

MINISTRY AND MARRIAGE

Proverbs 18:22 He who finds a wife finds what is good and receives favor from the Lord.

Ps 127:1 Unless the Lord builds the house,
its builders labor in vain

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MARRIAGE AND MINISTRY

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INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK

CHRISTIAN FAMILY LIFE AND THE BIBLE

Better understanding godly Christian family life has been a great interest of my since I got married. I have always wanted to be the husband and father God expected me to be. I have been married for 34 years and have 6 children and 12 grandchildren. I am greatly blessed with a wonderful wife and fine children. I have learned many things from them and are very grateful for them.

As a pastor and counselor I have been involved in much marriage and family counseling over the 45 years of my ministry. I have done intensive study on the subject, both in the Bible and by reading many books published by Christian authors. I have the joy and privilege of doing marriage counseling and leading numerous marriage retreats and conferences. While I don't claim to be an expert, I feel I do understand what God had in mind when He created man and woman and put them together to form a marriage and family.

I have tried to convey those basic principles in this book. This is not a book about marriage based on American culture and costumes. Nor is it a book based on how marriages and families operate in India. It isn't even a book on marriage as practiced in the early church. It is simply taking the eternal principles of the Bible and teaching what they mean so they can be applied to any culture in any time. These are God's basic truths. He created us so He knows what is best for us. Take these truths and apply them to your life and culture as He leads you.

While I have written this book most specifically for Christian pastors and their wives in India, it also applies to all Indian Christians. Since it based on God's basic principles it can also be applied to pastors and Christians in any country at any time.

May God use this book to strengthen the families in India and around the world, and may He be glorified in all we do. May Your kingdom come, may Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:10).

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I. HUSBAND – SACRIFICIAL LOVE

Key Thought: God requires husbands to show unconditional, sacrificial love to their wives the same way Jesus shows these things to them.

Marriage is a wonderful gift from God. He created and established it before sin entered the world. If mankind had never sinned then marriage would still be perfect. But we are fallen, sinful, self-centered people and therefore living daily with someone else can be difficult. Just being married a long time doesn't make marriage problems go away. Often it makes them worse. This book is to help us understand how to make our marriage all God wants them to be despite our sin and failures. God created us and He created marriage, so He knows how we can have marriages that bring peace and joy. Read this book with an open mind and heart, letting God speak to you through what you read. Since man is the leader, we will talk about what God expects of men first.

JOSEPH AND MARY Joseph was to be married to Mary (Matthew 1:18-25; Luke 2:1-20). The legal papers had been signed, and he had given her his dowry. All that was left was the final ceremony so they could begin living together. It was during that time that Joseph found out Mary was expecting a baby. He did not know it was God's baby. He thought she had been unfaithful and that hurt him deeply. Many men would have wanted to hurt the person who caused them so much pain, but not Joseph.

God's law said he could not go ahead with the marriage. The law said it had to be broken. It was up to Joseph how he did that. He had three options. He could have her stoned to death for adultery (Leviticus 20:10). Or he could have her brought before all the people, publicly mocked and shamed for her sin, have the union broken legally and gotten his dowry back. The people would have applauded Joseph for making an example of her so others wouldn't sin this way. This would have been cruel and painful to Mary. His third option was to quietly end the relationship. He would not get his dowry back and people would mock and criticize him, blaming him for everything. His reputation would be ruined instead of hers. Do you know which option Joseph chose before God told him he could marry her anyway?

Joseph chose the third option (Matthew 1:19). How do you think Mary felt when she found out Joseph was going to protect her from public shame and instead take the blame himself, even though it seemed she had been unfaithful to him? It's no wonder God chose someone like Joseph to raise His Son!

Joseph put Mary and her needs before his own (Luke 2:1-20). No wonder she wanted to go to Bethlehem with him, even though pregnant. No wonder she quickly obeyed when God, through Joseph, told them to leave for Egypt and then to return later to Nazareth where all the talk about them was very critical (Matthew 2:13-23). I think Joseph is one of the finest men in the Bible, a great example for all husbands today.

ABRAHAM AND SARAH Not all husbands are like Joseph, though. Abraham was the opposite. When we first meet Abraham and Sarah (Genesis 11:27-30), they seem to have a good marriage. She doesn't have any problem leaving her home and family to go to an unknown land when Abraham says to pack up and leave (Genesis 12:1-5). However soon problems arise. When they got to the Promised Land, there was a famine. Instead of staying and trusting God, Abraham took matters into his own hands and moved to Egypt. Because

Sarah was still beautiful despite being in her late 60's, Abraham was afraid Pharaoh would kill him so he could take Sarah into his harem. He had her lie about their relationship to protect him by having her say she was just his sister (Genesis 12:10-20). She was taken, but Abraham was safe. How do you think this make Sarah feel?

She sacrificed herself to protect Abraham when it should have been him sacrificing to protect her. A woman needs to be protected and feel secure in her husband's love. Sarah did not have that. Abraham showed her he was putting himself first and taking care of himself, not her. Unfortunately this was not just a one-time event with Abraham. The same thing happened twenty years later (Genesis 20:1-18). Abraham never did protect Sarah, just himself.

Sarah took control of her own life to protect herself because Abraham wasn't going to do so. Because she couldn't trust him, she was listening by the door of the tent when the messengers came from God (Genesis 18:10). She told Abraham to have an heir by Hagar (Genesis 16:1-3), and then when she was jealous of and hurt by Hagar, she had Abraham send her away (Genesis 16:4-6). She even laughed at God's prediction of a coming son (Genesis 18:9-15). When Isaac was born, she used him to meet needs her husband wasn't meeting: feeling needed and important (Genesis 21:1-7). This just taught Isaac to be submissive to a strong woman, a pattern he continued and passed on down to Jacob. Sarah even made Abraham send Ishmael away (Genesis 21:8-13). When God started working on Abraham about all this and told him to take Isaac and sacrifice him, it seems certain he didn't tell Sarah (Genesis 22:1-3). Notice how this relationship had deteriorated, starting with Abraham's putting himself first.

Men, who are you more like, Abraham or Joseph? Who would your wife say you are more like? Would she say you protect whatever the cost, like Joseph did for Mary, or that you put yourself first, like Abraham did with Sarah? Maybe we should ask first of all who your wife is more like. If she's more like Sarah, what do you need to do to have her feel secure and trust you? If she's more like Mary -- great! Wait a minute before taking all the credit. Is she like Mary because of your sacrificial love and protection, or because she is trusting God despite how you treat her?

What pattern did you learn from your parents when growing up? Was your father more like Abraham or Joseph? Was your mother more like Sarah or Mary? What are you teaching your children? Abraham taught Isaac and Jacob to put themselves first. Is that what your sons are learning from your example?

What can you do to make your wife feel more secure in your love? In what ways can you show your love for her more? What can you do to better protect her from too hard work, from criticism she receives from out or inside the home, from disrespectful children, and from those who would take advantage of her? We'd all love to have wives like Mary. We can, too. The first step is for us to be more like Joseph!

A. WHAT IS SACRIFICIAL LOVE

God wants all husbands to be like Joseph. They are commanded to love their wives sacrificially, as Jesus loves them. “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her” (Ephesians 5:25). “However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband” (Ephesians 5:33). It is a command and men are disobeying God if they don’t do this.

UNCONDITIONAL LOVE DEFINED There are two words for love in the New Testament. One, *phileo* in the Greek, speaks of liking someone for what they do or don’t do. It is a conditional love. We love them because of what they do. Many married people have this kind of love for each other. When they are hurt or feel neglected they no longer love their mate. This is NOT the kind of love God has for us. A marriage will not grow on this kind of love. People have a sin nature, they will fail and hurt each other. Husbands must love their wife despite these things, just as God loves them despite what they do.

The other word for love, *agape* in the Greek, refers to unconditional love, love no matter what the person does, love in spite of their sin and failure. It is the word used of God’s love for everyone (I John 4:8, 16).

UNCONDITIONAL LOVE SHOWN In the Old Testament God told a prophet named Hosea to marry a woman named Gomer. Despite his faithful love for her, she was unfaithful to him (Hosea 1-2). She had children by other men, and eventually left him to live with other men. After awhile she became a slave. When Hosea discovered this, he went and bought her so he could bring her home and restore her as his wife. God had Hosea do this to picture His own unconditional love for His people who have sinned and left Him, yet God loves and restores His people even though they don’t deserve it. This is unconditional love! This is how He loves His people. This is the example He gives husbands and wives for loving each other.

Loving your wife unconditionally means you don’t compare her to other wives nor to your mother. You wouldn’t like her comparing you to other men! You aren’t to compare her appearance to that of other women, nor her cooking or housekeeping. You are to love her as she is, unconditionally, the same way Jesus loves you. He doesn’t compare you to other Christians and decide if He loves you more or less than them! Loving her unconditionally means you don’t expect her to think and act like you do. Women are very different than men (“weaker partner” in 1 Peter 3:7). Their needs, especially emotionally, are very different. Wives need to know their husband are following God’s leading in how they direct their family. They need assurance they are loved and important. They need to know their husband will protect them and care for them. They need to know you want to get to know them better and will listen when they talk. Her needs are much different than your needs. Get to know her as she really is.

UNCONDITIONAL LOVE DESCRIBED God Himself describes this kind of love in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7: “Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.” This tells us about unconditional love.

First, love is patient with others, it doesn't demand they be perfect but is patient like God is with you. It is kind and does good things to help others, if they deserve it or not, like Jesus taught in the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30-37). Unconditional love does not envy or get jealous but is content with what God has provided in marriage and life. It does not boast because it is not self-centered. People who are married do not brag to each other about what a good husband or wife they are because they are not proud. They do not demand to be the center of attention. Like Jesus, they are humble (Philippians 2:3-4).

In addition, this kind of love is not rude, instead it has good manners, is considerate, and lives by the Golden Rule of treating others as we want others to treat us (Luke 6:31). Unconditional love like God has for us is not self-seeking. It is not selfish or self-centered. Instead, like a servant, love thinks of what it can do for others, not what others can do for them. This is especially true in marriage where both mates must put the other person before himself or herself. God's *agape* is not easily angered and doesn't hurt others to get its own way. Many times people see their parents use anger to get what they want and they think can start doing that themselves, but that is not how God's love treats us, and it is not how we should treat each other. When something does not go as we want, we must forgive the person and keep no record of wrongs. Love like God's love forgives without being asked. He doesn't remember our sins (Jeremiah 31:34; Hebrews 8:12; 10:17) nor does He bring them up in the future. If we are to be like Jesus, we can't mention or even remember the sins of your mate. True love does not delight in evil but rejoices in the truth (verse 6). We are not to be glad when something bad happens to someone who has harmed us. We should find no pleasure when our mate is wrong or what they are doing fails. God isn't that way with us. Instead love like God's love always protects the other as Joseph did for Mary and as Boaz protected Ruth when she was working in his fields (Ruth 2:5-17). Notice it says ALWAYS protects, not just sometimes, not just when it is easy or we want to, but unconditionally no matter what.

Another thing this love does is always trust. It always believes the best about another and always compliments and encourages. It always hopes, it looks for the best not the worst and is always willing to give another chance. It always perseveres and never gives up or quits, no matter the difficulties or the problems being faced. When your mate is going through a hard time, stay faithful, be even closer to them than before. That is because love never fails. It does not let down or disappoint the one you love. Instead, it keeps putting the other first and growing stronger. It means loving your mate as they are, sin and all. With love, any marriage can grow because love is more important than any skill, training, schooling, talent or ability we have. Love is greater than anything (verse 13).

LOVE YOUR WIFE AS JESUS LOVES YOU God commands us: "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her" (Ephesians 5:25). Not only did Jesus love the church, but He "gave Himself up for her" (Ephesians 5:25). He sacrificed everything for His bride, the church. Husbands sometimes get selfish and self-centered. They think about themselves first and feel their wives should be doing more for them. They complain when it doesn't seem she is meeting their needs. Some men say they will love their wives and be a better husband when she first becomes a better wife. This is not how Jesus is to us and should not be how husbands are to their wives. Jesus sacrificed everything for us because He loved us. He even gave His life for us. A husband's love for his wife will be shown by how he sacrifices for her. Jesus gave up everything for us, and that is the example men are to follow in loving their wives.

Sometimes husbands think they do sacrifice for their wives, but compared to what our wives need and what Jesus did for us it really isn't much at all. Having love like God has for us means showing your wife love as He shows it to you. Jesus "gave Himself up for us" (Ephesians 5:25). He left everything in heaven to come to earth, suffered here, and then went to the cross where He suffered what we would suffer for eternity in hell. THAT is real sacrifice. He did it for us, not for Himself or what He would get out of it. He did that for us before we did anything to love Him. Men, too, must show that same kind of love and not wait until they think their wives deserve it.

