

Marriage & Family



“Living and Leaving a Legacy”

A Book on Marriage and Raising a Family

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With input from their children Scott
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***“The LORD God made a woman from the rib...
and he brought her to the man...For this reason a man
will leave his father and mother and be united to his
wife, and they will become one flesh.”
Genesis 2:22-24***

If you work at it, marriage can be like heaven on earth!

And if you don’t, well it can get quite a bit hotter!

We decided early on that we didn’t like the second option, so we made a commitment to each other to work at it, and also decided that divorce would never be an option either. Of course it also makes all the difference if God is in the mix! With Him it is much easier for two to fully become one!

In this book you’ll learn how to build a solid Christian home based on the Bible. Even if you don’t attend church we hope you’ll agree that the Bible probably has much to say about marriage and family. After all since the Bible is most always quoted at weddings, it should probably have some of the best advice. So you’ll discover God’s plan for marriage and how you fit into that plan as a husband or wife. Grasp practical tips on raising children and dealing with issues that occur in marriage. We also give personal stories and other tips and ideas from our own years of marriage. You’ll learn how to leave a legacy for generations to come, both in your own family and those your family touches.

So go ahead, learn how two can truly become one in the full sense of the word. And then leave behind a legacy that will go on for generations!

Ed & Janice Blankenship (pictured here with two of their three children and their families) wrote this book on Marriage and Family. They’ve been married 42 years and served full time with The Navigators Church Discipleship Ministry. Joy and her husband Bubba (William) have three children and live in Virginia near their parents. Janelle and her husband Tobias (both not pictured) live in Canada. Scott and his wife Ali (Allison) have one daughter and two dogs and also live in Virginia near their parents and near Joy and Bubba.



Marriage & Family

Living and Leaving a Legacy...

A Spiritual Look

Dedication

Dedicated to Edward Reginald and Musette Marshall Blankenship and Everett Ray and Irene Francis Dinwiddie Gottman, our parents, who tried to show us how to love one another.

And to our children, Janelle, Joy, and Scott and their wonderful spouses.

Scripture taken from the *Holy Bible, New International Version*.
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INTRODUCTION

What is Marriage?

Marriages have been taking place for thousands of years. Even before recorded history there were marriages. They usually start with a ceremony. Some are big events, others are quite small. The average ceremony today in this country is around \$50,000 we've heard, but the amount is really not important. Ed doesn't even remember much from the ceremony. Janice bedazzled him that much! Anyway, the actual marriage ceremony is only the beginning. The real marriage is the life together afterwards.

Since marriage has been around almost forever, it seems a bit odd to even ask the question of "What is marriage?" Surely we all know what marriage is, don't we?

Well here goes our stab at defining marriage. Marriage is a commitment of two people, a man and a woman, to each other completely, for life. It transcends all other commitments we make with others on this earth.

But there is another commitment that is even higher which we'll get into later. It's our relationship with a higher power, with God.

What Legacy?

This book isn't simply about having kids. Yes, when we think of leaving a legacy we think first of having children who carry on after we are gone. They are a legacy and this book is certainly about those children we leave behind. But this

book is also about living a legacy of another sort, regardless if we have children or not. It is about impacting people's lives for the better. It may be our spouse, an aging parent, a brother or sister, a friend, a co-worker, even an acquaintance. It might be a neighbor down the street or someone in a homeless shelter. Our life as a husband or wife (and as a couple or family) should be lived in such a way that others are built up and encouraged, not torn down. The world around us often forces us down. The news, the economy, wars, politicians, most everything we hear today can be depressing. So what's needed? While you may or may not believe in the Bible, the Bible (and common sense) says that we should, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you!" To treat others, love others, and encourage and help others (whatever their need) like you want to be treated and loved and encouraged and helped! Unfortunately, that's a different approach you don't see every day! And that is also truly living and leaving a legacy behind in others' lives. Whether it be taking a neighbor some cookies, telling them about Christ, or just being a friend, you are showing them you care. And that is also part of the purpose behind this book! To become part of the solution, rather than just part of the problem. We hope as you read and learn from our book, you'll pick up something you can pass on to others through your life. That's really leaving a legacy!

Purpose of this Book and Suggested Use

The purpose of this book is to strengthen marriages and families. This book is designed primarily for those who trust the Bible as the Word of God. But if you are not a Christian, but do believe that the Bible has useful information you also will get something out of it. We ask that you please go into it with an open mind.

There are some exercises given in the book, many in the Appendices, particularly having a “Date” with your spouse. Please also read those and make them a priority. Make a date with your spouse and have some fun!

Most Christians never read the Word of God. Yet the Bible is the most wonderful book there is! Jesus, when tempted by Satan said that the Bible is to be what we live by. But how can we if we don’t know it? Jeremiah 15:16 says, “Thy words were found and I did eat them, and they words became to me the joy and delight of my heart.” Only as we get into the Word does it become real to us. Deuteronomy 29:29 says, “The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do them.” That is the purpose of Bible reading, to help unlock those secrets.

Included in the back of this book is a list of all the individual “books” within the Bible. The Bible is actually a library of 66 separate volumes that tie together to show how God relates to humanity. We highly recommend you get a modern translation such as the New International Version or the New Living Translation. Then read a chapter or two in it daily and if you like even underline and take some notes. I have a journal you can use if you’d like. Getting in the Bible daily, and even praying to God individually and as a family will help your marriage succeed.

That is our prayer for you as you begin this journey into His Word! We hope you will work at your marriage to make it a good one. We’re trying to do that, and so far it’s been great!

CHAPTER 1

Why a Book on Marriage?

Our son Scott has been involved in the automotive industry for seven years now and one thing he's seen with cars is the need for Preventive Maintenance. If you change the oil in your car every 3 months or 3,000 miles (or whatever your manual says), it will basically last forever. Yes, the things listed in your Owner's Manual are key to the life of your car.

Marriage is the same way. There are certain things we need to do to make it last forever. Scott says Dad told him when Ali and he got married that we should look at marriage as a life-long commitment. Divorce was not an option! With this in mind, Scott realized that if they were going to live together for life, then they needed to work at it to be happy. A miserable marriage didn't sound like fun.

You see making a marriage work is a lot like keeping your car working. The smartest way to prevent most wear and tear on your car is to do scheduled maintenance/work on it. The same is true on marriage. You don't just leave it alone. You have to work at it. Bring flowers home, take out the trash, dress up, cook a special meal, or listen to your mate. Do some preventive maintenance in other words. At other times you may even need major repairs. But don't just let your marriage "sit". Fix it if needed!

We often think we feel either like we are the only ones going through a particular situation or we have the mentality "if it ain't broke, then don't fix it". These are both lies! We know that there are no real fairy tale marriages and we typically notice signs of failure before it happens. It might be squabbles, or comments that sting. Words can hurt a marriage as much as anything. Work on the small things so

you don't have to find a counselor and get your marriage healthy again. But do so if necessary.

But how do you really keep a car running smoothly? Or by that same token, how do you have a happy marriage? In both cases it's by following the Owner's Manual. For cars it's in the glove box. But in marriage our Owner's Manual in this case is the Bible. It says we should be true to our spouse and not cheat. It says we should be loving and submit to one another. It says we should raise our children and teach them how to be good people. It says we as Christians should shine like lights in the world. We should do that in our home too!

You may even be single. If so, you'll see in this book that this is God's plan for you right now. And, if God would so lead, this book should help you in choosing a mate sometime in the future. Or you may be a single parent. If so, this book will give you guidance on raising your children.

This book will cover God's plan for marriage, the different roles of husband and wife, how to raise your children, communication, and finally how to look at your walk with God and your marriage and family as a legacy, something that will have a lasting impact. Our prayer is that this will enrich both you, your marriage and your family!

CHAPTER 2

The Plan for Marriage

Think about why you like being married? We (Ed and Janice) like being married because it is fun! We've been married 42 years and it's wonderful! We're committed to each other and to our marriage. I (Ed) know that my wife Janice is always there for me. And I try to be always there for her. She loves me and I love her. I also like marriage because it allows me to show her those things as well. I can love her, "treat" her, and be kind to her too! She does those things for me too! Because we are committed to one another we want to make our marriage work. A "fun" marriage is MUCH better than a "bad" marriage! I once heard someone say that a marriage isn't a 50/50 proposition. It's a 100/100 proposition. We each need to give our ALL (100%) to our marriage. That's what really works!

That's what we think. But who are we? Could there be an ultimate plan (a blueprint so to speak) for marriage? What is really the ultimate goal in marriage? What was the original intent? We think there are such answers and that God has them in His book, the Bible. The Bible is quoted at almost every marriage and so it must have something pertinent to say here. So we'll look at it from that perspective. We hope you'll bear with us and see what it says.

So we'll start with the Bible. This chapter will help us see why God designed marriage and why there are both husband and wife. It also gets into the wonderful reason for children. It finally shows us how to get closer to your husband or wife in your marriage. Please read on...

God and Us

When God created everything, He described the outcome each day as “good”. But at the end after creating people it says in Genesis 1:31, “God saw all that he had made, and it was very good.” So you are very good! That includes husbands and wives.

First God created a man. But God said in Genesis 2:18, “The LORD God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.”” So men shouldn’t be alone. And that’s why God made women. This need for companionship is true for women too. We can all benefit from a loving spouse!

