’t want to have children because they don’t want to give up their jobs or their careers do not follow God’s instructions for them. Women who don’t want to stay at home with their young children because they don’t want to give up their jobs and their careers do not follow God’s instructions for them, either. Understand, of course, we are not talking about women who can’t have children or who haven’t found a suitable husband to marry. But barring that, in God’s eyes, being a mother and

being at home with her young children, is the **highest challenge, vocation, occupation, and career** that could possibly exist for a woman.

THE ROLES OF THE CHILDREN

In order to have a happy and successful Christian family, the children have a part to play also. And *all of us* are children, whether young or old. We *all* have parents. In some cases, our parents may be dead, but in many cases, our parents, or at least one parent, are still alive. Just what responsibilities and functions do children have?

Are our hearts—the hearts of the parents and the children—turned toward each other, as we read in Malachi 4:6? Do we allow God to heal our family relationships if those relationships need healing? If we don’t live close to our parents, do we still have regular contact with them? Do we write them or call them? Do we *make* time to visit them? Do we show respect for them? Are we thankful for them, and for what they have done—and still may do—for us? Do we honor them as God commands us to?

“Obey Your Parents in the Lord”

Notice the clear instructions that the Bible gives to us, the children, in relationship to our parents. Paul says in Ephesians 6:1–3, “Children, obey

your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 'Honor your father and your mother,' which is the first commandment with promise: 'that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth.' ”

As children, we are to obey our parents *in the Lord*. This means, we are not to obey them if it would *not be* in the Lord—that is, if it would be in contradiction to God’s commands—either from a literal or a spiritual standpoint. Once a child is old enough to understand God’s way of life, he or she must follow God.

Christ did just that. He told His parents, when He was twelve years old, that He had to be about His Father’s business (Luke 2:49). Yet, as a young child, He remained obedient to His mother and His stepfather (Luke 2:51), when He could do so without violating God’s will for Him. Even as an adult, He honored His mother’s wish to change water into wine (John 2:1–11). He did not obey His mother, however, when it was contrary to the will of God. When He was busy teaching and His mother asked Him to come out of the house to see her, He refused (Mark 3:31–35; Matthew 12:46–50). Nevertheless, He always honored His parents. He saw to it, while hanging on the cross, that His mother would be taken care of by John, the disciple with whom He

had a very close relationship (John 19:25–27). We must follow that example. There is never an excuse for not honoring our parents (Leviticus 19:3; Deuteronomy 5:16; Exodus 20:12). After all, without them, we would not even exist.

Notice also in Colossians 3:20, “Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing to the Lord.” We must obey our parents in all things, unless the instructions of our parents contradict the letter or the spirit of God’s Word. It is *never* well-pleasing to God if we disobey *Him*. We discussed that wives cannot disobey God by obeying their husbands. In the same way, children must not obey their parents either, if this would violate God’s Law. They are not to lie or to steal or to kill or any such thing in “obedience” to their parents’ “orders.”

Harmony Between Parents and Children IS Possible!

Notice Philippians 2:22, in the *Revised English Bible*, “But Timothy’s record is known to you: you know that he has been at my side in the service of the gospel like a son working *under his father*.”

Now, this is a very interesting passage. It pictures a harmonious relationship between father and son. Both work together. Both are *willing* to work together. The son is not too

proud to be under his father's authority, and if the father is gentle, loving, and helpful, and at the same time, just and Godly, then there is no reason why the son should not *want to be* under his father's authority, willing to honor him and to obey him.

Christian children must not develop the kind of attitude that is prevalent in the Western world today, where children want to *rule over their parents*. Realize what the consequence would be, as recorded in Isaiah 3:5, if parents did not deal immediately with such an attitude of their children towards them, "The people will be oppressed, Every one by another and every one by his neighbor; The child will be insolent toward the elder [aged], And the base [despised, lightly esteemed] toward the honorable."

We quoted Isaiah 3:12 earlier to show that God does not want a woman to rule over her husband. God also tells us in that passage, "As for *My people*, children are their oppressors, And women rule over them..."