Jesus didn't feel like going to the cross, He felt just the opposite (Mark 14:36; Luke 22:42). Husbands can't wait until they feel like showing unconditional, sacrificial love to their wives. They must always do it no matter what. Does your wife see Jesus' love for her in the way you love her? Can she say she better understands the way Jesus loves her because of the way you love her? That's what God expects of husbands. Being a husband like that is even more important to God than being a pastor. In fact, if we can't or won't do that, we shouldn't be a pastor ((1 Timothy 3:2, 4-5; Titus 1:6; 2:6; Ephesians 5:22-33; 1 Peter 3:1-7; Genesis 2:23-24).

HUMBLE LOVE Sacrifice takes humility. Jesus humbled Himself to sacrifice Himself for us. He is our example. "Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death -- even death on a cross!" (Philippians 2:5-8). Think of all Jesus gave up for you. How does that compare to what you have given up for your wife? How much has your wife given up in life because she is married to you? Often we expect our wives to give up more for us than we do for them, yet God expects us to be like Him and give up everything.

Jesus loved us enough to die for us. Do you love your wife enough to die for her? Do you love her enough to die to yourself a little each day as you sacrifice daily for her? When Jesus sacrificed everything for us we weren't even aware of it. We still have no idea of how much it really cost Him. Your wife will not know how much you sacrifice for her, but that's OK because Jesus knows and that's what matters.

Some men think it's a shame to serve their wife but an honor to have their wife serve them. God says just the opposite. It's an honor to serve our wife like Jesus serves us because then we are becoming more like Him. It's a shame to just have our wives serve us for Jesus doesn't treat us that way. God gives honor to a man who shows unconditional, sacrificial love for his wife, who leads his family to serve God and who treats his wife as Jesus treats him.

There was a famous, very successful man in ministry in America several years ago whose wife developed Alzheimer's disease and couldn't take care of herself. She didn't know who anyone was anymore, even her husband. Yet he resigned from his important ministry position to stay home and take care of her: wash her, dress her and feed her. He gave up everything for her even though she didn't know who he was. When asked why he did it, he said it was a privilege and an honor to do that for her. He was following Jesus' example. He knew being a good husband was more important than being a good pastor.

LOVE YOUR WIFE AS YOU LOVE YOURSELF Paul then goes on to say, "Each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself" (Ephesians 5:33). We love ourselves unconditionally. If we make a mistake or do something wrong we feel badly, but we get over it and move on. We still accept ourselves, no matter what we do. That is how we must love our wives, as we love ourselves (Ephesians 5:33). It doesn't mean pretending we don't know our

wives faults and weaknesses, for we are very aware of them. It means loving her no matter what they are. God doesn't command us to always **like** our wives, for some times we don't like what they do. But God does say to always **love** them. He doesn't always like what we do but He always loves us anyway. Treat her as you treat yourself and as you want others to treat you (Luke 6:31).

A woman is a responder. If she is treated with love and kindness, she will respond in that way. If she is hurt and neglected, it will show in how she acts. That's why God holds men, as husbands, responsible for their wives. If a man treats his wife with love and respect, she will respond in that same way. As Jesus initiates by loving us first and reaching out to us so we can respond to His love, we as husbands are to initiate by reaching out to make our wives feel loved and secure in our unconditional, sacrificial love. God expects husbands to treat wives as He treats them. Then wives will respond as Christians do to Him. Remember, "He who finds a wife finds what is good and receives favor from the Lord" (Proverbs 18:22). "A woman who fears the Lord is to be praised" (Proverbs 31:29-31) "She is worth far more than rubies" (Proverbs 31:10). Don't think about how she should change for you; think about how you can change for her.

B. WHY SHOW SACRIFICIAL LOVE

God wants husbands to show sacrificial love to their wives for many reasons.

FOR THE HUSBAND'S SAKE A pastor is responsible to protect, guide, lead and feed his sheep. Your sheep are the people in your church. But do you know who your most important sheep is? Are you aware of the person in your church that comes first, before everyone else? It isn't the person who gives the most money or complains the most. It's your wife! She is your number one sheep (1 Timothy 3:2, 4-5; Titus 1:6; 2:6; Ephesians 5:22-33; 1 Peter 3:1-7; Genesis 2:23-24). If a man can't be a good husband, he shouldn't be a pastor.

In his list of qualifications for church leaders, Paul goes into detail when he says a pastor must manage his family well or he won't be able to take care of the church (1 Timothy 3:4-5). It can be harder to lead your own family than the church. God uses the relationships in your home, especially with your wife, to teach and train husbands to be more like Jesus. Men learn love, patience and sacrifice in marriage.

A reason God says the family is more important than the church ministry is because His main goal in our life is to make us grow more like Jesus. That is more important than anything a pastor can do for God in ministry. Even having the best church in the world will be nothing if we aren't becoming more Christ like in all we say and do. When a pastor has to sacrifice himself to show unconditional love, when he has to forgive his wife for hurting him, when he has to put her needs first he is learning to be like Jesus. These things must be learned in our marriages so we can apply them to our ministry. It in our relationship with our wife we learn these and therefore become more like Jesus.

The way you treat your family is the way you will treat the church. If you are bossy or controlling at home, you will be that way at church. If you give in to others out of fear, instead of doing what you know is right, you will do that at church. If you get angry when things don't go as you want, you will respond that way in church as well.

God also says that the wife is so much a part of a man that when he treats his wife with love he is treating himself with love as well (Ephesians 5:28). The stronger, more mature Christian she is, the better it will be for the husband, so helping her to grow benefits the husband greatly.

Also, loving your wife as Jesus loves you helps you grow to be more Christ-like (Ephesians 5:26-27). The husband grows more like Jesus as he treats his wife as God requires. Peter says if a husband isn't treating his wife as he should, his prayers will be hindered (1 Peter 3:7). If things aren't right with you and your wife they won't be right with you and God, either. Many men are no longer growing spiritually because they aren't striving to love their wives as Jesus loves them. During the years Abraham was putting himself before Sarah, he wasn't experiencing God's blessings or promises, he wasn't building altars to God as he had and he wasn't growing spiritually.

If your wife is not growing spiritually, you cannot say she is holding you back, for you are responsible to help her move ahead. If she isn't growing, you must look to yourself and how you treat her. Treat her as Jesus would to help her start growing again.

God has blessed me with a wonderful wife or I wouldn't be where I am today. The longer I am married to her the more I appreciate the fine person she is and the more I thank God for such a special gift. Her behind-the-scenes work and faithfulness in my life and ministry is invaluable. She is my greatest prayer supporter. Through her, I have learned about God's unconditional love for me; because I've seen it demonstrated in her love for me. I understand God can and will forgive, for she has exemplified that time and time again. I can trust His faithfulness better because I see it lived out in her life. Sometimes we think we could accomplish more in life if it weren't for the needs of our mates and families. We can resent the time they take. That is not true. Our wives are our most important ministry. Learning to meet her needs first doesn't take away from my ministry, it enriches it by maturing me. Whatever I put into her, I get back many times over. Learning to put someone before myself hasn't been easy but has been essential in marriage and ministry. The main lessons I've learned in life and the greatest spiritual and emotional growth I've experienced in life have come through my marriage. Things haven't always been easy or perfect, and they still aren't. God uses our imperfections to teach me about humility, service, being apologetic, forgiving and accepting forgiveness. These things can't be learned from a book, only from life.

Any time you take two people who are opposites and put them together there will be struggles. Males and females are opposites. Our personalities are often opposites as well. Add a fully active sin nature in each of us, and you have a sure formula for conflict. The major lessons of life, love and growth which I've learned have come through my marriage and family, not my ministry. It's easier for me to be a good pastor than a good husband and father. Other people are easier to impress, they don't need as much from me, and I can keep them at a safe distance. None of that is true of my wife and children.

I am amazed at how my wife and I continue to grow deeper and deeper in love daily, how we enjoy each other, and how we are bonded together. We share many fond memories. Our greatest pains are hurts we cause each other; but so are our greatest joys. And the joys far outweigh the pain. The older I get and the further I go in life and ministry, the more I realize that a good wife IS worth far more than rubies. And so is a good husband to a wife (Ecclesiastes 31:10-12, 30-31; 1 Peter 3:7).

FOR THE WIFE'S SAKE God wants men to be a loving husband for their sake; but also for their wives sake. Husbands' unconditional love provides a secure foundation women need to

grow as wives and Christians. They need to feel secure in their husband's love like they do in Jesus' love. This is needed so they can give of themselves and completely trust their husband. God doesn't tell wives to love their husbands because that comes naturally to them. It is much more difficult for a man to love and show it, so that is why God commands it of husbands.

Peter says we are to live with our wives in an understanding way because they are the 'weaker' partner (1 Peter 3:7). That means we are responsible to protect them and be their shepherd. We are to make the hard decisions but talk these things over with them and listen to their advice and opinions first of all. Would you like to be a woman? Would you be willing to trade places with your wife? Probably not. We know their role in life is not easy, so we must do what we can to make it easier. Encourage her, thank her, pray for her, and compliment her at home and in front of others.

Pastors can easily be tempted to be busy with God's work and neglect their families. When helping other people, they get praised and looked up to. That doesn't always happen at home. Their wives know what they are really like because they live with them all the time, and sometimes they aren't good examples of Jesus in their own families. A pastor's wife needs him even more than his church members. You are the only pastor your wife will ever have. She will be with you the rest of your life. Others may come and go from your church, but she will always be there for you. That is one reason God says that if a man can't be a good husband and father he won't be a good pastor (1 Timothy 3:4-5).

It can be very hard for a wife to complain when her husband is busy serving God and helping others. If a man was busy spending many hours watching TV or sleeping she could remind him of his responsibility to her, but since he is serving God she doesn't feel she can complain. Often pastors take advantage of that and spend far more time ministering to others than our own families. God doesn't expect of pastors. God expects them to make their wives their number one sheep and not neglect her for their ministry.

In the Old Testament, the husband was responsible to meet his wife's needs. In fact, the law said that if he didn't, she was free to leave him (Exodus 21:10-11). That is how serious God is about a husband meeting his wife's needs. If that law applied where you live, would your wife want to leave? Is she only there because she can't leave? It is terrible for a woman to feel she is stuck with a husband instead of being glad she is with him. Would you want your daughter to have that kind of marriage?

FOR OTHER'S SAKE God wants us to show sacrificial love to our wives for our sake, for their sakes, and also for the sake of others. God's chosen way of showing the world His love for us, the Bride of Christ, is through marriage (Ephesians 5:22-33; 1 Peter 3:1-7). A godly marriage is your greatest witness to the world – a husband reflecting Jesus' unconditional, sacrificial love for the church and her loving, trusting submission in faith to Him. That is especially needed in places where women are not treated as equal to men. Pastors' families must reflect the difference Jesus makes to the world around them, to other Christians and to their own children. That is the way their children will know what a godly marriage should be like so they can be the husbands and wives God expects them to be.

It's important for your people to learn that your wife is your most important priority, even more than the church. This sets the example for other husbands to put their wives first. It teaches younger boys that their wives must come first, and it lets women and girls know they deserve and can expect to be first in their husband's life. It is a very, very important example for your own children as well.

God instituted marriage before sin even entered, long before He instituted the church. The church can only be as strong as its families. May God help husbands lead the way to stronger churches through stronger families.

C. HOW TO SHOW SACRIFICIAL LOVE

Sacrificial love is what God commands, but how are we to do this? Many men haven't seen their fathers show this kind of love to their mothers and, while they may want to do it, don't know how. What does it mean to show sacrificial love? Here are some examples:

BY LETTING A WIFE HELP God said in Genesis: "The Lord God said, 'It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.' ... But for Adam no suitable helper was found" (Genesis 2:18, 20). This is the first time anything is said to be 'not good.' There was no sin, Adam could walk and talk with God, but something was missing. Man needed a 'helper.' This word has the idea of a 'completer,' someone who could finish what was missing in men, who could "fill up his empty spaces." She wasn't just someone to serve meals, clean the house and produce children. At the time she was created, those things didn't even need to be done. She was to be to him what he was lacking in himself. Notice God didn't create parents, children, a church, or a male friend to meet this need for only a woman (wife) can do so. She was to be a friend, companion, someone totally equal to Adam in all ways. In God's sight women are still equal to men (Galatians 3:28).

Some even translate this word in Genesis 2:18 and 20 as 'savior' because the wife saves the man from loneliness and emptiness. Adam had God walking with him and talking to him, but still there was something missing that only a woman could meet. Woman was created just for man (1 Corinthians 11:8-9) because he is incomplete without her (Proverbs 31:11). She has what he needs. She, too, is incomplete without him. Together they find fullness and fulfillment.