Since we are not meant to be alone, the primary relationship we should all (married and single) have is first God Himself. 2 Corinthians 11:3 says, “But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ.” So even though our spouse may be Mr. Perfect or Miss America, our ultimate joy should come from our relationship with God Himself. Only He can truly satisfy.

Even though this book is about marriage, it also applies to singles. In fact, if one is called to be single, That can be beneficial in this regard. 1 Corinthians 7:32-35 says, “I would like you to be free from concern. An unmarried man is concerned about the Lord's affairs--how he can please the Lord. But a married man is concerned about the affairs of this world--how he can please his wife-- and his interests are divided. An unmarried woman or virgin is concerned about the Lord's affairs: Her aim is to be devoted to the Lord in both body and spirit. But a married woman is concerned about the affairs of this world--how she can please her husband. I am saying this for your own good, not to restrict you, but that you may live in a right way in undivided devotion to the Lord.” So single people can be more devoted

to God, more useful to Him and to others because they'll have even more free time. But the bottom line is whether we are single or married, God should be our number one priority!

The most important relationship in our life is God. He died for us, made us and wants us to truly put Him first in our life whether we are married or single.

Us and Our Spouse

Getting back to Genesis in the Bible, what God first tried to satisfy man was the animals. Genesis 2:19-20 says, "Now the LORD God had formed out of the ground all the beasts of the field and all the birds of the air. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds of the air and all the beasts of the field. But for Adam, no suitable helper was found." So God made the animals for us. But they didn't truly satisfy. Something was still missing!

Then what God did was quite remarkable. Genesis 2:21-23 says, "So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and closed up the place with flesh. Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. The man said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman, ' for she was taken out of man." So God made a woman. A wonderful, wonderful woman! The man basically said, "This is it! This is what I've wanted!"

In Genesis 2:24 we see the first marriage. Genesis 2:24 says, "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh." So couples should leave their parents and make a life for

themselves. They should become one physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually.

God made wives to be helpers for their husbands. But husbands are also to help their wives. Marriage is a two-way street. Because of marriage we are to leave our parents and become “one” with our spouse.

Us and Children

And what is one of the ultimate purposes in marriage? Genesis 1:28 says, God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.” We are to be fruitful and multiply, to fill the earth with people. As a species we’ve done very well with this.

But it’s not just more people that God wants, however. He wants more followers of Him. In Malachi 2:15 it says, “Has not [the LORD] made them one? In flesh and spirit they are his. And why one? Because he was seeking godly offspring. So guard yourself in your spirit, and do not break faith with the wife of your youth.” So we see here that the ultimate plan is to have offspring that are more like God Himself. Someone who cares, loves, and helps others.

In fact, God wants that for us as Christian families! Joshua 24:15 says, “But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your forefathers served beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD.” Yes, God wants us to serve Him (and others) as a family, whether it be a family of two or a family of ten. To not only be looking out for ourselves, but also striving to help others. To be like Christ as much as we can.

So God gives children to some marriages. He wants godly offspring if they can have some. He wants whole families to serve Him and others. That's true whatever the family size!

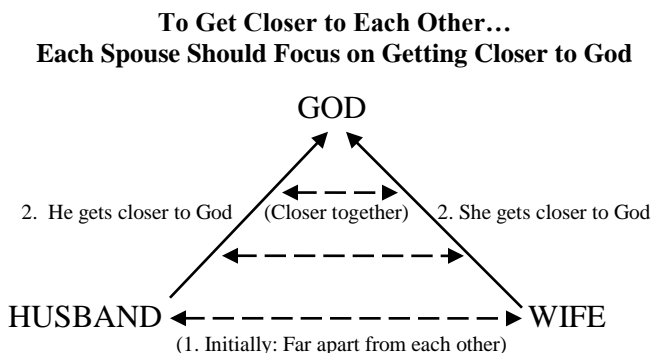
Summary

While not talking about marriages specifically, there are some lessons related to marriage that can be drawn from Ecclesiastes 4:9-12. It says, "Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work: If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up! Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone? Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken." This passage says that two can do more than one by themselves, which is obvious, but we sometimes do try to do things ourselves, don't we? Also, this says we keep each other warm. This can be true physically, spiritually, and emotionally. I hate trying to encourage myself, don't you? It also says we can pick each other up after "battles". We all have battles! Things like problems at work, difficulties in the neighborhood, problems with the in-laws, illnesses, money, etc. Isn't it much better if you have someone to share these battles with? Of course. Finally this passage says we can accomplish MORE: More Friendships, More Fun, More Insight, More Hospitality, and of course More Love. Whatever you want to do you can do it MORE with a spouse!

The triple braided cord (or a cord of three strands) referred to in Ecclesiastes can represent husband, wife, and God in a marriage. This can also be shown as a pyramid. Our own relationship with God is key in this pyramid. We need to be linked to Him. But then we get married to Mr. Right or Miss Wonderful. It's perfect at first, but then reality sets in. We find flaws. He may not be very neat. And she may be too talkative. So when we start out in marriage we often find ourselves farther apart than we thought (as shown at the

bottom of the pyramid)! So we try to change the other person. But that doesn't work. Then we try to get closer together, and making up is fun, but the problems are still there.

One reason many marriages in the world don't make it, is they try to do it on their own. They try to get closer to each other, but since both parties often have their own guiding principles that is impossible, and they find that they can't truly get that much closer to each other. But if both partners are Believers and each gets closer to God individually, their goals and purpose in life get more in tune with God and then more in tune with each other, they find that they also are then getting closer to each other as the illustration below shows:



Think of where you and your mate might be on this illustration. What would it take to get you personally closer to the Lord, and then as a result closer to each other?

So a Christian marriage is like a cord of three strands, it isn't easy to break. It also is like a pyramid with Christ as the Head. As we get closer to Him, we also get closer to our spouse! Going it without God isn't a good idea.

CHAPTER 3

ROLES IN MARRIAGE

God designed each partner in a marriage differently. He also gave us specific roles we are to follow. Let's start with what happened as a result of the first sin and then we'll go into the New Testament teaching on the roles of both husband and wife.

Result of the “Fall”

Going back to Adam and Eve, initially they were with God in the Garden of Eden. But after eating the apple God had forbidden, things began to change.

First, their relationship with God changed. Genesis 3:10 says, “He (Adam) answered, “I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid.”” So they went from walking together with God to hiding from Him. The wrong things we do (lies, bad thoughts, selfishness, etc.) do that. They separate us from God and from others, including our spouse.

Second, their sin had an impact on bearing children. Genesis 3:16a says, “To the woman he said, “I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing; with pain you will give birth to children.”” I'm sure you've seen that sin also causes strife within the family too. Every time we do things wrong, it impacts others.

Third, sin impacted their (and our) work. Genesis 3:17-19 says, “To Adam he said, “Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, ‘You must not eat of it,’ “Cursed is the ground because of you;

through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return.”” Whether we are a man or a woman we’ve likely experienced that work is hard. That’s why they call it work!

Fourth, it impacted the husband-wife relationship itself. Genesis 3:16b says:

Regarding the wife

“Your desire will be for your husband....”

Regarding the husband

“Your...husband will rule over you.”

This is not very politically correct, but it is what the Bible says. We’ll see later that both husband and wife are to submit to one another, but the husband is responsible as head of the marriage. We’ll also see that the husband is to love his wife as Christ loves us and gave Himself for us, even unto death. It’s easier to submit to someone who loves you unconditionally. Wives too are to love their husbands. It’s easier to lead someone who loves you. Only as we submit to each other and love one another will we be open to experience all that God has for us in marriage.

Finally, what was the ultimate outcome (result) of this first sin? Genesis 3:23-24 says, “So the LORD God banished him (Adam) from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken. After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.” Paradise was definitely lost.

And it happens today. We all still sin. It’s not just Adam and Eve’s fault! Romans 3:23 says, for all have sinned and fall

short of the glory of God.“ And what results are there from sin today?

Romans 6:23 says, “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” So we also are separated from God. We’ll all die physically and spiritually. But this verse also gives us hope. Eternal life is a gift from God and it comes in Jesus Christ. If we have Him in our life, we also have eternal life, because eternal life is IN Christ.

Proverbs 17:1 says, “Better a dry crust with peace and quiet than a house full of feasting, with strife.” Another result of sin is there is strife in our homes today. Arguments, criticisms, even threats and physical abuse are a result of sin. But making God the focus in our marriage changes all that.

Yes, sin causes a separation between us and God. It also strains the relationship between husband and wife. It started with Adam and Eve, but we all sin today.

Both Love and Submit

God showed His love for us by sending Jesus to die for our sins. If we accept Him, He makes us a new creature (2 Corinthians 5:17). Jesus not only saves us, but He gives us a plan to follow in marriage and in life. Jesus commanded His followers in John 13:34-35 saying, “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

Think about it. How would real love be evident in a marriage do you think? Wouldn’t it be by accepting each other, by honoring each other, by thinking of the other person’s needs above your own? Of course it would. Both husband and wife are to love each other that way.

Another key passage about the roles in marriage is Ephesians 5. Ephesians 5:21 says for both husband and wife (as well as for all believers), “Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.”

Submission is a dirty word today. Yet this is what the Bible says to do. How do you submit to one another? By not always having your own way, and by listening to the other person’s opinion.