True Christians are *God's people*. Does this passage in Isaiah 3:12 describe true Christians today? Are children our oppressors and do we allow our wives to rule over us? If so, we had better get this changed in a hurry! God's ways are very clearly revealed to us. Women are not to

rule over their husbands, and children are not to oppress their parents. Only if all of us understand and carry out our respective roles properly will there be truly happy and successful marriage and family relationships that are blessed by God.

Children Need to Respect Their Parents!

Notice Hebrews 12:9, "Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect."

Paul makes this statement as if it were a self-evident and universally accepted fact of life. And apparently at the time of Paul's writing it was so. Unfortunately, in our societies today, the respect for parents is not self-evident, and actually is rare. *How many children respect their parents today?* How many children respect the teaching of their parents and accept their correction? Do children respect the rules of the house? Or do they have total disregard for them? Even as full-grown adults, when we visit our elderly parents, do we respect their desires? Or do we insist on conforming them to our way, for our convenience?

Let's take a look at a few admonitions in the book of Proverbs that tell us how to have a right relationship with our parents. These valuable instructions apply to all of us as children, young or old.

Notice Proverbs 19:26, “He who mistreats his father and chases away his mother Is a son who causes shame and brings reproach.” It is a terrible indictment against our so-called “Christian” Western society that there are far too many cases of abuse of *parents*, where sons and daughters actually hit their parents, or refuse to help them, or even chase them away when they are old and dependent. This conduct, if done by true Christians, brings reproach on the word of God.

Proverbs 20:20 reads, “Whoever curses his father or his mother, His lamp will be put out in deep darkness.” Cursing our parents is the opposite of honoring them. We must never curse our parents, not even in our thoughts. If not repented of, we will be suddenly visited by calamity, as the Scripture says.

Proverbs 23:22 points out, “Listen to your father who begot you, And do not despise your mother when she is old.” God used our parents to give us life. Without them, we would not exist. We need to listen to them. They have been around a lot longer than we have, and let’s not despise them or belittle them when they are older. If our parents have “strange” ways of doing things—so be it. Let’s not develop an attitude of despising them. That would be so dangerous for us,

spiritually speaking.

Note Proverbs 30:11, “There is a generation that curses its father, And does not bless its mother.” Do we *bless* our parents? Do we see to it that they are happy? Do we take the time to thank them for what they did, and still do, for us? It’s one thing not to curse them, but do we actually bless them? And do we let them know that we are blessing them? Do we help them when they need it? Are we deeply appreciative of what they are doing and have done for us?

Proverbs 30:17 tells us, “The eye that mocks his father, And scorns obedience to his mother, The ravens of the valley will pick it out, And the young eagles will eat it.”

Have you heard young people say, “What—you actually *obey* your mother? You actually do what she tells you to do? Oh come on, in what world are you living? You have *respect* for your ‘old man’? We are living in the 21st century, you know. That kind of stuff is ancient.” But is it? God thunders at us, **if the hearts of the parents don’t turn to their children, and if the hearts of the children don’t turn to their parents, then God will not even preserve mankind alive! Thankfully, some will respond to God’s challenge, as we are told that God will save mankind from utter destruction (cp. Matthew 24:22).**

USE THESE KEYS!

We have seen from the Bible the vital keys to happy marriages and families. God wants mankind to apply His perfect laws for our own good. In fact, if we do, God will be in our marriages and in our families, guiding and protecting us as we seek to follow His lead. In Isaiah 66:2, God promises to help us, if we have an attitude pleasing to Him, “But on this one will I look: On him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, And who trembles at My word.”

In the book of Malachi, God takes special note of those who fear or respect Him and who esteem His name. Consider what God says to those people, “...And I will spare them As a man spares his own son who serves him.” (Malachi 3:17).

God is revealed in the Bible as our Father (cp. Matthew 6:9; 23:9).

He wants His family to be happy, and the way for us to do that is to apply His keys revealed to us for this tremendous purpose.

We have been given an awesome privilege of knowing HOW we can better our marriage and family relationships. But with knowledge comes responsibility! We need to ACT upon what we know! Rather than being forgetful hearers or readers, let's become *DOERS of the Word of God* (James 1:22–25). And if we do that, the **product** will be *happy and successful relationships, and our marriages and families will stabilize and will last.*

It's up to us now to respond to God's challenge—are we going to apply God's Word in our lives, or not? Our very physical and spiritual survival—as well as the survival of our families—will depend on it!

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