Many men today are not all they could be or want to be as men because they see their wives as inferior and don't allow them to have an important role in their lives. These men are turning down God's second greatest gift to them. Only Jesus is a greater gift than a wife. A man shows love to his wife, and to himself, when he allows her to be part of his life. He must turn to her for suggestions and guidance, share his dreams and fears with her, be best friends with her, and together face all life brings.

BY LEAVING PARENTS AND UNITING WITH HIS WIFE God then says in Genesis 2:24, "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh." This is so important THAT it is in the Bible four times! Jesus quoted these very words (Matthew 19:5-6) as did Paul twice (Ephesians 5:31 and 1 Corinthians 6:15-16). This is the first command God gives about marriage in the Bible and cannot be overlooked. Until this command is followed, nothing else the Bible says about marriage will work.

"Leave father and mother" means to forsake, abandon, not depend on his parents. A man can still respect and help his parents, but his first responsibility must be to his wife. He must depend on her, not his parents, for advice, guidance, support, encouragement and friendship. He must meet her needs for time, companionship and help before providing these things for his parents.

This is so important THAT God told this to Adam and Eve in the very beginning, even before there were any children or parents.

The second part of this command is to “be united to his wife.” The word used means “to cling, to keep close” and is used of the way skin clings to our bodies. That is the way a husband and wife are to be together – total commitment until death. A man can’t do that if his parents have the top place in his life, so God says men must leave their parents and replace them with their wife. He must depend totally on his wife for friendship, help and support. That doesn’t mean he can’t have other friends, but she is to be the first and main one he turns to for these things.

When a man leaves his parents and is united to his wife, the result is that they become “one flesh” – they are one person even though they live in two separate bodies. They both complete each other for neither is whole without the other. Separate they will fail, but when they are one in love, there is a strength that will hold them both no matter what happens.

In the western part of the USA, there are redwood trees that grow to be 100 meters. They can be as large as 8 meters in diameter. What is unusual about them is that they have a very small, shallow root system. The roots by themselves cannot support the tree. It will quickly fall over. What the roots must do is intermingle with the roots of other redwood trees nearby. Together they form a unit, a secure web where each one holds the other up. Even when high winds or storms come, they stand strong. They live for 700 years, some even reaching 2,000 years of age. This is how a husband and wife need each other to stand strong, desire the storms of life.. When they are closely united, nothing can bring them down. If you don’t have that with your wife, you will both struggle. Developing that with her is a way of showing unconditional, sacrificial love to her.

BY BEING A GODLY LEADER Men are to be the leaders of their families (Genesis 3:16; 1 Timothy 3:4-5; 1 Corinthians 11:3; Ephesians 5:23) but the leading must be done in love. This kind of leadership is not dictatorship. It’s not self-centered where the husband gets to have things his way. Loving leadership means doing what is right and best for your wives and children, however hard it is for you.

Just because the man is the leader doesn’t mean he is superior to the woman. Both are equal in God’s sight (Galatians 3:28; ‘joint heirs’ in 1 Peter 3:7). When you work for an employer he is your boss. That doesn’t mean he is a superior human being, it only means that his responsibility is different than yours. Someone must lead and others follow or nothing will be accomplished. All are of equal worth in God’s sight. Husbands must remember this, though. Your wife is an equal person to you. She has a different role to carry out but she is in no way inferior to you in God’s sight or as a person (Galatians 3:28).

Paul says a husband is to “manage” his family (1 Timothy 3:4-5). A manager oversees things to make sure they are done. He doesn’t do everything. He delegates and lets others do what they are good at. Like the principal of a school, he sets the goals, provides the resources, helps where necessary, and oversees it all. That is how a pastor is to a church, and it is how a husband must be with his wife. Husbands aren’t to do everything but are to let their wives do their part and use their skills and spiritual gifts. Still he provides the leadership, the headship, so they are working together in the right direction. When husbands lead, it is to accomplish what is best for the family, not just what is best for themselves. The pastor doesn’t lead the church to serve himself, nor the principal of the school. Husband leaders do what is best for the whole family, no matter if it is easiest for them or not. Husbands lead their families to serves Jesus, as

Joshua led his family (Joshua 24:15). Doing this in a godly way shows love to your wife and makes her feel secure.

BY BEING A SERVANT TO YOUR WIFE Pastors are to be servants (Luke 22:25-26; Matthew 20:26-28). If your wife is your number one sheep, then she is the first person you are to serve. You must serve out of love, not just because you have to. You are not to serve to bring honor to yourself, but to bring honor to your wife. Serving means doing what is right and best for her, no matter what others think. Jesus gave up His honor by going to the cross and paying for your sins. Husbands are called to give up all to serve their wives. Christians who follow Jesus are to be a servant as He was a servant (Luke 22:25-26; Matthew 20:26-28). In fact, Jesus used a stronger word than servant, He used the word for “slave” (Matthew 20:27). This word referred to “a slave in bondage” (Genesis 9:25; 24:9; Exodus 21:5; Matthew 10:24; Luke 17:7), someone who was owned by someone else and had no rights of his own. He only lived to do what his master wanted. As servant slaves of Jesus, husbands live to obey Him, and one of the main commands He gives you is to serve your wives as He serves you. This is a mental attitude, not just actions your body does. It must be done out of love, unconditional love, as He has for you. It must be done as Joseph served Mary out of love and sacrifice. Men must wash their wives’ feet, as Jesus washed the disciples’ feet and told us to do likewise (John 13:1-17). Washing your wife’s feet means serving her in her sin and imperfection while helping her to be clean from it and grow more like Jesus in all she thinks and does.

After washing the disciples feet Jesus told the disciples to go and do likewise (John 13:14). A husband washes his wife’s feet when he serves her. You might think this takes too much time, but God expects us to do it. God gives each one of us 24 hours in a day, and He doesn’t give us 25 hours of work. He doesn’t give us more than we have time to do. The problem is that we are often too busy doing other things so that we don’t have time to do what God expects. He expects us to show loving leadership by serving our wives.

BY MEETING YOUR WIFE’S NEEDS Husbands serve their wives by meeting their needs (Ephesians 5:25-28). Do you know what your wife’s needs are? If you don’t, you better ask her, and listen carefully. How can you do something you don’t know? Men serve by helping them with the work with which they need help. You are to spend time talking and listening to them. You are to know them so well you understand the concerns and burdens, the fears and joys they have. You are to be able to tell when something is bothering them and reach out to them in love. You serve by being considerate of their time and not expecting them to always be doing things for you and your ministry. You serve them by showing them your love and respect. You serve them by protecting them from criticism from relatives, people in the church, and even your own children. You serve them by knowing what makes them happy and providing those things when you can. You serve them by taking time to have fun with them and to do special things they like. In other words, you serve them like Jesus serves you.

You must meet their spiritual needs by leading in family devotions and prayer, talking to them about spiritual things, reading the Bible, and leading our children to follow God. You meet their emotional needs when you show unconditional, sacrificial love, when you talk with them and listen to them, when you appreciate things that concern them, when you tell them of your love and appreciation for them, and when you try to get to understand them better. You meet their intellectual need when we ask their opinion on things, learn from them, share with them things you are learning and allow them to learn new things that are of interest to them. You meet their

physical needs by providing enough income for them to be able to feed and clothe the family and by physically showing love in how we treat them.

BY MEETING OUR WIFE'S SEXUAL NEEDS BEFORE YOUR OWN Paul also clearly states that husbands serve their wives by meeting their needs sexually (1 Corinthians 7:2-5). Some men don't think their wives have sexual needs; or know what they are. But God commands we seek to meet their sexual needs before our own. Are you doing that?

BY PROTECTING OUR WIFE Peter says your wife is "the weaker partner: (1 Peter 3:7). Therefore you must protect them from and help them with hard physical work. You must be leaders they can trust to make good decisions (like Joseph, not like Abraham); to lead the family spiritually, to protect them from criticism or from those who would hurt them by words or actions. You must protect them from your own children by disciplining your children when it is needed and by making sure your children are respectful in how they talk to and treat their mothers. Sons sometimes learn from their father's example that they don't have to be respectful in how they treat women. Jesus was always, always very respectful whenever He had anything to do with a women. We must be like Him.

BY PROTECTING & HELPING WITH YOUR CHILDREN When you protect your children you are showing love to your wife as well for it is built into her to protect her children with her very life if necessary. Since she isn't always able to protect them as she would like, she needs you to do so for her. Being a good father to her children is a wonderful way to show your wife you love her.

BY BEING CONSIDERATE Peter commands husbands to be considerate of their wives (1 Peter 3:7). Would your wife say you are considerate of her? Are you more or less considerate now than when you first got married? What would she say you need to do to be more considerate?

Being considerate means you are to look at life from her perspective, not just our own. It means you learn to be as sensitive to her needs as you are to our own needs. It means praying for her each day; and praying you would better love and understand her as well. Being considerate means letting her talk when she wants to and to pay attention without interrupting. It means being gentle in how you treat her and what you say to her. If you must correct something she is doing, do it in a loving way; "speak the truth in love" (Ephesians 4:15). Speak to her in a tone of voice you would want others to use if they were correcting you. Being considerate means you don't take your disappointments and problems in life out on her. You don't get angry at her. You don't expect more of her than she is able to do, and you don't blame her for things that aren't under her control. Being considerate means you praise her, thank her for what she does for you, tell her you love her, encourage her, brag about her to others and compliment her each day. Do these things and your marriage will be beautiful as your love grows stronger and deeper.

BY SHOWING RESPECT Peter also says husbands are to treat their wives with respect (1 Peter 3:7). That is very similar to consideration but adds the idea of thinking highly about her. Her life now centers on you, not her. Does she try to be a good wife? Does she love you and seek to make your life better? Is she a good, loving mother to your children? Does she support you in your ministry? Does she pray for you and with you? How would your life be different

without her, if God suddenly took her home to heaven? Answering these questions should help you appreciate her for who she is and what she does. Do you respect her for trying to do her best in life? If so, do you tell her and show her that you respect her for how she lives and serves you and others? That would be showing her respect.

Do you respect her time and her feelings? Are you sensitive to when she is struggling and hurting? Do you seek her opinion about matters and listen carefully to her suggestions. Any husband who does not consider his wife's opinion is foolish, for women have a wisdom and insight that men often lack. Do you have confidence in her and trust her? All these are ways of being respectful.

BY FORGIVING HER A good husband must be quick to forgive. Forgiveness can be hard in marriage because sometimes we can be badly hurt by our mate. It's easier to blame each other, as Adam blamed Eve, and then Eve blamed the serpent (Genesis 3:12-13). Without a lot of forgiveness marriage will not grow. God commands all Christians to forgive (Ephesians 4:26-27, 31-32; 1 Corinthians 13:5). Like Joseph, men must forgive their wives as soon as they are hurt, before the wife even apologizes, even up to more than 490 times a day (Matthew 18:21-35). Forgiving your wife doesn't mean saying what she did was all right, or that it didn't hurt, or that she didn't mean it, or that she won't do it again, or that you are forgetting it. None of those things are part of forgiveness. Forgiveness means giving up any right to see her suffer for the pain she has caused you. You will absorb the hurt and not hurt her or wait for her to be hurt back in some other way. That is how Jesus forgives us. He absorbed our hurt on the cross and took it all. He gave up all right to see us suffer for our sin (Romans 8:1). He took it all forever, before we ever apologized or acknowledged our sin. He is our example of forgiveness. Do you forgive your wife the way Jesus forgives you?

Often, when people first marry, they think their mate is wonderful, almost perfect. They try hard to please each other and do what will impress each other. They hide their weaknesses and sin from each other. They focus all their time and energy into making a good marriage. But as time goes on, they hurt each other, accidentally or on purpose. They become busy with ministry, work and children, and they don't try as hard to be as nice to each other as they used to. They drift apart and are two separate adults living in the same home, working together, but not having the friendship or love they hoped to have. Instead of thinking the other is wonderful, they only think of each other's faults and focus on them all the time. They forget the good things they first appreciated about them. Without a lot of forgiveness, a marriage will stay in this rut until the end. You know many couples that are this way. They bicker, they pick at each other, they look for things to criticize, and they don't show love. The book of Proverbs talks about how miserable this is for both people (18:21; 25:24; etc.). Unconditional, free, total forgiveness is the only way out of this misery.

Of course, if you have offended your wife, even accidentally without meaning to, you must apologize to her before you can pray or worship or minister in any way (Matthew 5:23-24).

BY PRAYING FOR YOUR WIFE & FAMILY Another way of showing unconditional, sacrificial love to your wife is by praying for her and your children. Satan will attack your family to destroy you and your church (1 Peter 5:7), so pray for God's protection around them every day. Job was a godly husband and father (Job 1:8). Every day he prayed for God to protect his family, even after his children were grown and gone (Job 1:4-5, 10). He literally asked for God to put a wall, a strong fence, around his family which would keep Satan and his demons out. Godly husbands must have a close personal relationship with God, reading His word and praying

every day. They must be growing spiritually. Part of this includes praying for your wife and children, both now and for their futures. This is a good use of time and shows sacrificial love.