And that includes serving the other person too! In our marriage Janice is better at some things and Ed better at others. Also, Ed likes to do certain things around the house while Janice likes to do other tasks. So we share duties. Janice cooks the meals, but Ed does dishes after dinner after coming home from his work. Doing your part is part of serving, and also submitting to one another.

Love and submission go hand-in-hand in a marriage. They are like two keys needed to open a door. The door to your spouse’s heart.

Think of some ways you might both love and submit to your spouse in your marriage. Write them here:

So we’ve found that as a result of sin we are all separated from God and can have strife in our marriage. Each partner should accept Christ and love and submit to the other as to the Lord. Those are the keys to a great marriage!

Specific Roles (Husband Lead & Love, Wives Submit/Respect/ Honor and Help)

The Bible also says that each spouse has specific roles in marriage. These differ between husband and wife. Ephesians 5:22-24 says, “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.”

This says that wives are to submit to their husbands as to the Lord in everything. This doesn't mean that the husband runs the wife's life. She answers to God and to herself first, not just to her husband. But just as all Christians should follow what the Lord says for their life, so a wife should seek to please her husband. That can mean giving in when it's unimportant.

We've always run our own marriage in such a fashion that we look for mutual agreement on things. If we don't both feel led to do something, we don't do it. And most always we both agree on things. But not always, and in those cases if we don't agree we usually wait until we are both in agreement. But for those instances where a decision has to be made now, we'll go with Ed's choice. Janice submits in that decision. And that puts added pressure on Ed to make sure he's got it right.

That brings us to the second aspect of Ephesians 5:22-24, that “the husband is the head of the wife just as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which He is the Savior.” Just as the head of your body directs the entire body, so the husband should ultimately set the lead for the whole family. But he should do it in a similar way to how Christ is the head of the church and is its Savior. What did Christ do for us? He loved us, He died for us, He gave up himself for us. That is the way husbands should lead their wives, by loving and giving of himself for his wife. A leader respects his followers and wants the best for them and helps them feel a beneficial part. Husbands should do the same. Again, if a husband is leading like this, the wife will want to submit and let him lead.

1 Peter 3:1-4 gives additional insight to a woman submitting to her husband's leadership. It says, "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, when they see the purity and reverence of your lives. Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewelry and fine clothes. Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight." So by submitting to her husband, a Christian wife can better win over a non-believing husband. That's a great witness!

Ephesians 5:25-30 talks more about the husband's responsibility. It says, "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church--for we are members of his body."

So husbands are to love their wives like Christ loves us. That's very deep, isn't it? Christ died for us. As a husband Ed should be willing to die for Janice. But daily he should also die to himself and look out for her needs, her interests, her concerns. A husband should not look just after his own needs and neglect the needs of his wife. That's not love!

But how can a husband really do this, really love this way? I believe it's impossible, apart from Christ. Having Christ in your heart allows you to fully love your wife because you have Christ inside you. His example of self-sacrifice is what we must follow as husbands. That's not easy, but with

Christ's help it can be done. After 42 years of marriage Ed is still learning this. (Janice says he's doing pretty well.)

Ephesians 5:31-33 summarizes what a marriage should be like. It says, "'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.'" This is a profound mystery--but I am talking about Christ and the church. However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband."

In this passage it still says the husband should love his wife, but instead of saying wives submit to their husbands it says that wives should respect their husband. Respect means to allow the husband to lead and to give him credit for those good decisions. All men liked to be "stroked", so to speak, and getting a word of encouragement goes a long way to building up a husband.

1 Peter 3:7 gives another charge to husbands. It says, "Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers." Here we see that husbands should live considerately with their wives and treat their wives with respect too, just as wives are to respect their husbands. Being considerate means a husband should bring his wife into the decision-making process. Treating her with respect means listening to her and following the wife's advice as well as that of the husband. Remember that you are both equal in God's sight. "Joint heirs" as the Bible says. If God treats the wife the same, so should husbands.

Here we also see that the Bible acknowledges that women are weaker physically than men, and that as a result men should be careful that they treat them with care. This is particularly true in marriage. Much physical abuse happens in homes. This is wrong. If this is happening in a home, the wife

should first tell the husband he should stop, that this is not showing respect to her and that he is taking advantage of being physically stronger. If this doesn't help, then send him to a counselor or a pastor. Finally, tell the police. Abuse is sin, and it is also a crime!

What is the outcome of husbands doing this? 1 Peter 3:7 says that a husband's prayers will not be hindered. This is confirmation from God that NOT treating a wife this way is wrong. But if a husband truly loves, honors, respects, and treats his wife tenderly, God will be pleased, and will honor the husband's prayers.

Before we end this chapter, reflect on your marriage. Out of all this, what do you feel you need to work on in your marriage? As a wife do you love, honor, and respect your husband? As a husband, do you truly love, honor, respect, and treat tenderly your wife?

The Christian marriage should be one where the husband loves his wife just as much as Jesus loves all of us. He must be willing to give of himself for his wife. The wife must submit to her husband out of respect for him as the leader of the family. God is the ultimate head of the family, however, and He brings everything into submission under Him.

CHAPTER 4

BECOMING ONE IN MARRIAGE

God brings two separate people together in a marriage from different homes, sometimes even from different cultures, and says that the two will become one. That is sometimes tough, but it certainly can be done. This lesson gets into what is involved in becoming one both spiritually and physically.

Becoming One Spiritually

When a man and woman become married, what about their former lives? Genesis 2:24 says, “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.” So a couple should leave behind their parents and family and start a new home.

What is involved in leaving your parents? This doesn’t mean they never speak to their parents, but that they should separate themselves. It also means that they need to have a mindset that they have now “grown up” and can make their own decisions together as a couple.

What else should be left behind when we get married? There are things that might prevent a husband or wife from getting close to their spouse. This could include time with former friends, or even certain hobbies or activities.

This passage in Genesis also says you should cling to (or “cleave” to) your new mate. What does this mean? Think of it like glue. You should look for things that both of you like to do as much as possible. Do things that can help bind you together in time and interests.

The Bible also says in Mark 10:9 that God himself brings us together. It says, "Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate." This kind of joining should be comprehensive. It should first involve joining physically but also spiritually as well. Each of us has a spiritual component (a soul if you will), that needs to be in synch first with God. But Hebrews 10:24-25 says we should encourage and build up one another spiritually as well. A husband or wife can best do that for each other. So find a good church, read the Bible together, pray together as a couple at meals and before going to bed. All of this will help you grow together.

You should also be joined together intellectually and emotionally. This doesn't mean you should both have the same IQ, but it does mean that you should talk about the things that you learn with each other. Janice really likes history. Ed hated history initially. But over the years Ed's seen that history can be fun too. Janice originally hated science while Ed loves science. Now, some of our favorite things to do involve science. Sharing things together and particularly sharing your heart brings you together in a new fresh way as a couple.

Sharing your heart can be hard for some. A key here is listening and asking questions when someone is quiet. So try to draw out a quiet spouse by saying something like this: "What's wrong Honey?" "Can I help?" "I'd like to." But give everyone their space at times. They may really need it.

We can also gain insight from what is called the Greatest Commandment, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength." Our love for God should involve ALL of our being, not just part of it! This is the love Christ also has for us as well. In the same way, a husband and wife are to have this same intensity and expansiveness in their relationship and love toward one another. Soul is spiritual. Mind is mental or intellectual. Heart is emotional. Strength is

physical. All are important in showing love. Think about each of these four ways we are to love, and come up with some ways you can love first God, and then your spouse that way. Enter what you can, and then discuss with your spouse ways you could do this. Ask what he or she would like.

Soul (Spiritual)

- How might you show God that you love Him spiritually?
- How might you show your spouse that you love them spiritually?

Mind (Mental or Intellectual)

- How might you show God that you love Him mentally?
- How might you show your spouse that you love them mentally?

Heart (Emotional)

- How might you show God that you love Him emotionally?
- How might you show your spouse that you love them emotionally?

Strength (Physical)

- How might you show God that you love Him physically?

- How can you show your mate you love them physically?

We'll talk more about the physical aspect of showing love next, but let's summarize first. God wants us to leave behind our former lives when we get married. We are no longer to be dependent on our parents, nor are we to "run around with the old crowd". We now have a new partner, joined together with them to share all life's experiences together.

Becoming One Physically (Sex in Marriage)

(Note: If you are discussing this book in a small group, you may want to do this next section in two separate groups, men in one group, women in the other.)

God designed us with sexual differences. He created both male and female. Sex in marriage is God's plan. Genesis 1:28 says "God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it." And then 1 Corinthians 7:3-5 talks about what a husband and wife should do to satisfy each other sexually. It says "The husband should fulfill his marital duty to his wife, and likewise the wife to her husband. The wife's body does not belong to her alone but also to her husband. In the same way, the husband's body does not belong to him alone but also to his wife. Do not deprive each other except by mutual consent and for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer. Then come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control." This says that each partner in the marriage is to give themselves (including their physical body) completely to their mate. This means that anything between husband and wife in marriage is OK as long as both of you agree to it.

While either spouse can have a "wandering eye", men seem to have the greatest problem with this. That is why men

must particularly be careful that they don't go astray. Consider these passages in the Bible.

Hebrews 13:4 says Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral."

And Proverbs 5:18-21 says "May your fountain be blessed, and may you rejoice in the wife of your youth. A loving doe, a graceful deer-- may her breasts satisfy you always, may you ever be captivated by her love. Why be captivated, my son, by an adulteress? Why embrace the bosom of another man's wife? For a man's ways are in full view of the LORD, and he examines all his paths."