BY PRAYING WITH YOUR WIFE & FAMILY A man must lead his family spiritually, and one way is by praying with them. It forces men to humble themselves and open their hearts to their mates, thus making sure there aren't large or small problems between them (1 Peter 3:7). The prayers of "two or three" are extra important (Matthew 18:20). A special trust and closeness, a spiritual bonding, takes place between a husband and wife when they pray together. It humbles the husband and makes the wife feel secure in his leadership. It is the best way to start the day with God and with each other. Make sure you take some time at the start of each day to do this, no matter how busy or what problems exist. Doing this daily will be a way of making sure your love and marriage grow.

BY BEING BEST FRIENDS The best marriages are those in which the husband and wife are each other's best friend. That's why God gave Eve to Adam. God created husbands and wives to be best friends, to meet each other's empty spaces (Genesis 2:18, 20). Solomon and Shualmith had this before marriage (Song of Solomon 8:1; 4:9-12; 5:1). Samson and Delilah, on the other hand, had no relationship but a sexual one and it led to destruction (Judges 13-16). To develop a good friendship means spending a lot of time together. It is this time spent in friendship that prevents many problems and hurts later in marriage. Shulamith could have anything she wanted from King Solomon, the richest and wisest man in the world, but what she wanted most was his time so they could grow closer and avoid little problems that would grow to larger problems (Song of Solomon 2:15-17). God wrote in his law that when a man married, he could not go to war or away from home for a year so he could use that time to develop a good marriage foundation with his wife (Deuteronomy 24:5).

These are some of the ways a man can show unconditional, sacrificial love to his wife. There are probably others as well. God will lead you as you strive to do these with your wife.

D. HOW TO HAVE SACRIFICIAL LOVE

One more important subject needs to be dealt with as we talk about husbands having the love God has for them – how are they to get that love? Do we just pretend to have it? Where does it come from and how can we truly have it inside so we can show it? Here is how to have the love we've been talking about.

BY HAVING A CLOSE PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD Make sure there is no sin in your life, that you are growing spiritually and living in obedience to God in all you say and do. Only then will we have His power and guidance in our lives.

BY BEING FILLED WITH THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT Galatians 5:22-24 says the first fruit of the Spirit is love, *agape* love, God's unconditional love. It is something God produces in us when we allow His Spirit to work in us. It is not something we can pretend on our own. When we don't have sin in our lives and we are living in obedience to God, when we spend time with Him every day and seek to please Him by all we do, His Holy Spirit fills us and produces in us the fruit of the Spirit, love being the first and primary fruit. Each day, ask God to give you that sacrificial love of His for your wife. Ask Him to help you see her as He sees her and love her as He loves her – unconditionally and sacrificially. This kind of love only comes from God (1 John

4:7). It is a reflection of His love for us. This love for our wife grows greater and greater each day we allow God to fill us with it (1 Thessalonians 3:12; 4:9-10).

BY FOLLOWING JESUS' EXAMPLE When God puts this supernatural love for our wives in our hearts, how are we to use it? We follow Jesus' example in showing love (Matthew 10:24-25; John 13:1-17). It is great when we feel overwhelmed with love, and want to show it, but even at times when it is hard or we don't feel like showing love we must do so, for Jesus showed love for us even when it was hard and He didn't feel like it, like when He went to the cross (Mark 14:36; Luke 22:42).

We see Jesus' example very clearly in how He treated the woman at the well (John 4). Here are some lessons from Jesus for godly husbands.

1) Christ-like husbands initiate (John 4:5-6). Jesus went to her; He didn't wait for her to make the first move. Husbands must do the same. Reach out to reconcile when there is a problem, apologize first, suggest prayer for a situation, encourage her and thank her. Women respond to a man who puts them first, as Mary did to Joseph. Godly women can learn from this the importance of responding to their husbands like they do to Jesus.

2) Christ-like wives serve (John 4:7-8). The woman offered to get water for Jesus; she had a servant's heart even though she was not yet a Christian. Jesus let her serve Him. Women desire to feel needed, but not used. Serving her husband is just like serving Jesus. When she serves her husband, she is serving Jesus.

3) Christ-like husbands accept their wives as they are (John 4:9-10). Jewish teachers in those days would never go into Samaria, would never talk to or even look at a woman, even a Jewish one. Further, if she wasn't Jewish, they would never touch or drink water from her pot, and would never have anything to do with an immoral woman. Yet Jesus accepted her as she was, with all her sin and shame, and loved her anyway with His unconditional love. He didn't compare her to others or expect her to change so he could love her. He looked at her heart, not what she had done. What a wonderful example of how husbands are to be to their wives.

4) Christ-like wives trust Christ-like men (John 4:11-15). She had been hurt by other men and needed to know she could trust Jesus wouldn't hurt her. Wives need to know they can trust their husbands to do what is best for them, like Joseph. Husbands must do everything they can to show their wives they can trust them. They must listen to their opinion. They must apologize when they fail. They must learn how to do better next time.

5) Christ-like husbands are gentle (John 4:16-18). Jesus asked the woman about her husband, knowing she had five and was now living with someone she wasn't married to. He didn't embarrass her, shame her, criticize her, or scold her. She knew she was wrong and felt guilty about it. He was very gentle with her, treating her like a "weaker vessel" (1 Peter 3:7). Be considerate with your wife. Help her, have good manners with her, show her respect no matter what she has done. That's what Jesus did for this woman and for us as well.

6) Christ-like wives go by their mind, not their emotions (John 4:19-25). The woman didn't let her guilt end the conversation. She didn't let her emotions run things but instead went by the thoughts in her mind and started talking about the Messiah. Husbands must be aware that women can be emotional and go by their feelings. They must respect those feelings but both men and women must realize that just because a woman feels something doesn't mean it is true. Eve felt very right in giving the fruit to Adam (1 Timothy 2:13-15). Husbands, like Jesus, must respect their feelings but not be afraid of them. They cannot let their wives' anger or fear

keep them from doing what God wants them to do as men and as leaders. They must be patient and still do what is best for everyone.

7) Christ-like husbands and wives minister to each other and to others (John 4:26-29). Jesus told her who He was, and she told the others in her village. Then Jesus stayed awhile teaching them. Godly husbands and wives help each other spiritually and together team up to help others.

How do you measure up to Jesus as a godly man? If there is some area you need to work on to follow His example, please do so!

CONCLUSION

Now you know what God expects of men and how to do it. Following Jesus' example and with the fruit of the Spirit, men are to show sacrificial, unconditional love to their wives just like Jesus does to everyone. Now let's look at what God expects of wives. Husbands, it's very important for you to read the next chapter. It isn't just for your wives.

FROM MY WIFE:

Jesus answered, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind"[a]; and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself" (Luke 10:27).

Jesus makes it simple. Your first and closest neighbor is your family and especially your wife

Mark 8:36 says, "For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world, and give over his soul?"

I like to also say, "What good does it do for a man to help and serve all the people and not serve and help his own family?" It is not good to bless others when your wife and children suffer in need of their husband and father.

Keep it simple. Keep it right.

Nancy Schmoyer

II. WIVES – SUBMISSIVE TRUST

Key Thought: God requires wives to have submissive trust for their husbands the same as they have for Jesus.

We have seen that God expects men to have sacrificial love for their wives just as Jesus has for them. Now we will look at what God expects of wives. They are to have submissive trust for their husbands, just like they do for Jesus. Wives, if you are reading this but haven't read the first chapter for husbands, please read that first so you can better understand this.

A. WHAT IS SUBMISSIVE TRUST?

SUBMISSIVE TRUST DEFINED Paul and Peter both command wives to submit to their husbands. "Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything" (Ephesians 5:22-24). "Wives, in the same way be submissive to your husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives" (1 Peter 3:1).

The Greek word for submit comes from a word that means to respond to authority. A woman is a responder. If she is treated with love and gentleness, she will respond in the same way. If she is treated harshly, she will close up and become hard. Paul says wives are to submit (respond) to their husbands the same way they do to Jesus (Ephesians 5:22). Man is created with a need to lead and provide, and that is what God commands him to do. In order to do that, though, the woman must allow him to lead. That is why she is commanded to submit. Women need unconditional love and security. That is why men are commanded to sacrificially love their wives.

In the United States women don't like the word "submit" because it has been used by men to control and use women for themselves. It seems to mean a woman has no rights and the husband is the dictator, making the woman do whatever he wants. This is not the case, for the husband is first required to show unconditional, sacrificial love to his wife, like Joseph showed to Mary. In response to this, the wife is to submit in trust, as Mary did to Joseph. The husband is to be like Jesus to the woman, she is to submit to him as the Christian submits to Jesus. When the husband makes her feel secure in his love, it is much easier for her to trust and submit than when he doesn't, like with Abraham and Sarah.

RESPOND TO YOUR HUSBAND A wife's submissive response to a husband is like a seed in the soil. The seed needs water and nourishment to grow. The better that is provided, the better the seed will grow. Without any, it is very hard for the plant to become healthy and strong as it should. That is the way it is in marriage. By a husband showing unconditional, sacrificial love, the seed of the woman's submissive trust can grow. The more he shows this, the better she can trust him and respond to him. It is her responsibility to do this, but the husband makes it much harder or easier for her to do it. Husbands, if your wife has a hard time submitting to you and trusting you, could it be because you haven't proven to her that you will put her and her

needs before your own? Have you proven yourself worthy of her trust, or are you simply demanding it from her? Are you expecting her to grow with no water or nourishment?

WHAT IF A WOMAN CAN'T TRUST HER HUSBAND? While it was easy for Mary to trust Joseph, it was not easy for Sarah to trust Abraham. She didn't submit to him, and that was sin. God expects a woman to have submissive trust for her husband even if he doesn't put her needs first because when she trusts her husband, she is really trusting Jesus. It is really God a wife submits to, for He is in charge of all her husband does. God promises to take care of a woman when she doesn't have a husband who will do so, or if she is married but her husband doesn't treat her like Jesus would. She is a spiritual widow, and God will watch over her (Jeremiah 49:11). By obeying her husband, a woman is obeying God, by trusting him, she trusts God, and He promises He will be with her and care for her, even if her husband doesn't. So when you submit to your husband realize you are really submitting to God. Trust Him, even if you can't trust your husband. It may be hard to submit and trust, but God will use that to change your husband's heart. Sarah didn't wait until Abraham started putting her first to trust him, she finally learned to submit to him anyway, and God used that to change Abraham (1 Peter 3:1-6).

SUBMIT TO YOUR HUSBAND, NOT ALL MEN The Bible says a wife is to submit to her husband. It doesn't say that all women are to submit to all men for that isn't true. This is part of a loving marriage relationship where the man leads and the woman responds. Women don't have to submit to all men, but they do have to submit to their own husband. A man cannot expect an unmarried woman or another man's wife to submit to him and serve him. In God's sight, they are to serve each other as equals (Ephesians 5:21; Galatians 3:28). A woman does not submit or respond to every man. That is only for her husband, in the husband wife relationship.

SUBMIT "AS TO THE LORD" "Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord" (Ephesians 5:22). That small phrase, "as to the Lord," makes a great difference in what this means. While in America wives don't like the idea of submitting, in other countries, like India, women are taught from when they are little girls that their role in life is to obey their husband and do whatever he says. Some think their husband is better than they are, and they only have honor in life by doing whatever he says. They often are afraid not to obey and so quickly do what they should but not from love and trust in their heart. God says He doesn't want women to just obey outwardly, but from their heart as they do to Jesus. A Christian doesn't respond to Jesus out of fear but out of love and trust. To obey this command, Christian wives must respond to their husbands in the same way: willingly, lovingly, freely and full of trust. This is the inner beauty Peter talked about in 1 Peter 3:1-6 and is much more important in God's sight than outer beauty.

WHAT IF A HUSBAND WANTS HIS WIFE TO SIN? Ephesians 5:24 says wives are to submit to their husbands "in everything." But what a husband wants his wife to do something that is sin, should she obey God or her husband? The rest of Ephesians 5:24 says "everything" means "as the church submits to Christ" in everything. Jesus would never require Christians to sin. He only wants us to do what is good for us. A husband's leadership over his wife is to be like Christ's leadership over Christians. In fact, God requires husbands to treat their wives as He would. That is the only thing husbands can expect their wives to submit to – their representing Jesus in how they lead their families.

God gave the man delegated authority, the right to represent Him in his wife's life. When he no longer represents God but instead opposes God, he no longer has authority from God over her. God does not give man authority to command a woman to disobey Him. A soldier in the army must obey the orders of his commanding officer because that man has delegated authority from the government. But if the commander orders the soldier to do something against the government, the soldier is no longer under obligation to obey for the commander has stepped out of his authority. The same is true of husbands who use their authority against God.

Parents have authority over children, and children are to obey their parents for the parents are to represent God in their lives. When the parents no longer represent God, the child must choose to obey God instead. The same is true of a government, which is to rule for God, not against Him. God does not give governments authority to oppose Him. We do not have to obey governments which want us to sin. When commanded by the government to not preach, Peter said, "We must obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29).

There are times when a wife is not to submit to her husband, and that is when what he wants is sin. Vashti disobeyed her husband for moral reasons (Esther 1). He was asking her to do something he had no right requesting of her. Sarah went along with Abraham when he told her to say she was his sister, and she suffered the consequences as well. Sapphira also submitted to her husband and lied about the money they gave to the church (Acts 5:1-10). She too died for the sin. She wasn't exempt because her husband wanted her to do it. Abigail, however, didn't support her husband when he was in sin and God used that act to save many lives (1 Samuel 25). When anyone wants us to sin, we as Christians are to obey God rather than men (Acts 5:29).

SUBMISSION DOES NOT MEAN YOU HAVE TO BE SILENT If your husband is doing something you feel is wrong, you have every right, as a fellow Christian, to talk to him in love (Ephesians 4:15). Even if it is not sin but just a difference of opinion you should make your opinion known as long as you do it in a loving, respectful way. Just say it one time, don't nag (Proverbs 25:24). Pray God will give your husband wisdom. Maybe what you think is right, maybe it is not. Let God convict him where necessary. You can and must make your feelings and needs known or your husband won't know about them, but you must do it gently and in love (Ephesians 4:15; Galatians 3:3-4).

WHAT IF A HUSBAND BEATS HIS WIFE? God hates divorce (Malachi 2:16), but Jesus Himself said He made provision for it because of the effects sin can have in marriage (Matthew 19:3-9; Mark 10:4-9). It was provided for the protection of the wife who was neglected, not wanted, or physically abused. She could be free from the cruel treatment of an ungodly husband. Paul added words about marriage by stating the principle that "God wants us to live in peace" in a marriage (1 Corinthians 7:5). He doesn't say divorce is all right, but he allows for a wife to separate from a husband who is harming her or the children. God does not require a wife to submit to a man who so clearly is not representing Him in how he treats his wife. By separating she and the children can be safe, and hopefully losing them will cause the husband to take measures to overcome his sin. As to divorce, Jesus did say at least two times that if one person is sexually unfaithful the marriage can be broken (Matthew 5:31-32; 19:3-9; Mark 10:4-9).

B. WHY HAVE SUBMISSIVE TRUST

Understanding what submissive trust means is important, but so is knowing why God wants women to have it. "Submit" is a command, it is something that is to be done continually, not just a onetime event. The way it is written in the Bible shows that the woman who submits benefits from her submission. It is for her best that she does it, not just for her husband. What are some of these benefits?

FOR THE WIFE'S SAKE When a wife responds to her husband by letting him lead she is following the example of godly women in the past (1 Peter 3:5) in obeying God's command to them. She is living in obedience to God and His will for her.

God created men and women very different. Most men are logical thinkers who are interested in accomplishing things in life. Most women are more emotional feelers who put relationships first. Men want to accomplish things; women enjoy spending time with other people. Women talk more than men because that is how they connect with others. They can be open, sharing their feelings. Rarely do men do this. Men are more reserved and don't show their emotions as well. Men are created to fill their role of leadership and provider. They are good at these things. They aren't as sensitive to the needs and feelings of others; this is more what women are good at. Women are natural mothers. Men and women are both equal human beings in God's sight even though God has given them different roles. The man sees logically to make decisions to lead the family, but the woman emotionally senses the needs of those around her in order to help them. In a group of all men the softness and gentle love of women is missing. In a group of all women, the need to lead and control is usually missing. God created each for his or her own role. So when God says the woman is to fill the empty spaces of man (Genesis 2:18, 20), He is talking about the love, emotion, sensitivity, gentleness and motherly skills she brings into his life (Titus 2:3-5). She fills those empty spaces. In doing that her empty spaces are filled as well. But she isn't to be the leader, the one who protects and guides, for that is his responsibility. That is where her empty spaces are and he is to fill them. God commands her to submit so he can fill her spaces by leading (Genesis 3:16; Ephesians 5:23). The woman benefits because God will then guide the family through the husband, and she is allowing him to fulfill his duty of being the leader. She also benefits because she will feel secure in the fact that God is leading the family through her husband, as Mary felt with Joseph.

When a wife has this attitude, she will pray for her husband daily. It may seem he has it better than her because he is the leader, but for a man who wants to follow God, this is a very heavy responsibility. It is very important for him to follow God and lead his family that way, not for him to do what he wants. Godly men realize this great responsibility. Pray God would give him wisdom and guidance. Being a godly man is not easy. Most men did not grow up with a good example of a godly man in their lives and that makes it harder for them. Pray God would help your husband be the man God wants him to be, for that is beneficial for both of you.

Submitting to and serving a husband out of love and trust bring great honor to a wife from God and her husband. Zipporah did not submit to Moses (Exodus 4:18-26), Jezebel did not submit to Ahab (1 Kings 21), and Gomer did not submit to Hosea (Hosea 1-3), and each of them suffered greatly for it.

FOR THE HUSBAND'S SAKE By allowing her husband to lead, the godly wife is making it so he can fill his God-given role and desire to lead (Genesis 3:16). A woman needs to be loved

and a man needs to be needed. Men need to be respected for who he is and what he does. He needs your gratitude for how hard he works for the family. He needs you to be his friend and do things he enjoys. He needs to know you are glad to see him when he comes home. He needs you to support and encourage him then life gets difficult. By submitting to his leadership a woman is showing her husband he is needed, something very important to a man.

The woman helps her husband grow spiritually by setting a godly example for him (1 Peter 3:1). By trusting him she shows him love and encouragement. He can feel proud of his wife and family and receive honor and respect from others because of his godly family.

FOR OTHERS' SAKE As was stated when talking about husbands, a godly family show God's love to the world, as well as how Christians respond to His love. It is an important example to the children in the family and others in the church as well. A wife who submits in trust is a beautiful example to her children and the other women in the church and community.

C. HOW TO SHOW SUBMISSIVE TRUST

We know that it is very important for wives to show submissive trust to their husbands. What are some of the ways they can show this in their marriages?

BY TRUSTING HIM TO LEAD As said previously, submitting in trust to a husband allows him to fill his God-given command and inner desire to lead his family.

BY LIVING A PURE LIFE Wives must live holy lives free from sin (1 Peter 3:2). You are to try to be like Jesus in all you think, feel, say and do. The fruit of the Spirit should be evident in your life (Galatians 5:22-24). If you are living a life of obedience to Jesus it will make it much easier for your husband to live as Jesus wants him to live. No matter if the husband is following God or not, the wife must read her Bible and pray every day, live in obedience to Jesus, and do all she can to follow Him.

BY RESPECT & REVERENCE Peter says wives are to live lives of reverence (1 Peter 3:2) and Paul says wives are to respect their husbands (Ephesians 5:33). These mean almost the same thing. Every man needs the respect of his wife. Men need respect the same way women need love. Wives, think of how you feel when you think your husband doesn't treat you in a loving way. That's how he feels you when you are disrespectful to him. Men learn to hide their hurt, although some react in anger and hurt others. Men need respect. They need to know they are doing a good job in leading and providing for their family. Ask your husband if there any ways in which you are disrespectful to him and listen to what he says.

Notice the Bible doesn't command a woman to love her husband; that happens naturally and doesn't need to be commanded. But respecting a husband is often hard for women and can only be done with God's help. Show him respect by complementing him and not criticizing him. Brag about him to others. Appreciate how he tries to be a good husband and tell him so. Listen when he talks. Try to understand how he feels. Ask him questions if you don't understand what he is saying. Think about his needs before your own. Don't compare him to others; you don't want him comparing you to other women! Do all you can to encourage him. Say something kind to him every day. Let him know you believe in him and trust him. Don't assume he knows

how you or the children feel about things. You need to tell him respectfully and with loving words. When you disagree with something, do that respectfully as well. Abigail corrected David when he was coming to kill her family, but she did it carefully and gently (1 Samuel 25). Be very careful of the tone of your voice or how loudly you speak (Proverbs 18:21). You may not notice, but men can easily pick up hidden anger. Make sure there is no anger when you speak. Pray about that and work it out with the Lord before speaking. Remember that when you argue, everyone loses; the only one who wins is Satan.

You can speak the truth in love to your husband, like Abigail did to David (1 Samuel 25), but don't be critical or nag him (Proverbs 25:24; 18:21). Husbands need a wife to encourage and support them. Most men are well aware of their failings and don't like them any more than you do. They need you to help them overcome these things, not to keep telling them about their weakness.

Be patient with him, as you want God to be patient with you (Matthew 7:5). Don't assume he knows what you are feeling or thinking – he doesn't. Even when you tell him, he may not understand or he may forget and have to be told many times. Patiently listen when he talks, even if he's said it before. That shows you care about him, and he is important to you.

BY BEING HIS FRIEND Some women prefer female friends for they can more easily understand them and how they feel. But God wants husbands and wives to be best friends, that's why He created Eve for Adam even before sin entered the world.

BY A GENTLE & QUIET SPIRIT No one likes a woman who is loud and bossy. Everyone knows she is not acting like Jesus. God says a woman should have a gentle and quiet spirit (1 Peter 3:4). Always be kind and gentle, even when correcting or disagreeing with your husband. Don't focus on his weakness. Treat him the same at home as you do when outside the home. Think about the good he does, not his mistakes and failures (Philippians 4:8).

BY NOT WITHOLDING SEX Some women use sex to control their husbands or to punish them if they don't like something they've done (or haven't done). Don't use it to control or manipulate your husband, as Delilah did with Samson and Tamar did with Judah. God says your body belongs to your husband, not to you, and God says you should be enjoying his body as well as him enjoying yours (1 Corinthians 7:2-5). Sex is not something a woman is to endure; she is to be a willing participant, enjoying it as much as her husband. God created sex and gave it to a man and wife for their pleasure. It is God's wedding gift to couples and He is very, very pleased when we enjoy it.

BY NOT BEING AFRAID Fear is one of Satan's biggest weapons against wives (1 Peter 3:6). Don't be afraid to say or do the right thing. Don't fear failing or being shamed. Don't fear what others think as long as you know you are doing what Jesus wants and following Him. Don't fear what will happen to you if he doesn't follow God correctly. God is still in control of your life and family, and all things will be used for His good (Romans 8:28). Don't fear what will happen to you if your husband doesn't meet your needs. Take them to Jesus instead. No man can ever meet all his wife's needs. God makes sure of that! He wants wives to still need Him and to come to Him for things a husband can't provide. Pray, read your Bible and continue to grow spiritually. Live a godly life no matter what. Don't let the sins of another be an excuse for you to sin. Take your unmet needs to Jesus and ask Him to meet them.

BY FORGIVING YOUR HUSBAND It is very important for a wife to forgive her husband as soon as he does something that hurts or disappoints her, just as a husband must do the same with his wife (Ephesians 4:26-27, 31-32). A godly wife must be a good forgiver, even if it is 490 times a day (Matthew 18:21-35). Wives are to be like Jesus and therefore must forgive as He forgives.

D. HOW TO HAVE SUBMISSIVE TRUST

God requires a wife to have submissive trust for her husband. It doesn't come naturally for most women to trust a man and depend on him. How can she have this trust and love in her heart so she can do it as she submits to Jesus instead of just going through the motions?

BY HAVING A CLOSE PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD Only in Jesus' strength can this be done, so make sure there is no sin in your life and that you are spending time with Him reading the Bible and praying every day. Pray throughout the day while you are doing other things. Live in dependence of God's grace and mercy in your life. When you have needs that your husband isn't meeting, try to talk to him about them, but talk to God as well. Ask Him to meet those needs, then trust He will. As said before, He promises to take care of women when the man is not doing so (Jeremiah 49:11).

BY BEING FILLED WITH THE FRUIT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT As you live for Jesus and put Him first in all you think and do, He will fill you with His Holy Spirit and His fruit will be produced in you: "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law" (Galatians 5:22-24). Trust and love from your heart is not something you can pretend or just make happen. Pray daily for God produce these characteristics in you.

BY FOLLOWING JESUS' EXAMPLE Jesus' perfect submission to and trust of His heavenly Father is an example women should follow in their own lives (Matthew 20:26-28; 10:24-25; John 13:1-17). Follow Mary's example with Joseph as well. Perhaps you know a wife nearby who is a good example of Jesus in this. Ask her to help you and pray with you. You can both be an encouragement to each other.