Finally, Matthew 5:27-28 says "You have heard that it was said, 'Do not commit adultery.' But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart."

So sex outside of marriage is wrong,(including looking at another woman lustfully), but it is perfectly alright for each married partner to look at (and want) their spouse in this way, however. The Song of Solomon (or Song of Songs as it is also called) is a sensual book on the subject of desiring each other. Here are some passages from this book in the Bible that show how the wife and the husband think and feel about each other. (We've abbreviated Song of Solomon as "SS".) As you read through it, think of your mate and how you can please them and how they please you.

The wife (What she is thinking about her husband)

SS 1:2, 4, 7, 13, and 16 says "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth-- for your love is more delightful than wine...Take me away with you--let us hurry! Let the king bring me into his chambers. We rejoice and delight in you;

we will praise your love more than wine. How right they are to adore you! ...Tell me, you whom I love, where you graze your flock and where you rest your sheep at midday. Why should I be like a veiled woman beside the flocks of your friends? ...My lover is to me a sachet of myrrh resting between my breasts. ... How handsome you are, my lover! Oh, how charming! And our bed is verdant.”

SS 2:3-10 says “Like an apple tree among the trees of the forest is my lover among the young men. I delight to sit in his shade, and his fruit is sweet to my taste. He has taken me to the banquet hall, and his banner over me is love. Strengthen me with raisins, refresh me with apples, for I am faint with love. His left arm is under my head, and his right arm embraces me. Daughters of Jerusalem, I charge you by the gazelles and by the does of the field: Do not arouse or awaken love until it so desires. Listen! My lover! Look! Here he comes, leaping across the mountains, bounding over the hills. My lover is like a gazelle or a young stag. Look! There he stands behind our wall, gazing through the windows, peering through the lattice. My lover spoke and said to me, “Arise, my darling, my beautiful one, and come with me.”

SS 5:10-16 says “My lover is radiant and ruddy, outstanding among ten thousand. His head is purest gold; his hair is wavy and black as a raven. His eyes are like doves by the water streams, washed in milk, mounted like jewels. His cheeks are like beds of spice yielding perfume. His lips are like lilies dripping with myrrh. His arms are rods of gold set with chrysolite. His body is like polished ivory decorated with sapphires. His legs are pillars of marble set on bases of pure gold. His appearance is like Lebanon, choice as its cedars. His mouth is sweetness itself; he is altogether lovely. This is my lover, this my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem.”

The husband (What he is thinking about his wife)

SS 4:1-11 says “How beautiful you are, my darling! Oh, how beautiful! Your eyes behind your veil are doves. Your hair is like a flock of goats descending from Mount Gilead. Your teeth are like a flock of sheep just shorn, coming up from the washing. Each has its twin; not one of them is alone. Your lips are like a scarlet ribbon; your mouth is lovely. Your temples behind your veil are like the halves of a pomegranate. Your neck is like the tower of David, built with elegance; on it hang a thousand shields, all of them shields of warriors. Your two breasts are like two fawns, like twin fawns of a gazelle that browse among the lilies. Until the day breaks and the shadows flee, I will go to the mountain of myrrh and to the hill of incense. All beautiful you are, my darling; there is no flaw in you. Come with me from Lebanon, my bride, come with me from Lebanon. Descend from the crest of Amana, from the top of Senir, the summit of Hermon, from the lions' dens and the mountain haunts of the leopards. You have stolen my heart, my sister, my bride; you have stolen my heart with one glance of your eyes, with one jewel of your necklace. How delightful is your love, my sister, my bride! How much more pleasing is your love than wine, and the fragrance of your perfume than any spice! Your lips drop sweetness as the honeycomb, my bride; milk and honey are under your tongue. The fragrance of your garments is like that of Lebanon.”

SS 7:1-9 says “How beautiful your sandaled feet, O prince's daughter! Your graceful legs are like jewels, the work of a craftsman's hands. Your navel is a rounded goblet that never lacks blended wine. Your waist is a mound of wheat encircled by lilies. Your breasts are like two fawns, twins of a gazelle. Your neck is like an ivory tower. Your eyes are the pools of Heshbon by the gate of Bath Rabbim. Your nose is like the tower of Lebanon looking toward Damascus. Your head crowns you like Mount Carmel. Your hair is like royal tapestry; the king is held captive by its tresses. How beautiful you are and how pleasing, O love, with your delights! Your stature is like that of the palm, and your

breasts like clusters of fruit. I said, "I will climb the palm tree; I will take hold of its fruit." May your breasts be like the clusters of the vine, the fragrance of your breath like apples, and your mouth like the best wine. May the wine go straight to my lover, flowing gently over lips and teeth."

You may have noticed some differences in the two lists above. The man is more interested in what he can visually see in the woman while the woman seems also interested in the strength and ability of the man. (But there certainly are aspects of both for each sex, so both are important.) One key aspect of this difference is a woman likes to be romanced. It is her whole life that is important in regards to having and enjoying sex. To a man it is the act itself.

Finally, here's a list of some **"Differences in Men and Women"** in general. These don't hold for every member of that sex, but this list does tend to show that we are made different sexually. Think how you might work with your spouses' differences to enhance your relationship rather than just "grudgingly accept them". And, don't fret that you are different from your mate. Be glad that they are different. That's why you came together in the first place!

Man (Husband)

- More visually stimulated.
- Stronger physically
- Compartmentalizes things
- Decides based more on logic
- Stricter disciplinarian
- Resistant to talking
- Likes speed
- Big-picture oriented

Woman (Wife)

- Stimulated more by touch
- Relationally stronger
- Interrelates everything
- Decides based more on emotion
- More lenient
- Likes to talk
- Likes to take it slow
- Detail-oriented

Yes, sex in marriage is a very wonderful thing. It involves caressing, romancing, looking, kissing, talking, as well as intercourse itself. Pray that God will make this part of your relationship all it can be.

CHAPTER 5

Raising Godly Children

Children are a gift from God. This chapter shows us how we should raise our children, how we should love and care for them, how we should teach them, and how we should discipline them.

The Blessing of Children

When God first made people he told them to “be fruitful and multiply”. In other words, to have children! Psalm 127:3-5 says about children, “Sons are a heritage from the LORD, children a reward from him. 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.” Both sons and daughters are a heritage from God, a blessing, and a joy. Having them when you are young, or when you are old, is both OK. And however many God gives you is great!

We all know how to have kids. It takes two to “tango”, as they say. But in reality children aren’t made by just husband and wife. God is also involved. In Genesis 4:1 Eve gives God some credit by saying, “Adam lay with his wife Eve, and she became pregnant and gave birth to Cain. She said, “With the help of the LORD I have brought forth a man.””. And in Psalm 139:13-16 the writer says “For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, your eyes (God) saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.” So God has a hand in having kids!

Children are very important to God. Jesus got involved with them during his ministry. Matthew 18:2-5 says "He called a little child and had him stand among them. And he said: "I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoever welcomes a little child like this in my name welcomes me." And Matthew 19:13-15 says "Then little children were brought to Jesus for him to place his hands on them and pray for them. But the disciples rebuked those who brought them. Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." When he had placed his hands on them, he went on from there."

Yes, Jesus loves little children. They have child-like faith that we all need to emulate. They are very precious to God. They are a blessing from God. They are special to Him and were made by Him (and by us).

Nurturing

Another thing we need to do as parents is nurture (or care for) our children. An interesting story is Hannah in the Bible. She wanted a son and finally had one. She dedicated him to God, but kept him until he was nursed. 1 Samuel 1:22-24 says "Hannah did not go. She said to her husband, "After the boy is weaned, I will take him and present him before the LORD, and he will live there always." "Do what seems best to you," Elkanah her husband told her. "Stay here until you have weaned him; only may the LORD make good his word." So the woman stayed at home and nursed her son until she had weaned him. After he was weaned, she took the boy with her, young as he was, along with a three-year-old bull, an ephah of flour and a skin of wine, and brought

him to the house of the LORD at Shiloh.” Hannah nursed her son and had compassion on him.

Comfort is another thing parents do for their children. Isaiah 66:13 says “As a mother comforts her child, so will I (God) comfort you; and you will be comforted over Jerusalem.” Comfort involves bandaging hurts and wounds, listening and encouraging, and providing a comforting touch.

1 Timothy 5:8 also says that parents should provide for the needs of their children. This involves food, clothing, and shelter. Often, however, we go further and provide “wants”. This is fine, but we must be careful not to overindulge.

We also need to protect them from harm. In the Old Testament days, the Jews were threatened to have their young boys killed. But Moses was saved by his parents. Hebrews 11:23 says “By faith Moses' parents hid him for three months after he was born, because they saw he was no ordinary child, and they were not afraid of the king's edict.” We too need to keep our children safe from predators. Unfortunately predators still exist today. So make sure you keep your child safe. Don't ever leave them alone without proper supervision.

Caring for our children physically and emotionally is the first thing we do for them. And while we eventually want them to provide for themselves, we never stop loving them.