CONCLUSION

Thank God for your husband. Pray for him. Pray for yourself. And remember, don't think about what your husband can do for you, think about what you can do for your husband! If you put his needs first and he puts your needs first then your marriage will be the way God wants it. You'll have a relationship that patterns what a relationship with Jesus should be like. That's why He calls Himself the groom and us His bride.

Now you know what God expects of wives and how to do it. Follow Jesus' example and depend on the fruit of the Spirit so you can show submissive trust to your husbands. Now let's look at what God expects marriages of those in ministry to be like.

FROM MY WIFE

“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. 7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:6-7).

God command us to STOP being fearful. We, as women, need to choose NOT to be afraid. Paul tells us how to do this: decide in your mind to trust God and not be afraid, ask God specifically about your problem or fear, rejoice and thank God for all His goodness in your life and how He has always shown you mercy and love, and then the peace that only comes from God will fill your heart and spirit with comfort. Jesus is called the Prince of Peace.

III. MARRIAGE & MINISTRY

Key Thought: God requires pastors and their wives to work together as a team, to put their marriage before their ministry, and to not neglect their children.

(This chapter is for pastors and pastors wives. It also applies to elders and all those who work in a church in any way. Even if you don't, it is still good to read and will provide helpful, useful information for all Christian marriages.)

Having a marriage as God intended is hard work; but can be a real blessing. Pastoring is also hard work, but it too can bring a great blessing. Together marriage and pastoring can be very difficult but very rewarding. Satan attacks husbands and fathers, Christian families and pastors. When you are all of these, you know you will be attacked. Often we don't see examples of a godly pastor's family, so we don't know what it should be like. There is one such family in the Bible we will use as an example: Aquila and Priscilla.

AQUILA AND PRISCILLA Aquila and Priscilla were Jews who were living in Rome but had to leave when persecution started. They moved to Corinth and worked as tentmakers (Acts 18:1-2). When Paul arrived in Corinth to minister he worked as a tentmaker and got to know them (Acts 18:3). They invited him to stay with them and work together making tents. Every Sabbath, Paul spoke in the synagogue telling the Jews and Greeks that the Messiah had come (Acts 18:4). As they spent time with Paul making tents and meeting in the synagogue. He explained about Jesus being the Messiah, and they put their faith in Jesus.

They were talking with Paul every day for a year and a half. Soon they started helping him in his ministry. Paul taught and trained them every day, and they discovered God had called them to ministry and gifted them to serve.

After a year and a half Paul felt God calling him to move on to minister in a different city, so he sailed to Ephesus (Acts 18:18-19). Aquila and Priscilla went with him. Soon Paul left, heading to Syria, but Aquila and Priscilla stayed to continue the work Paul had started in Ephesus. It was their first ministry without Paul, but he had trained them well. Ephesus was the most influential city in Asia Minor and would later be the center for the early church. Aquila and Priscilla led the church as it started and grew. It met in their home (1 Corinthians 16:19).

An important event while they were there was that a great Bible scholar and gifted speaker named Apollos, came to Ephesus and was preaching about Jesus but wasn't aware of His death and resurrection. He only taught John's baptism (Acts 18:24-26). Aquila and Priscilla invited him to their home and taught him about Jesus (Acts 18:26). They mentored him in the truth, and he became a powerful church planter for many years (Acts 18:25).

Later, they moved back to Rome to minister (Romans 16:3), perhaps talking to the Jews they knew there before they fled years earlier. They were courageous and risked their lives for Paul and others (Romans 16:3). After many years, they moved back to Ephesus (2 Timothy 4:19). They had a long and fruitful ministry together. As we look at their marriage and ministry we can find some principles that can help pastors and their wives today.

A. THEY WORKED TOGETHER AS A TEAM

THEY TRAVELED AND WORKED TOGETHER Jesus' disciples took their wives with them when they traveled with Him (Matthew 27:55; Mark 15:41; Luke 23:55) and afterwards, when they when they started new churches in various cities (1 Corinthians 9:5). Peter did this also (1 Corinthians 9:5). These women were an essential part of the ministry and made great contributions to the work. Aquila and Priscilla were another husband wife team, moving from town to town but always traveling and working together.

God wants pastors today to include their wives in the work of the ministry. As we saw in this book, husbands need their wives in order to be complete (Genesis 2:18, 20). They are to be one person in two bodies (Genesis 2:24). They are not to be apart physically unless absolutely necessary (1 Corinthians 7:5), and then, only for a very short time. Pastors need a best friend, a prayer partner, someone to share thoughts with and from them receive insight and advice. They need encouragement. They need the spiritual gifts of their wives for they complement their own. Pastors need to work with their wives for their own personal strength, as well as their ministry.

THEY COMPLEMENTED EACH OTHER Six times Aquila and Priscilla are mentioned in Acts. Aquila is the pastor, and Priscilla is the wife. Twice Aquila's name is mentioned first, and four times Priscilla's name is mentioned first. It seems those times her name is mentioned first, she was leading in ministry by using her God-given spiritual gifts. She seems to have the gift of teaching and was a gifted teacher. Some even think she might have written the book of Hebrews, for it sounds a lot like Paul, who taught her, but has many differences showing it was written by someone else. The book doesn't have the author's name, for if a woman wrote it, some might object. Perhaps she did write it but didn't want to cause problems for those who didn't think God would choose a woman to write it. There were some then, like now, that wrongly believed a woman could not minister along with men. Paul says they can't have authority over men and must be under male authority, but otherwise, they are to use their gifts to minister (1 Timothy 2:11-15). Clearly Priscilla was under her husband's authority as they traveled and ministered. Deborah led the Jews but it was under Barak's authority (Judges 4-5). The same is true of any pastor's wife who ministers with her husband today.

Aquila recognized that Priscilla had gifts he didn't have and let her use them. He wasn't jealous and didn't let his pride stand in the way of ministry. God gave her to him to balance him out, to complete him as a person and as a pastor, and clearly, she did a good job of doing so. The same is true of pastors today. They must encourage their wives to use their gifts and give them opportunities to serve with them under their authority. Men can be twice as effective that way, and the teamwork is a good example to others about how marriages should work.

WIFE HELPMATE, NOT ASSISTANT PASTOR Often when pastors do have their wives help in ministry, it is having them do the hard work no one wants to do. That is not what God has gifted pastor's wives to do. Pastor's wives are called to the ministry as clearly as pastors are. They should not do things others can be given to do or they may not have time to do what God has called and gifted them to do. Pastors are to train others to serve (Ephesians 4:12). Aquila did not have Priscilla doing work others could do or doing things he didn't want to do. He protected her from overwork and from others taking advantage of her time so she could do the more

important things she was so good at. Do you know what your wife's spiritual gifts are? What are you doing to help her use them?

DEVOTIONS AND DISCUSSIONS TOGETHER Aquila and Priscilla must have had times of Bible study and prayer together each day. A husband is to initiate and lead in it, but a wife can also contribute thoughts and share what God is teaching her. In Jesus husband and wife are equal spiritually (Galatians 3:28).

TRUST HER WISDOM, INSIGHT A husband does well to listen to his wife's insights, suggestions and observations. She can see things he doesn't notice and can have much of wisdom. My wife gives me wonderful insights for my sermons and helpful suggestions about how to improve them. Her gifts of evangelism and prayer really help my gifts of teaching and counseling. We pray together and work together well as a team. I really need her and couldn't be the person or pastor I am without her help. The woman so highly praised in Proverbs 31:10-31 was also that way. Her husband gave her many opportunity to use her gifts, and she was a real blessing to him. If women are to be like her, they need a husband like she had who encourages her to use her talents and gifts the best she can and who gives her many opportunities to do so.

Wives must be certain they are close to God so they aren't misled in the guidance they give their husbands, like Eve (1 Timothy 2:11-15), Job's wife (Job 2:9), Jezebel (1 Kings 21:7-16) or Zipporah (Exodus 4:25-26). Husbands, too, can give poor guidance to their wives like Abraham did to Sarah (Genesis 12:13-19 and 20:5-12) or Ananias to Sapphira (Acts 5:2). They can also ignore good advice from their wives, like Pilate did from his wife (Matthew 27:19).

B. THEIR MARRIAGE CAME FIRST

FIRST PRIORITY A pastor's first priority is to grow spiritually by reading the Bible and praying every day. Additionally he should care of his physical health. His next priority, before anything else in life, is his wife. Following her come his children, and then his church and his parents. God makes it very clear that marriage comes before ministry!

A pastor's wife's first priority is to her own spiritual, emotional and physical health; after that comes meeting her husband's needs, then her children's needs, and finally, after that, the church's needs. Don't have her doing so much in your ministry that she must neglect her own needs, your needs or the children's needs. Find a good balance that works for everyone.

Aquila and Priscilla had a long, fruitful ministry together. That only happens when a husband and wife have the kind of marriage God expects them to have. It means putting their marriage before their ministry. God does not expect pastors to sacrifice their marriage or their children for the ministry. He says if they do that, they shouldn't be pastors (2 Timothy 3:4-5). It is up to the husband to make sure this doesn't happen. He is the leader, and God will hold him responsible. When a pastor dies and stands before God, God won't be looking at how good a pastor he was but how good a husband and father he was. Only if he did a good job there, will he also be rewarded for being a good pastor.

FRIENDS FIRST OF ALL For Aquila and Priscilla to be together at work making tents, at home, and in ministry means they must have gotten along very well. They must have been best

friends. God expects a pastor and wife to be best friends. He created wives to complete husbands (Genesis 2:18, 20), to fill up his empty spaces (Genesis 2:24). The husband does that for the wife as well. Friends share their feelings and thoughts; they encourage and support each other, they laugh and have fun together, they are always available to help each other, whatever the need. When you look at the story of Mary and Joseph, with her wanting to go to Bethlehem with him, even though she was nine months pregnant and the law said she did not have to go, it is clear they enjoyed being together as friends as well as husband and wife. If your wife is not your best friend you are missing something very important.

INVEST TIME IN YOUR MARRIAGE When we earn money, we must spend a lot of it for food, housing and bills. But we try not to spend all of it. We try to invest some of it in a bank for the future, so it will grow, and we can draw on it later. God only gives us a limited amount of money, and we must use it wisely. He only gives us a limited amount of time, too, and that also must be used wisely. Much of it we spend on the activities of life and ministry, but we must set aside some to invest in our marriages. Spending time with your wife is like putting money in the bank for the future. With you wife, though, you can enjoy the time as well as investing for the future. Spending time with your wife is the only way to have a marriage and a friendship grow. You need time to talk and listen, time to pray, time to laugh, time to dream about the future, time sit quietly and enjoy each other. Our relationship with God doesn't grow unless we spend good time with Him, and the same is true of our relationship with our mate.

TAKE OFF ONE DAY A WEEK One way of having time for your wife and family is to make sure you take off one day a week. We are not under the law, but the principle of working 6 days and resting one started long before the law. It started with creation (Exodus 10:8-11). The early church changed the day from Saturday to Sunday because Jesus came back to life on the first day of the week (Mark 16:9; Acts 20:7). Still, the principle is the same. God requires we rest from work one day a week. For pastors, Sunday is not a day of rest. It is our busiest day of the week. That is OK, as long as we take another day off to rest and spend with our family.

The Jews were to take one day off every seven days and one year off every seven years so they and the land could rest. One of the reasons they went into captivity for 70 years was because they violated this command for 490 years. So God put them where they couldn't farm or work their land for the 70 years it should have rested. That is how serious God is about this command being obeyed. Pick one day of the week and let your people know you won't be available that day each week no matter what. Teach them why so they understand the principle and can apply it to their own lives. You can cook and do things together in home, but avoid ministry or work projects. God says our minds and bodies must rest one day in seven.

The Jews also had several feasts during the year when they would take several days off. Taking a few days off every year to go away with your wife or your whole family is a wonderful idea and a principle that God will certainly bless. This is not just something God suggests or allows. It is something He requires for us and for our marriages.

TURN OFF CELL PHONES Supposes someone came up to you and took your wallet and took some money out, then someone else did the same, and before long another person did it – what would you do? Would you allow them to take your money? No, because if you did you wouldn't have enough for yourself. God only gives us a certain amount of money, and we must use it for the things He wants us to use it for. The same is true of our time. God gives us a limited amount of time, and if we let others take it from us then we won't have time for important things.

When you are praying or reading your Bible, when you are having a talk or devotions with your wife or family, when it is your day off; or any special time like that, do not answer your cell phone! Do not let someone push their way into your life and interrupt your relationship with God, your wife or your family. Others can wait; your relationship with God, wife and family cannot. You can call them back later, or if it is important they will call you again some other time. Pastors must be good steward of their money, not letting others come and take it. They must also be a good steward of their time and not let others come and take their time, either. Pastors were able to function very well before cell phones, and they can still function without them turned on all the time!