Teaching and Training

We must teach our kids what they should do in life. But what is that? Deuteronomy 4:5-6 and verse 9 says, “Teach them the Word of God. The Word will give them wisdom and understanding. It will teach them obedience.” So the Bible is one thing we should teach them. Proverbs is a good place

to start. It has hundreds of sayings that will fill a child's heart with what is right. Here are just a few subject areas:

Proverbs 20:6	Faithful Love
Proverbs 16:7	Peaceful
Proverbs 15:31	Teachable
Proverbs 12:19	Truthfulness
Proverbs 11:3	Integrity
Proverbs 16:11	Honesty
Proverbs 20:3	Avoiding Strife

We should also teach them to love God. This comes from spiritual conversations at home. Deuteronomy 6:5-7 says "Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up." So use teachable moments wherever you may find them to talk about God to your children.

We also want to teach them to serve God and others as Joshua 24:15 and Galatians 6:9-10 say. Setting an example here as parents is key. We have supported orphaned children and also invited a homeless mother over for Thanksgiving dinner to show our children what serving others is like. They will catch on if you model serving others for them.

You see, the things taught in the Bible are ageless, and they are passed down from generation to generation. Psalm 78:2-7 says "I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter hidden things, things from of old--what we have heard and known, what our fathers have told us. We will not hide them from their children; we will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the LORD, his power, and the wonders he has done. He decreed statutes for Jacob and established the law in Israel, which he commanded our forefathers to teach their children, so the next generation

would know them, even the children yet to be born, and they in turn would tell their children. Then they would put their trust in God and would not forget his deeds but would keep his commands.” So keep the Bible’s teaching prominent!

You also need to teach them the importance of church and worshipping God corporately. Psalm 122:1 says “I rejoiced with those who said to me, “Let us go to the house of the LORD.””

They also need to learn obedience, to their parents, to the government, and to those in authority like the police. Proverbs 6:20 is a good place to start. (Look it up.)

But don’t over-discipline. Ephesians 6:4 says “Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.” And Colossians 3:21 says we shouldn’t exasperate them or make them discouraged. Don’t ever expect more from your children than they can do at their age.

Another aspect of teaching is training. While teaching is giving them information, training is actually helping them make right decisions. Proverbs 22:6 says what will happen when we do this with our kids. It says “Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.”

There are a number of areas we should teach and train our children including relationships, spiritual growth, morals, responsibility, citizenship, caring for others, sharing, serving, money management, etc. You may think of other areas that are also important.

The Word of God is especially important for our children to know. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 says “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly

equipped for every good work.” 2 Peter 1:3 says we have in Christ “everything we need for life and godliness”. So the Bible is most important. Teach that to your child and you’re well on your way to helping them as adults.

We can’t expect our kids to know the whole Bible, but we can teach them what is in the different books of the Bible. We should also show them how to find what the Bible says on a particular subject using a concordance or topical index. Some of these are online (see www.biblegateway.com). We also need to make sure they have accepted Christ and know how to spend daily time with Him in the Word and prayer. There are tools in this series available to help you instruct your children in these areas.

God expects us to teach our children His Word. Most importantly we need to model it. And we also need to make it a part of our everyday life. We should also worship God with our children. This should include going to church regularly with them, getting them into Sunday school and youth group when they are old enough, and we should also teach them at home. Make spiritual learning appropriate for them, and also make it fun and worthwhile.

Example is Key

One of the reasons there are parents is so they can raise their children. The apostle Paul wasn’t married and so he didn’t have physical children. But he did lead people to Christ and they became his “spiritual children”. As a result Paul knew something about how children (spiritual and physical) learn best. Philippians 4:9 says “Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me--put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.” Paul knew that children learn best by example. In fact, kids pick up everything their parents do. If a parent cusses, the kids will cuss. If a parent praises God, the kids will praise God. What kind of example are you setting for your children? Is it one

of praising or of complaining? Is it one of confessing when you've done wrong, or do you blame it on someone else? What are they picking up from you?

We need to remember that actions speak louder than words. The example we set for our kids speaks volumes to them, and to others as well. Philippians 4:8 is also a good verse to keep in mind. "Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable--if anything is excellent or praiseworthy--think about such things." If we have positive thoughts, our actions will be more helpful to our children. Negative thoughts are harmful.

Discipline

One of the hardest things we have to do as parents is discipline our children. Yet the Bible makes it clear that God disciplines us as His children. What does the Bible say about why God discipline us? Proverbs 3:12 says that He does so because He loves us. Hebrews 12:10 puts it this way, "Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness." So He disciplines us because He loves us and also for our own good.

If God disciplines us for our good and because He loves us, we as parents should do the same. God expects this. Proverbs 3:11-12 says, "Kids shouldn't reject discipline. Don't be upset when disciplined. God corrects those He love, just as a father does us." And Proverbs 23:13-14 says, "Do not withhold discipline from a child; if you punish him with the rod, he will not die. Punish him with the rod and save his soul from death." You see, as we discipline our children it saves them from a horrible life. You don't want them to grow up rebellious. It will negatively impact their work, their family, and their ministry if they are. Discipline helps turn them from that.

Ecclesiastes 8:11 is a key verse. It says, “When the sentence for a crime is not quickly carried out, the hearts of the people are filled with schemes to do wrong.” This verse says that not only must we discipline when wrongs are done, but it should be quick and swift. This is very true for kids as they have short attention spans. If you wait to discipline they will not be able to connect what they did wrong with the punishment. And it should also end with a hug and, “Daddy (or Mommy) loves you very much!”

It is hard to discipline. But remember Hebrews 12:11. It says, “No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.”

Yes, discipline is important. God disciplines us for our good. We should do the same. But we must be careful when we discipline our children. Never do it out of anger. Cool off first if needed. Also, do it in private. And don’t let it wait. Kids need to associate the discipline with what they did. And follow it up with a loving hug! Proper discipline will help them to live a godly life and be of use to society.

CHAPTER 6

Communication and Relationships

Communication is one of the keys to a successful marriage and to all relationships. Expressing your love for one another sexually is a key part of that communication as we saw several chapters back, but in this chapter we will look into how we should listen to and speak with our mate.

General Principles

We want to look first at some basic principles of human relationships. These should also be observed in marriage. The Bible has much to say about relationships. Below are my summaries of a few key verses. (You may want to look up and read the entire verse.)

Proverbs 17:22 Be happy, don't always be sad.

Proverbs 29:11 Don't get mad. Keep your temper under control.

Romans 12:9-10 Be sincere in your love. Honor each other.

Romans 12:12 Be joyful, patient, faithful.

Romans 14:13 Don't be judgmental.

Romans 14:19 Do what leads to peace and builds the other up.

Romans 15:1-2 Bear with other's weaknesses. Please others.

Romans 15:7 Accept each other.

Philippians 4:4-6 Rejoice. Be gentle. Don't worry. Pray.

Philippians 4:8 Always think positive thoughts.

Colossians 3:8-9 No anger, rage, malice, slander, cursing or lies.

James 3:16-18 Don't be envious or selfish. Be pure, peaceful, considerate, merciful, impartial, sincere, a peace-maker.

Look back over this list and choose one trait that you'd like to do this week to pleasantly surprise your mate. Write it here:

Love is paramount in a relationship like marriage. But describing love can be tough. Let's look at how 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 describes love: "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 describes love as an action, not an emotion as we often think. While love in marriage can certainly be emotion, long-lasting love is a matter of choice. I should choose to be kind even when circumstances say I should not. I should choose to be patient even when you aren't. I choose not to seek my own way even though I do have a right. Why? Because I love this person. You see love is unconditionally giving of yourself for another. That's what Jesus did for us and what we must do for our spouse in marriage if it is to last.

But these active choices aren't easy. Where do these types of active qualities come from? Galatians 5:22-23 says, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law."

You see the more we walk with God, the more He molds us into His character. Usually I (Ed) am not very patient or kind, but occasionally Janice will say to me, "Honey that was so thoughtful what you just did!" Well guess what? I have to admit it wasn't really just me doing it, it was Jesus working in and through me. And that's OK. That's reality. I need His power to be a good person. That's why I want to spend more time with God so He can shape my character! And He'll shape yours too. Spend time with God and ask Him for this type of fruit in your life!

Titus 2:2-8 also gives specific instruction for men and women in relationships. It says:

Older Men should be temperate, worthy of respect, self-controlled, and sound in faith, in love and in endurance.

Older Women should be reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine, but to teach what is good. Then they can train the younger women.

Younger Women should love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands, so that no one will malign the word of God.

Younger Men should be self-controlled. In everything set them an example by doing what is good. In your teaching show integrity, seriousness and soundness of speech that cannot be condemned.

Look over these list of traits. What do you need to work on in your life? Write it here.

Yes, exhortations we find in the Bible on personal relationships also are pertinent for marriages. Things like kindness, goodness, and faithfulness work with everybody. Love is the paramount quality we need to exhibit, and it should be most obvious in our relationship with our spouse.

Listening and Talking

Listening is key in communication. But too often we talk more than listen. My Mom used to tell me, “Son, you have two ears and one mouth, so listen twice as much as you talk!” I still have problems with that today. When I’m talking I don’t listen to what others are saying. And often I am thinking of what to say while others are talking. This is bad

too. It's like Proverbs 18:13 saying that you shouldn't talk before you have all the facts. That's true in marriage too. Sometimes I come home from work and want to just sit down and eat. But I have found that Janice needs me to listen to her first. Matthew 13:15 says it this way, "For this people's heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them." I need to soften up and listen and really see!

And James 1:19 says "My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry," This verse brings out not only that we should listen, but we should be quick to listen. That takes practice. I would much prefer to talk, so I have to work at listening. Again, one key here is to be slow in speaking.

And James also brings in that we should be slow to anger. One reason for that is because when we get angry our blood pressure goes up and we have more trouble listening. In fact many people who get angry can't listen at all. So make it a point to not get angry. Take a few deep breaths or go out of the room, whatever works.

You see the tongue (or talking) and the words we say are so important. They can hurt very badly. Proverbs 12:18 says "Reckless words pierce like a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing." Proverbs goes on to say in Proverbs 15:28 that as a result we should think carefully before we talk.

We should also speak in a loving way. Ephesians 4:15 says "Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ." So when you speak, say it in a loving manner like, "You're sweet", "You're kind", "Thanks for doing that", etc. And speak in a low volume too, don't ever shout or yell.

Ask yourself, do you speak the truth in love? Or does hate come out of your mouth or by the tone in your voice?

Since it is so easy to say words that hurt, we often do, and so it is a good idea to confess these things together as a couple, and also individually. James 5:16 says “Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.” As you pray together and confess your sins as a couple it will be liberating. It will bring you much closer together. And making up is fun too!

The act of communication involves listening and talking. But the art of communication involves so much more. We should seek to understand and empathize with our spouse when they are communicating with us, and then share our response in love.

Disagreements and Forgiveness

It is inevitable, however, that you will have disagreements in your marriage. That is normal. But sometimes they turn into fights or quarrels. What does James 4:1-3 says is the reason for this? It says, “What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask God. When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.” You see we get upset when we don't get OUR way. But our real need to is get our complete satisfaction from God, not our spouse. But we don't do that, so we have disagreements.

One principle that can keep arguments from starting or growing into more than they should is in Ephesians 4:26. It

says “In your anger do not sin: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry,” For 42 years now we’ve made it a point of not going to bed angry. Sometimes we’re hurt, at other times we’re confused, but we never go to bed angry. We always make up before going to bed. Asking forgiveness, saying that’s OK, coming to some sort of an agreement all play a part. (And tickling helps too.) There is additional help in the appendix for help on Resolving Conflicts.

If one party offends the other, the Bible gives clear guidelines on what we are to do:

If we wronged someone: Matthew 5:23-24 says "Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift."

If we were the one wronged! Matthew 18:15 says “If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over.”

Note that in either case it is our responsibility to go to the other party. Don’t wait for your partner to admit guilt. Pray, and then go to him or her and tell them what you’ve done or what they’ve done and how it has hurt you. God wants the relationship restored. That takes priority over who’s right or wrong!

And when your mate (or someone else for that matter) wrongs you, Colossians 3:13 says “Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.” Remember that you too are not perfect. We all have faults. Holding a grudge helps no one. So forgive. That will start the healing.

Several areas that commonly cause disagreements in marriages are finances, discipline of children, and a lack of communication. In this chapter we've discussed communication. Good communication starts with following God and His Word. Things you read anywhere in Scripture can be applied to your marriage. Communication includes both listening with understanding and speaking in love. It is definitely something that continually needs to be worked on. The sexual relationship is a part of this and definitely needs to be discussed. Find out what both of you like. Plan times to just sit and talk, and if disagreements come up, come to an agreement. And don't go to sleep until you've made up.

Last chapter we discussed discipline of children. This too causes problems if husband and wife don't agree either on the method of discipline or on consistency. Make it a point to determine what should be punished, how you are going to discipline, and then be consistent with your children. That will minimize friction between husband and wife. Plus, kids do best when they have boundaries.

As for money, it also can cause conflicts in marriage. Both parties need some spending money of their own and the freedom to do so, but it is important to have a budget and stick to it. The study "Finances – More Than Making Ends Meet" has help in this. And Financial Peace University offered by Dave Ramsey is solid financial training. You can also use on-line budget tools. Some key money principles and Bible passages to look up follow:

- | | |
|----------------------------------|---------------------|
| 1. God owns everything | Psalm 24:1 |
| 2. God entrusts it to us | Job 1:21 |
| 3. We should use it wisely | 1 Corinthians 4:2 |
| 4. Trust God to provide | Philippians 4:19 |
| 5. Be content with what you have | Hebrews 13:5 |
| 6. Give away some of it | 2 Corinthians 9:6-7 |
| 7. Save some of what you make | Proverbs 21:20 |

Another key aspect of finances is to have proper insurance. This too is important for families. This includes term life insurance on the main breadwinner and health insurance on family members. 1 Timothy 5:8 says we should provide for our own family. Insurance is a way we provide for them if someone is ill or if we die. Many financial planners recommend getting enough term life insurance to cover at least ten (10) times your annual salary.

A will is another important document to have prepared. It is particularly important to designate guardians for your children.

Of the items just mentioned, here is a checklist you can use to help get these things into your marriage so they don't become harmful communication issues:

____ Decided on an approach to Discipline of children.

____ Developed a Budget. ____ Following our Budget.

____ Obtained sufficient Term Life Insurance.

____ Obtained Health Insurance.

____ Have a Will designating children's guardian (if applicable).

Important: If you don't have some of these, plan now to do so.

CHAPTER 7

A Legacy

Whether you're single or married, a "Legacy" is what you leave behind. If single, it's your walk with God and ministry to others. And if married, it also includes your children and grand-children if so blessed. Hopefully there will be generations following you that bring glory to God! If not, don't worry as God's plan is always best. But we also like to think of it as your "Impact" today in people's lives in the world around you as a result of your faith, your Christian marriage, and your family. In this last lesson we'll see how you can have a positive and lasting impact on your family, community, your church, and the world.

Christian Families Should Be Like a Beacon

Some homes start out with the parents being Christians, but other homes do not. My Mom was a Christian, but my Dad didn't become one until age 80 but the change that occurred in his life at that time was remarkable. He went from being prejudiced against certain people to making them so welcome in his home I couldn't believe it. He started reading the Bible and even memorized verses. He started going to church. Only God could have done all that at his age. But what if your entire household is not yet believers? What hope is there? Let's see what the Bible has to say about this:

Matthew 19:13-15 says "Then little children were brought to Jesus for him to place his hands on them and pray for them. But the disciples rebuked those who brought them. Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these."

When he had placed his hands on them, he went on from there.”

1 Corinthians 7:12-14 says that a Christian spouse brings holiness to the house.

1 Peter 3:1 says “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,”

And Acts 16:31-34 tells a story where the entire household came to Christ.

Yes, God can bring the whole family to Christ. You need to pray and trust God that this will happen!

Christian singles and families should be a godly example in the world. Here are some passages in the Bible that tells what Christian family members should be like:

Matthew 5:16 says “In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.”

John 13:34-35 says ““A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.””

Romans 1:8 says we should have a strong solid faith.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 says “Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.”

1 Corinthians 16:15 says we should spend our life in service to others.

Titus 1:6-9 says “An elder must be blameless, the husband of but one wife, a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient. Since an overseer is entrusted with God's work, he must be blameless—not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain. Rather he must be hospitable, one who loves what is good, who is self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined. He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.”

From these passages we can see that we should let our “light” shine (by doing good deeds), we should love others, we should show strong faith in God, we should be pure and honor God and our mate with our body, and we should serve God and others. This will impact others.

So if all of your family is not believers in Christ, don't despair. Once one member of a family comes to Christ, there is a much greater chance that others will also as the believer in the family walks with God. Once others in our family come to Christ we first can more fully love one another with Christ's love. Then Christian families (like all believers) should set an example that will draw others to Christ. Christian singles and families should be like lighthouses. They warn people away from danger and guide them to Christ.

Being an Example

Your job is one area in which you should “shine”. Work is something most people hate, although it does put food on the table. Let's see what the Bible says about work:

Genesis 3:17-19 says that work is “hard”. “Cursed” almost!

And the writer of Ecclesiastes 2:11 and 17 says “Yet when I surveyed all that my hands had done and what I had toiled to achieve, everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind; nothing was gained under the sun. So I hated life, because the work that is done under the sun was grievous to me. All of it is meaningless, a chasing after the wind. ”

Yes, people find work hard. But what does God say our attitude should be about our jobs?

1 Corinthians 10:31 says “So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.”

1 Corinthians 15:58 says “Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain. ”

Philippians 2:14-15 says we shouldn’t complain or argue.

And Colossians 3:17 says we should do it as a representative of Christ, giving Him thanks. Think of your job as a foreign country and you are Christ’s ambassador to that country!

And don’t let work stop completely when you come home. Share a bit over dinner each night how your day went. This can include how you demonstrated Christ at home, school, or work. All family members should participate. And also remember to pray together at meals for your day.

One other thing we should do is to be part of a good local church. But what should we do there?

Psalms 96:9 says we should first of all worship God. Tell Him you love Him, sing some songs of praise, listen and learn about the Bible, and serve others. In fact, Hebrews 10:24-25

says “And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another--and all the more as you see the Day approaching.”

You might ask, “Why is church so important?” Ephesians 1:22-23 says “And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.” So when you go to church look for God. He’s there if you’ll only look!

But unfortunately not all Christian churches are alike. To get an idea of what church should be like, let’s look at the first church in the book of Acts. Acts 2:42-47 says “They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.”