PROTECT EACH OTHER There are those in the church or community who would take advantage of the pastor or his wife. Some want advice, others want help, some may even want money or attention. A pastor must protect his wife from those who would take advantage of her or her time by telling them no. She can protect him by warning him or talking to them and telling them the pastor can't help them at that time. Pastors and wives protect each other from sexual temptation by making sure their emotional and sexual relationship is close and strong.

RECEIVE ADEQUATE PAY FROM YOUR CHURCH Not all churches are able to pay a pastor a good salary, but if they can, they are required to do so (1 Corinthians 9:3-12; 1 Timothy 5:17-18). Some think the pastor should live on less money than the people in the church. That is not true and is not the way priests in the Old Testament or pastors in the New Testament live. A pastor should teach his people to give (2 Corinthians 9:7). Pastors must teach their people to give to God; if not, they allowing them to sin by robbing God of what is His (Malachi 3:8). A pastor's salary should be about as much as the average member of his church. Pastors must teach their people the importance of giving money to the Lord through the church, and of him receiving a salary from it (1 Corinthians 9:3-12; 1 Timothy 5:17-18). Life is hard enough for a pastor's family and wife than having to live without enough money for food and other things. When you receive your salary, let your wife have as much as she needs first. Don't use it for yourself or for the church and then not have enough for her to use for the family.

THE MARRIAGE GARDEN A good way to understand about marriage is to think of a garden. Proverbs 24:30-34 uses a garden to teach us some lessons about life and marriage. "I went past the field of the sluggard, past the vineyard of the man who lacks judgment; thorns had come up everywhere, the ground was covered with weeds, and the stone wall was in ruins. I applied my heart to what I observed and learned a lesson from what I saw: A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest-- and poverty will come on you like a bandit and scarcity like an armed man."

This is a picture of a garden that hasn't been taken care of and doesn't bring the pleasure and joy it once did. No one did anything to harm it; they just were too busy doing other things and neglected it. The owner was lazy and put off working in it. Most of our marriage problems are not because of a big sin or major problem; they come because we are too busy doing other things to give our marriage the time and care it needs. Like this garden, if we let it go long enough everything is destroyed. It doesn't happen all at once but slowly. Little by little over time hurts and neglect take its toll and a husband and wife are no longer close to each other. Sometimes they hardly get along. The lesson of the proverb is that neglecting something that needs to be cared for allows it to fall apart.

All this could have been avoided if the owner had kept a close watch on his garden and given it the time and attention it needed. Then he would have had something that still brought him joy and pleasure. Marriage partners need to work at being a good mate, at forgiving each other, at loving and serving each other, at spending time together and at making sure their friendship grows. Look for early signs of trouble or problems in your marriage and do what is necessary to fix them. Don't let your marriage get so bad that, like this garden, it can't be restored.

For a garden to grow the plants need to be watered and fed. Your marriage needs to be watered and fed as well. Husbands and wives can both do that by expressing thanks to each other, apologizing as soon as they hurt each other, complimenting and encouraging each other, doing kind things to help each other without being asked, spending time together, showing love in the ways that mean most to your mate and praying for each other and with each other.

The garden pictured in Proverbs 24 was overrun by weeds. It doesn't take any work to grow weeds; all it takes is neglect: letting them go and not getting rid of them. They start unseen, under the ground, then expand and take over. Watch for the unseen hurts hidden inside you or your mate. If they aren't forgiven and removed they will grow to strong bitterness and kill anything good in the marriage. When these weeds are allowed to grow they have deep, strong roots and are very hard to get rid of. They will choke all the love out of your marriage garden.

The walls of this garden, instead of protecting it, were broken down. Any plant seeds or animals can in. You need strong walls around your marriage to protect it, and you must keep them in good repair. The walls are standards you set up to keep from temptation, to keep others from taking away your time, to make sure you have privacy for yourselves and your children, to guarantee you take time off and not work seven days a week and to be able to focus on meeting each other's' needs.

If you do have strong walls, keep weeds out, and water and nourish your marriage and not neglect it you'll have plenty of fruit that will bring much happiness and delight throughout life. Is your marriage like a garden that is a blessing to you, or has it been left to get run down? If it has been neglected you need to work extra hard to get it to be what it should be. It won't be easy but it can be done. It is better to not let the garden get that way to begin with.

C. THEY DIDN'T NEGLECT THEIR CHILDREN

We don't know if Aquila and Priscilla had children. If they did, the Bible doesn't say anything about them as parents. But we can assume they did since most people had children in those days. Since they knew how to have a good marriage for all the years of their ministry and God blessed it, we can assume they were good parents as well. We'll talk more about raising children in the next chapter, but in this chapter we can mention a few principles for raising children in a pastor's home.

Many times the children of pastors have a bad reputation. They grow up to be rebellious and don't follow God. When asked why, they will usually say that their father spent so much time with the church he didn't have enough time for them. They were jealous of God and the church and hated them for taking their father away from them. Others sometimes say that their father was kind and patient with the people in the church, but when he was home he was often angry and impatient. If his faith made him a hypocrite, they didn't want anything to do with it. That is a very sad reputation for pastors!

CHILDREN COME BEFORE CHURCH Only a person's mate should come before children, not even the church or your own parents. Children in pastors' homes need extra love and support, for pastors and their wives are often busy with church work. You will teach them more than you teach anyone in the church, so set a good example of what God is like for them. If you do, they'll love and obey you and for God the rest of their lives!

PROTECT YOUR CHILDREN Sometimes people in the church can be cruel to a pastor's family or children. They can say or do things that hurt them. You must protect them from that. Make sure you don't have too high expectations for them. Some pastors want their children to be perfect so people in the church are impressed with them as parents. Let your children be children. Don't expect them to act differently than other children in order to impress others. Don't have a different standard for your children than you have for other children in the church. Give them privacy so people don't know everything about them. They need and deserve privacy as you do. People don't need to know everything they do and neither do people need to know everything you do.

ENCOURAGE THEM TO SERVE Being a child in a pastor's family is a very special blessing for the child can learn about God and how to serve him much in a very special way. Give them opportunities to do things to use their interests and spiritual gifts so they can serve. Make sure they do it out of love, not just because they have to. Let them choose what they want to do and do things they enjoy. Don't just assign them the work others don't want to do. Teach them to serve by your example.

PRAY FOR YOUR CHILDREN Pastors and wives should pray for their children every day. Satan would do all he can to turn them from the faith. He will try to use them to discourage and distract the pastor and his wife as well. Pray for their future, the person they will marry, and for God's will to be done in all areas of their lives. Prayer is very powerful, so make it an important part of your family (James 5:16).

We can see from the example of Aquila and Priscilla that God requires pastors and their wives to work together as a team, to put their marriage before their ministry, and to not neglect their children. We will talk more about raising children in the next chapter.

FROM MY WIFE

Jesus answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself" (Luke 10:27).

Jesus wants us to love Him totally and serve Him. He goes on to say we are to love our neighbors as our self. We are to love and care for our self. Wives and mother often serve everyone and neglect taking care of themselves. Here Jesus ASSUMES you will take proper care of your body, mind and spirit. When we do this, we have the physical strength and emotional courage and spiritual wisdom to help our families and others. Pray and read your Bible. This feeds your spirit .

Pastor's wives especially must be careful to ask God who He wants you to help and serve in your church. Some people have many needs and will always need your help and you will not have any time left to give attention to others. Try to balance this. Teach other women how to help the most needy people that require much time and attention.

IV. CHILDREN

Key Thought: God expects parents to provide godly training for their children.

A husband must put his wife before anything in life except God, and a wife must do the same with her husband. Next come their children in importance. God expects those who are parents to provide godly training for their children. Parents must not neglect their children for their ministry, or for anything else. God says a pastor must be a godly husband and father, or he shouldn't be a pastor (1 Timothy 3:4-5; Titus 1:6). You will impact the lives of your children more than anyone else ever. They are your best disciples. The training you give will form them for the rest of their lives. Their needs for a father's love and attention must be met by their father. The way their earthly father treats them is the way they view their heavenly Father, God. Children are like soft clay which you are forming and molding into whatever image you choose. Do you want them thinking they aren't important, that you have other things that are more important? That they are a bother to you? If they get that message from you, they will feel that way about God as well. You are forming a picture of what God is like in their lives by how you treat them. God expects you to meet the needs of your children right after your wife, no matter how many other responsibilities you have.

Jesus' top priority while on earth was His 'family' of disciples, not the crowds and not new programs and projects. He put His close followers and their needs first, often withdrawing from the crowds or sending others away to spend time with His disciples (Mark 6:31; Matthew 14:13). We are to follow this same pattern today.

MY FAMILY IS MY FIRST PRIORITY IN MINISTRY: As I look back on my life I have a perspective that many of you who are younger don't have. My six children are grown, four of them married and with families of their own. My impact on their lives has been made. I thank God that He convicted me at the start of ministry of the importance of making my family my number one congregation. People have come and gone in my church, but my family is still with me and always will be. There is no one I have had more influence on or ever will have more influence on than my children and my wife.

Now that my children are grown, one of my greatest joys in life is watching them serve the Lord and follow Him. "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth" (3 John 4). Each one of them has chosen to stay faithful to God and serve Him wholeheartedly. I take great pleasure in that, although I don't take credit for it. That is between them and God. It is all His grace. I can rest in the fact that, as far as I was able at the time, I did my best to love them and teach them about God. I certainly wasn't perfect. I greatly enjoyed spending time with them and raising them for the Lord. God gets the credit for how they turned out, but I am thankful I don't have to live with many regrets. As they say, no one on their death bed wishes they would have spent more time working! They wish they would have spent it with their family. Make sure your family is your first priority now and always (1 Timothy 3:4-5; Titus 1:6; Proverbs 22:6)

A. WHAT IS GODLY TRAINING?

Godly training is that which teaches children to grow up and follow God because they want to live for Him and serve Him (Ephesians 6:4). It is what Joshua committed himself and his family to do: "...but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD!" (Joshua 24:15)

ABRAHAM A GODLY FATHER We saw Abraham was not a good husband, but he was a good father. God said Abraham trained his children and his whole family to follow God (Genesis 18:19).

JOSEPH A GODLY FATHER Joseph was a good husband and a good father. Jesus didn't marry in His late teens like other Jewish boys but stayed working with His father as a carpenter until He was thirty (Luke 3:23). Every day they were together at home and at work, talking and being good friends. Joseph shaped Jesus more than anyone, and he did a wonderful job. Jesus learned from Joseph just as we learn from our parents (Hebrews 5:8). That is why God chose Joseph to be the father of His son. Joseph had four sons besides Jesus: James, Joseph, Simon and Jude in addition to some daughters (Matthew 13:55-56; 12:46-48; Mark 3:31-33; Luke 8:19-20; John 2:12; Acts 1:14). James and Jude, two great men in the early church, were raised by Joseph (Galatians 1:18, Jude 1). In fact, after James, the brother of John, was killed (Acts 12:2), James, Joseph's son, became one of the leaders of the early church in Jerusalem (Galatians 1:19; 2:9, 12; Acts 12:17; 15:13; 21:18; 1 Corinthians 15:7). James and Jude each wrote books that are in the New Testament. James's book was the first New Testament book written. For a man to raise so many fine, godly sons, including Jesus Himself, Joseph must have been a very good father.

TRAINING TO FOLLOW GOD Jesus was brought up by Joseph and Mary to obey and serve God out of love. Luke 2:52 says He grew physically (a healthy, strong body), intellectually (in knowledge and wisdom), socially (learned to get along with others) and spiritually (developed a strong personal relationship with God). We are to train our children in those areas as well. We are to begin as soon as a child is born so that it stays with them his or her whole life (Proverbs 22:6). Timothy's mother and grandmother taught Timothy the Scriptures when he was an infant (2 Timothy 3:14-15).

B. WHY TO HAVE GODLY TRAINING

GOD COMMANDS IT Training our children to love and follow God from infancy is God's command to us, what He expects parents to do (Ephesians 6:4).

CHILDREN NEED IT God created each child differently. Each one is unique with his or her own personality and spiritual gifts and talents. God wants each child to be raised to become the man or woman God created him or her to be. A godly home, with a father showing unconditional, sacrificial love to his wife and a wife showing submissive trust to her husband, is the kind of home a child needs so they can be secure and learn to love and trust God.

C. HOW TO HAVE GODLY TRAINING

God holds the father responsible to make sure his children are raised in a godly manner (1 Timothy 3:4, 12). Some men think it is the duty of the wife to raise the children because the man is too busy doing things he thinks are more important. They are wrong. God expects fathers to oversee the raising of their children. Mothers can do most of the work, but the father is responsible to God to help and oversee it (Ephesians 6:4; Colossians 3:21).