And Acts 4:32-35 says “All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had. With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and much grace was upon them all. There were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned lands or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales and put it at the apostles’ feet, and it was distributed to anyone as he had need. “

Unfortunately we see a different sort of church in Acts than we have today. These early believers were devoted to the Bible. Today most Christians never even read it. The early believers were devoted to prayer. Today we doubt it's power. The early believers saw God working in their lives. Today, even if we experience a miracle (like avoiding an accident) we seldom give God the credit. The early believers gave much of their goods to help others. They praised God, and met together outside of weekly service in their homes. They shared Christ with others. And they saw their numbers growing. That's the kind of churches we need today. And these types of churches do exist if we're open to looking for one. If we only go into church just looking for a good time you will eventually be disappointed. But if you go into church looking to serve others and also looking for God, He'll find you there. And then spend time with Him outside of church through Bible reading and prayer daily. That's called a quiet time. And using a Journal is a real treat we've found! There's even a journal you can use to record your thoughts and those of your family. Try it. Trust us, the more you meet with Him daily, the more real He'll be to you and the more your life will change!

And the more you and your family grow spiritually, talk about what needs you could meet as a family. Do you have extra toys or other things that could be given to others? Do you have any extra furniture or clothes? What could you do to help others in some way?

We've "sponsored" several children and families over the years through various agencies and our church. We've also had homeless mothers over for dinner and gave their kids presents for Christmas. We've also helped putting together kits for teachers in our area. And we've also helped paint houses and gave away clothes to Goodwill. And then we've had people over to our home for Bible study. The blessing has been all ours!

You see we've tried to be like the early churches by being "house churches". Many of the things we saw in the book of Acts could be done today in small groups that meet in people's homes today.

There are many benefits to having a small group. This could be with neighbors or people from church. People are often more comfortable in a small group, particularly if they meet in a home. It is also a good forum to cover topics or issues that pertain specifically to that particular group of individuals. We've had studies on Marriage and on Handling Finances and have invited neighbors. It is not a substitute for the organized worship, but an ideal way to introduce care and outreach. And being a small group leader really helps you too! You get to study the lesson more in-depth and get to know the people in the group better. Leading a small group is a blessing all-around.

You should prayerfully consider if God would have you lead a small group. Think a minute. What do you see would be the benefits of a small group Bible study (or discussion group) that would meet in your home in your neighborhood? Write your answer here:

Having a proper attitude on your job and in your neighborhood, being an example, and being part of a church, and leading (or hosting) a small group are ways for your family to leave a legacy. Consider how you can be involved in other's lives.

Ministry as a Lay Person

One thing we should want to do is serve others. And since there are so many needs around us, there aren't enough pastors to do all that's needed. It takes all believers in Christ, just like it did in the first century church! We've talked about

some of these, but let's see what a few Bible passages say we can do:

Proverbs 14:31 says we can help the poor. This includes feeding, clothing, finding a job, housing, etc.

Luke 10:26-37 is the story of the Good Samaritan. Particularly verses 33-35 says " But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, took him to an inn and took care of him. The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.'" So we can help others who are in need physically.

2 Corinthians 8:1-5 says we can give generously. Again, the first century church did that. Most of us have enough money for our needs and go beyond to help others. Our church also needs support for the pastor's salary, for building maintenance, for supplies, and ministry outreach.

Hebrews 13:1-3 says "Keep on loving each other as brothers. Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it. Remember those in prison as if you were their fellow prisoners, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering." Yes, love is to be in all of what we do. And Hebrews says we should love each others as brothers and sisters in Christ. If we had a physical brother or sister in need we would surely help them. Well we should do the same for our spiritual family too! And just like we also call and encourage our physical family members, we should do the same with our church family too. And even strangers, acquaintances, co-workers, store clerks, etc. could use words of encouragement when they least expect it. That's part of serving others too!

As a family, talk about those you know who might be in need. Perhaps someone comes to mind. One idea is to sponsor a child through World Vision or Compassion International. This is a tangible thing you and your children can identify with. And also help others in your own area as well.

We should also sense an urging to tell others about Christ. But how can we do this, you might ask?

Matthew 28:19-20 says "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Mark 16:15 says "He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation."

Romans 10:1 says we should pray for people to come to Christ.

Romans 10:13-15 says "for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"

1 Peter 3:15 says "But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect,"

So make it a priority to show Christ to others and to tell them about Jesus in your life. Perhaps God's comforted you when you were depressed or hurt. Or maybe He's provided for

your physical or financial needs when you couldn't. Or maybe He's answered a prayer of yours for help or for others. Whatever it is, share these things with others and tell them that God is real!

Serving others and telling others about Christ is one way to leave a legacy. This can happen as a result of prayer, one-on-one encounters, via a small group, or just taking cookies to a neighbor with a card. Think of your family as a network. Each member knows others, whether at school, at work, or in the neighborhood. Plan how you can best minister to them and then tell them about God when it comes up. Be prepared to share a spiritual story or testimony of what God has done in your life (See the Appendices for help on how to do this.)

Continuing On

We have reached the end of this book, but this really isn't the end, it's only the beginning. Hopefully the beginning of a new and strengthened marriage and a new and strengthened walk with the Lord. We encourage you to start reading the Bible if you haven't started yet. More information on that is in the Appendix. If you've already started, keep having a daily Quiet Time in the Word and prayer and praying together as a family as well. Have regular dates together and Family Nights too! These too are described in the Appendix. Think how you can impact your neighbors and others for Christ. And if you are part of a small group, keep sharing what God shows you from your Quiet Times with each other as part of your small group time as well. Also try setting some goals for yourself and your marriage and asking others (and your spouse) to help hold you accountable on completion of those goals. (See appendix.) Confess your sins, pray, and read the Bible, asking God to show you how to apply it to your life. He wants you to live out your faith. God will bless you and your marriage as you continue to walk with Him throughout your life!

SUMMARY OF KEY PRINCIPLES

Foundational

- The Bible is God's "Owner's Manual" for marriage and raising a family. (2 Peter 1:3-4)
- God wants each of us to grow in our knowledge and love for Him every day. (John 3:16 and Luke 10:27)
- Having a daily Quiet Time is an excellent way to spend time with God. (Mark 1:35 and Psalm 5:3)

God's Plan for Marriage

- The most important relationship in our life is God. He is to be #1 in our life! Your spouse is to be #2 in your life. Your kids should be #3 in priority. But they need protection. (Matthew 6:33, Luke 14:26)
- The best way for a husband and wife to grow closer to each other is for each to grow closer to God. (1 John 1:3)
- God wants to use our marriage to reach others. (Matthew 5:16)

Roles in Marriage

- Husbands are to be the leader of the marriage. But it is to be a leadership of love. (Ephesians 5:22-24 and 25-30)
- Wives are to help their husbands, but that doesn't mean they are inferior in any way. (1 Peter 3:1-4)
- Both husband and wife are to love and help each other. (John 13:34-35 and Ephesians 5:21)

Becoming One in Marriage

- Sexual purity is the most important thing you can do for your spouse. Be faithful! (Genesis 2:24 and Mark 10:7-9)
- Realize that husbands and wives look at sex differently. She wants romance. Talking, caressing, and showing love throughout the day is vital to her. He on the other hand is vision-based. What is worn, appearance, and interest is important to him. (Matthew 5:27-28, Song of Songs, 2 Samuel 11:2, Genesis 26:8)

Raising Godly Children

- Remember that your children are a gift from God. (Psalm 127:3-5 and Psalm 139:13-16)
- We are to teach our children about life, relationships, life skills, and of course about God. (Proverbs 22:6)
- We are to discipline our children, but ALWAYS do so in love, NEVER in anger. (Proverbs 23:12-14)

How Has Your Life Changed? (Questions to discuss with your spouse)

1. Overall, what have you thought of this book? (Share with each other what stood out to you the most.)
2. Since going through this book how has your life changed?
3. What new habits have you picked up? Attitudes?
4. How has this helped our marriage? Our family?
6. Where would we like to see our marriage in 1 year? 2?

Appendices

Priorities in Life and in Marriage

(Ed) When I was a kid, my parents used to tell me that they loved me more than they loved each other. I guess they thought that would make me feel good, but inside I felt like that wasn't right, that they should love each other more than me. After getting married, Janice and I started talking about having kids, and I told her I wanted to wait. I didn't want kids to come between us. Eventually we worked this out, and I realized that you love your kids differently than you love each other as husband and wife. But it does bring up the whole subject of priorities in our life. God should be #1 in our lives (Matthew 6:33 and Matthew 22:37-38). We will be spending eternity with Him. He came and died for us. He is to be our first love. We are His love (John 3:16). Next to Him all else should pale in comparison. Yet God also gives many of us a spouse. We are to love our spouse above all

others on this earth. Our spouse is to be our one true love for life. No one can (or should) take their place. (Matthew 19:6) So your spouse becomes #2 in your life. Not your #1, as that is for God alone. Each of you keeping (or putting) God as #1 in your life, gives your life real meaning and purpose, and helps you to love your spouse even more than you could do on your own. It's a win-win for all! Then as God gives some couples children, they should become #3 in our life, behind God and our spouse. As we've seen children are a blessing from God. We would certainly die for them as Christ died for us, but our kids should never take the place of our spouse (or God) in our lives. That isn't healthy for them, nor is it right for our spouse or to God. We have them for a few short years and then they will go off and most of them will start families of their own. We still love them, but as they build their own lives, we need to go on with our own lives. An "empty nest" is easier if our spouse has always been #2 in our life before our children.