BY SHOWING UNCONDITIONAL LOVE Of all God's characteristics, it is His unconditional love that means the most to us. Wives need to experience unconditional love from their husbands (Ephesians 5:25), and children need that from their parents as well. That is how they will learn about God's unconditional love for them. Parents teach their children about God by how they act because parents are 'god' to their children – they are totally in charge of their lives and the child is totally dependent on the parent. As they grow older, they will transfer that trust to God, so it must grow strong in a young child.

Make sure your children know they are loved for who they are, not just for what they do or don't do. Don't teach them you love them more for doing some things and less for doing others. God always loves us the same. When we sin, it separates our fellowship with Him but doesn't diminish His love for us. When our children disobey, it keeps them from being close to us, but it doesn't change our love for them. Make sure your children know you love them no matter what they do, like you know God will love you no matter what you do.

DAVID DIDN'T SHOW UNCONDITIONAL LOVE King David was as wonderful man and very close to God spiritually, but he was not a good father. He never learned from his father. His father did not make him feel loved (1 Samuel 16:8-11) nor did his brothers (1 Samuel 17:28-29). He had many wives and was not close to his sons (2 Samuel 3:2-5). When his son, Amnon, raped his half-sister Tamar, David didn't do anything about it (2 Samuel 13:1-22). Because David didn't do what a father should have done, Absalom, Tamar's brother, took matters into his own hands and killed Amnon and then fled. David missed Absalom but didn't go to him to show him his love (2 Samuel 13:23-39). Finally, Absalom went to David to reconcile with him, but David didn't offer him love or friendship and Absalom felt worse (2 Samuel 14:23-33). David kissed him as he was supposed to but didn't tell him he forgave him or restore him. Absalom was hurt by his father's rejection and started a rebellion to overthrow his father. He was killed (2 Samuel 15:1 – 18:32), and David was heartbroken (2 Samuel 18:33) and wished he had died instead of Absalom. He expressed great love for Absalom after he died, but he never showed unconditional love to Absalom while he was alive.

BY KNOWING HOW TO SHOW LOVE There are different ways to show love to children, like there are different ways to show love to a wife or husband. Some like to hear kind, loving words or receive a note with compliments written down. Others feel loved when someone spends time with them. For still others, doing something sacrificial to help them really touches them. Some really feel loved when they are given a gift, even a very small one. Others need to be physically touched or hugged to feel loved. Knowing which one speaks love to your children (or mate) can help you better communicate your love to them.

BY REFLECTING GOD’S CHARACTER We teach our children more by what we do than what we say. What we say and what we do have to be the same. If we say one thing and do another we are being hypocrites, and God hates hypocrites (Matthew 7:5; 23:13-40; 6:2-16; Luke 6:42). We teach children by our words, then we should also show how to do those things by our lives. We can tell them about God’s unconditional, sacrificial love, but until they see what it is like in how husbands and wives treat each other and how parents treat their children, they won’t really understand. Ask yourself, “How would God treat me in this situation?” Then that is how you should treat your children.

BY DEDICATING THEM TO GOD As soon as they are born, the father should pray with the whole family and thank God for the new child. They should pray thanking God for the child and asking Him to help them raise him or her for Him. The parents should dedicate themselves to God just like they dedicate the child to God.

BY TREATING SONS AND DAUGHTERS THE SAME Both sons and daughters need the same love and training. There cannot be different standards. The Bible includes them both in the word “children” and never says one should be treated differently. They are the same in God’s sight (Galatians 3:28).

BY SPENDING TIME WITH THEM Spend time with each child every day, listening to them, playing with them, showing them they are special and worth your time. Our heavenly Father is always available for us, and we should be available for our children as well. Do things with them that they like. Take them where they like to go. When you go places or do things, take them along whenever possible. This special time alone with you is very important and forms good memories for the parent and the child. Show them they are more important than the church you pastor (1 Timothy 3:4-5; Titus 1:6). If the phone rings when you are talking or doing something with them, don’t answer it. Give them your full attention, just like your heavenly Father always gives you His full attention.

BY BEING FRIENDS WITH THEM My children are my best friends next to my wife. We started a friendship when they were young. Mutual trust, love and respect should begin when children are very little. Don’t think of children as inferior – they have thoughts and feelings just like adults. Jesus didn’t turn children away, in fact He said adults should be like children, not that children should be like adults (Matthew 18:3; 19:13-14; 21:16; Mark 10:13-16). Start developing a friendship with each child when they are young. They will bring great joy to you and you will be a wonderful blessing to them.

BY PRAYING FOR THEM Pray for each of your children by name each day. Job prayed daily for his children, even when they were grown and living on their own (Job 1:4-5). He prayed for God to protect them (Job 1:10-11). Satan knows if he can break up families and control children, he can control the world. The children he would like to win over most of all are pastors’ children. Both parents should pray, individually and together, but it’s especially the father’s responsibility. Pray for your children first thing in the morning. Pray for them and with them when you put them to bed at night. Pray for them and with them whenever a need arises during the day.

BY HELPING THEM UNDERSTAND THEIR NEED FOR SALVATION Just as your children have been born into your family physically, they must be born into God's family spiritually (John 1:12-13; 3:3). Even before they are born, parents should pray for their salvation every day. Start praying with them even before they understand your words. Talk to them about Jesus and putting their faith in Him. Show the importance of living for Jesus by your own life. Talk about your faith and what Jesus means to you. The seeds of faith you plant and water when young will produce fruit for the rest of their lives (Proverbs 22:6).

BY TEACHING THEM THE BIBLE Teach your children the Bible and tell them Bible stories even before they can understand everything you are saying. They must learn these things from infancy (2 Timothy 3:15). Just as a child's body needs physical nourishment to be healthy and grow, so their spirit needs to know God's Word to grow (1 Corinthians 3:1-2; Jeremiah 15:16). Take time to pray and read the Bible with your children every day. In the morning when they first get up or before going to sleep are good times. Encourage them to read their Bible when they are old enough. Start with a simple children's Bible so it is easier for them to read and understand. God wants all of us to memorize His word so we have it in our hearts (Psalm 119:9-11). Jesus was able to have victory over Satan by quoting verses He memorized as a child (Matthew 4:1-11). Use every opportunity you have during the day to talk about the Bible and how it applies to what happens in life (Deuteronomy 6:6-7).

BY TEACHING THEM HOW TO PRAY Teach your children how to pray and have them pray with you. Talking to God is like talking to a friend. Pray out loud so your children hear you and learn from your example. Encourage them to take a turn praying out loud as well. God loves to hear the prayers of children; in fact, He says adults should come to Him as children (Matthew 18:3; 19:13-14; 21:16; Mark 10:13-16). When you teach them to pray, teach them to listen to God as well. Communication isn't just about talking, it is also about listening. What God has to say to us is more important than what we have to say to God. Teach them how to listen to God's voice.

BY TEACHING THEM TO LIVE A HOLY LIFE IN OBEDIENCE TO GOD By your teaching and example show them the importance of applying their faith to everyday life (2 Corinthians 5:7; Galatians 5:16). Teach them how to live a holy life without sin, to confess their sin right away (1 John 1:9), to overcome temptations and to stay faithful during times of trials and difficulties. Talk to them about these things as you face them so they can learn from your example as well (Deuteronomy 6:6-7).

BY ENCOURAGING THEM If parents expect too much from their children or are too hard on them, they can easily be discouraged and not want to do what you teach them (Ephesians 6:4; Colossians 3:21). Don't be critical of them; don't use rejection or fear to make them do what you want. God doesn't do any of that with us, His children. He loves us no matter what and encourages us to follow. We must treat our children the same way.

BY GODLY, CONSISTENT DISCIPLINE Parents are required to discipline their children in love when they need it (Proverbs 22:15; 23:13). Our heavenly Father disciplines us in love when necessary (Hebrews 12:7-11). Caring enough to correct them shows love. The father is responsible to oversee the discipline, but it is the responsibility of both parents to carry it out together.

Discipline must be consistent; not one parent expecting more than the other. That is very confusing to children and hard on them. The same rules must apply each day to each child. You can't let them get away with something one day and then discipline them for it the next day. You can't let one child get away with something then discipline another child for the same thing. Discipline can vary by age, but it shouldn't be different because the child is a boy or a girl. Discipline needs to be the same at home or when away from home. If it isn't, children will soon notice and try to get away with things when not at home. Discipline cannot depend on a parent's mood - if they are happy, tired, etc. It must be consistent as God is consistent with us. If not, our children will become bitter or discouraged (Colossians 3:21). They will become exasperated and not learn from it (Ephesians 6:4).

Discipline cannot be done in anger. God never disciplines us in anger (Romans 8:1). When a parent is angry, discipline becomes punishment. Instead of thinking of what is best to teach the child to act differently in the future, the angry parent just takes his anger out on the child and makes them suffer because they have made the parent angry. A parent doesn't do what is best for the child that way. This, too can embitter, discourage or exasperate a child, something God clearly commands parents, and especially fathers, not to do (Colossians 3:21; Ephesians 6:4). If parents aren't getting along with each other, or with God, they sometimes take that out on their children. That is sin as well.

When disciplining, make sure the consequence is in accordance with what the child has done (or not done). If he makes a childish, immature mistake, the discipline should not be nearly as severe as if he willfully and knowingly chose to rebel.

When children are very young, spanking can be a good discipline for a child (Proverbs 13:24; 29:15). However, when they get older, it is better to use natural consequences, as God does with us. If you break the laws of the government, there are fines to pay. If you don't take care of your health, you get sick. If you don't pay your bills, you will lose your possessions. That is how God orders the world. Do the same with your child. If they can't get along with others they must sit by themselves. If they won't help work, they don't get to eat (2 Thessalonians 3:10; 1 Timothy 5:8). In our home schooling was our child's 'work' and if they continually put off doing it we would tell them that it had to be done before they could eat. If they break or lose something out of rebellion or willful disobedience, something that was not an accident, they must fix it or buy another. If they don't have money they can do extra work at home to earn money. Ask God to give you wisdom about these things. Never use nagging, scolding, withholding love or anger to discipline, though. God never uses it with us.

Make sure you let them know they are forgiven and restored after the discipline is complete. Talk about it, pray with them, hug them and make sure they know you love them unconditionally no matter what they do.

BIBLE EXAMPLES OF POOR DISCIPLINE The Bible abounds with examples of parents not correctly disciplining their children and the problems it caused for them and the children. Samson's parents should have never let him get involved with ungodly women, but they did. They even got him a wife who wasn't a believer because he insisted on it (Judges 14:1-4). This started the path that led to his death. Eli was a fine godly priest, but when his sons sinned he didn't restrain them. He just talked to them about their sin but didn't make them stop; instead he let them continue to serve in the Tabernacle. As a result, he and they died, and God removed the high priesthood from his family (1 Samuel 2:22-25). Lot clearly didn't raise his daughters correctly, for they got him drunk and then got pregnant by him (Genesis 19:30-38).

CONCLUSION

Our children belong to God. He just loans them to us for a few years so we can enjoy them and raise them for Him. Parents are just baby-sitters for God. Commit to raise them for God. Be like Joshua: "...but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD!" (Joshua 24:15).

Psalm 127:1-5 says "Unless the LORD builds the house, its builders labor in vain. ... 3. Sons are a heritage from the LORD, children a reward from Him. 4. Like arrows in the hands of a warrior are sons born in one's youth. Blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them. They will not be put to shame when they contend with their enemies in the gate." God must be at the center of our marriage and family for it to function as He requires. He says children are like arrows. When they are accurately formed they can be sent to accomplish whatever is required of them. Parents are to raise our children to follow the Lord and do His will in life, to go where He sends them and to serve as He leads them. When parents raise their children to be mature Christian adults living for Him, they will be a blessing to their parents and other Christians whose lives they impact.

If we strive to do these things will hear, "Well done, good and faithful servant!" (Matthew 25:21).

FROM MY WIFE

Don't not be afraid to politely let your husband know you and your family need him in the home. Be flexible and understanding if he is busy but encourage him to set time each day that he ministers to you and your family .He can do this by talking and spending time with the children and learning about their concerns and then praying with the entire family together . Then tell him he has blessed you and are proud of him. This encourages him to do it again.

CONCLUSION TO THE BOOK

I am grateful for the opportunity and privilege of writing this book. It has been a privilege and honor to share some of what God has been teaching me about marriage and the family.

I would love to hear from you if you have any suggestions to improve this book, lessons you have learned about marriage, questions for me or requests for prayer. I can be reached at jerry@schmoyer.net.

Thank you and may God bless you as you serve Him through your marriages and families. If I don't meet you in this life I will see you in heaven and together we can share about the mercies of God in our lives.

Jerry Schmoyer

Ecclesiastes 4:12 Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.

Husband + Wife + God