Family Time, Teachable Moments, and Dates

It is helpful if you have regular "Family Times" with your children. These are times when you turn off the TV, have some fun together through a game or two, tell a story or give a Bible lesson, and just share with each other. Make it appropriate to the ages of your children. (If your kids are a lot different in ages you might want to gear one family night for the younger kids and then the next time make it appropriate for the older ones.) Resources are available from your church or from a Christian bookstore. Also, use "teachable moments" during the week. In other words, as situations come up, look to use those moments to teach a lesson. This is particularly important as they grow older. Also, important is to have "Dates". First of all, you should have regular dates with your spouse, whether weekly, bi-weekly, or at least monthly. Get a sitter (or a grandparent)

and go out and have fun together. Also, Mommy or Daddy can each have dates with each of the kids individually. These have to be age-appropriate, but allow time for the child to know he or she is special and has Mommy's (or Daddy's) full attention. Maybe you could have one a month with a different child, whatever feels right to you. Teens may be difficult to do this with.

Teens

Some kids when they turn 13 become different people. Where before they wanted to do everything with you, now they will ask you to drop them off two blocks away from school so their friends won't see them riding with you! Not all teens are like this, but virtually all will exhibit some desire to be independent which is natural. What we have to do is make them realize that while they will be doing some things on their own or with friends, they are never alone, for God is always with them. We need to move them from being dependent on us, to being dependent on Him. Encourage youth group, doing chores around the house, budgeting their money, and making some goals. Get to know their friends particularly, and make your home accessible for them. And of course, pray. Prayer is the most important thing we need to do for our children as they grow older.

Issues & Other Information

1. Handling Conflict
2. ABCs of Knowing God's Will
3. Have you received the Salvation G-I-F-T ?
4. Personal Testimonies
5. Purity/Porn
6. Mom Working vs. Stay at Home Mom
7. Abuse
8. Married to a Non-Christian (Unequally Yoked)
9. Singleness
10. Divorce and Children
11. In-Laws
12. Learning from your Kids and Grand-Kids
13. Prayer
14. Leaving a Legacy
15. Priorities
16. Our Children's Births
17. Telling Kids Stories
18. Marriage is Not a 50/50 Proposition
19. Getting the Most Out of Church
20. Prayer – The One Thing I Needed to Do!

1. HANDLING CONFLICT

There are 3 ways to handle conflict (represented by the circles):

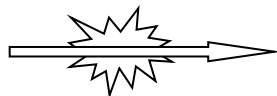
AVOID IT



SIDE ISSUES



GO THROUGH IT



One way is “Avoid It”. The problem is it comes up again. A second way is “Talk All Around It” (or Handling Side Issues). You discuss things related to the problem, but not the actual issue itself. The problem again is the issue resurfaces. The third way to handle conflict is to go right to the Big Issue and “Work Right Through It”. This is eventually best and resolves

the issue. Note that in some instances there still may be differing opinions in some areas, but you should come to a decision and it's OK to agree to disagree in those. After all, your relationship is most important!

(Our son Scott passes this on) When a couple has problems or issues in their marriage they need to talk. First they definitely need to talk them through with themselves (i.e., each other). That may be all that's needed. Many couples don't talk enough about issues that come up. So talk things through when issues arise. (And they do in all marriages, so don't feel bad that you have some issues.) Then if that doesn't work, the couple may need outside help. It should be an unrelated/unbiased individual/couple that helps them out in detail. A neutral person and place to vent/talk about these things (i. e., counselor, pastor, human resources at work, etc) can really help. It may be professional help, but what is important is if something is said in trust it is vital that that trust isn't lost by the third party mentioning it to another person. What is important is to talk in a constructive way. In my "People Helping Skills" class I took at Moody they talked about having "safety to talk/share". "Safety" doesn't just mean physical safety but it also means that when a person feels safe, they open up and healthy conflict resolution can happen. I feel this may be one of the biggest things couples need to work on, healthy open sharing in a safe environment with a trusted person. I work in the automotive industry and helping keeping a marriage healthy is a lot like automotive work. The smartest way to prevent most wear and tear on your car is to do scheduled maintenance/work on it. We need to have that attitude in our marriages too. I think we feel either like we are the only ones going through this or we have the mentality that "if it ain't broke, then don't fix it". These are both lies! When we sense there is no more "happily ever after" we are seeing "signs of failure" in our marriage before it happens. So really the smart thing to do in this situation is find a doctor (some help) and get our marriage healthy again.

2. The ABCs of KNOWING GOD'S WILL

The book of James says we must ask for guidance to know His will, yet there is no magic formula to knowing the will of God. His will is often revealed step-by-step as we walk with Him. There are, however, certain things we can do that allows us to better grasp God's will and then act upon them. You can easily remember them with the letters of the alphabet, A to G.

Ask God. Pray and ask Him for wisdom and guidance in whatever situation you are facing. (James 1:5)

Bible. Look in the Word for wisdom, particularly during your daily devotions. (Psalm 119:105)

Counsel. Get advice from Godly Christians who know you well. (Exodus 18)

Desire. Delight in Him. God will give you the desire to do His will. Ask, what has He given you the desire to do? (Psalm 37:4)

Evaluate. Prayerfully review what the above have shown you. If all of them point to a single course of action, it makes sense to proceed. (1 Thessalonians 5:6)

Forge Ahead. Act on what He has shown you to do. Trust Him for the outcome. (Exodus 14:15)

God has the final say. He will either open or close the door to reveal His perfect will. (Acts 16:6-10)

**As you follow the above steps, don't forget to praise
God for His perfect will, whatever the outcome!**

3. Have You Received the G-I-F-T of Salvation?

The Christian life is the most rewarding experience possible, because it is a relationship with the person of Jesus Christ. Biblical Christianity is God reaching down to us, caring for us, and accepting us just the way we are. It's a **gift**, not something earned by being good.

G - God Loves Us and Has a Wonderful Plan

Some people say God couldn't possibly be concerned about them. But look at 1 Peter 5:7 and John 3:16. They say God does love us and has a wonderful plan for us – eternal life.

I – I Sin (Do Things Wrong)

But there is a problem. The Bible says all people have something in common. Instead of the life God intended, we mess it up, and there is an awful result. Look at Romans 3:23 and Romans 5:12. Our sin separates us from God. Some people think the way to win favor with God is to be a good person and do good works. But look at what the Bible says in Ephesians 2:8, 9. We simply can't earn our way to heaven!

F – Forgiveness is Through Christ

With people in such a helpless situation, God didn't just leave us hanging. He sent Jesus for us. See Romans 6:23 and Romans 5:8. To those who say there are many ways to heaven, the Bible differs. John 14:6 says there is only one way. Jesus paid the penalty for us.

T – Trust in Jesus

In John 6:29 Jesus says we must believe in Him to have the abundant life God intends. In Revelations 3:20 Jesus gives the promise he will come into our life if we ask. He wants to be part of everyone's life. You can invite Him in by praying, **"Lord Jesus, I know I have done things wrong and I am sorry. I ask that you help me to turn from those things. I ask Jesus to come into my heart and life and save me. Amen."** If this is the prayer of your heart, Jesus is in your life!

2 Corinthians 5:17 says that He then makes you a new person. Now continue to grow in Him by reading the Bible and praying daily. Also attend a church where Christ is preached and get into a small group.

4. Personal Testimonies (or Spiritual Stories)

One way to leave a legacy is to think through your own personal testimonies and then share them with non-Believers as opportunities arise. As you share what Christ

has done in your life, God will use what you say to help lead others to Christ. **Each Christian has several testimonies as to how God has changed their life.** It may be victory over some sin or bad habit, such as gossip, smoking, liquor, pornography, or infidelity. It may be changes in attitudes or goals, such as going to a specific school, a change in vocation, trusting God, faithfulness, desire to help others, or inner peace. It may be a hunger for (or understanding of) the Bible or the knowledge that now you have eternal life and know where you will spend eternity. Each of these can be a testimony you can share with someone else. In sharing your testimonies, arrange each one into three sections (remembered by “**P-P-S**”) and then discuss a bit on each one:

1-The **Past** – The issue you used to have and how you dealt with it.

2-The **Present** - Specifically what your life is like now in this area.

3-The **Secret** – How you received Christ personally and how He helps you daily. Mention that you aren’t perfect, but He has made all the difference in your life!

You can have several testimonies as items 1 and 2 will be different for each issue, but item 3 remains essentially the same.

You may want to use a special verse of Scripture to support what you did. God will use these verses in their life. Do not preach to them, however, and try to keep it short - minute testimonies are best. You may also want to practice an example testimony. Begin praying for opportunities to share them, and pray by name for those you know that need to receive Christ. In sharing a testimony, look for common ground and leverage off that. If they are having trouble in their marriage and God has helped you in your marriage then share a “Marriage” Testimony. If they are having trouble with a specific habit and God has helped you with some habit, then share a “Habit” Testimony with them. (It doesn’t have to be the same habit.) Use a simple approach

such as, "I used to struggle with that, and tried several things but with limited success, but I had something happen to me that has really helped me in that area of my life. Could I tell you what was the secret that really helped (or "Can I tell you about it?") Once they agree, share it with them.

After sharing your testimony, ask if they have ever personally asked Christ into their life. Tell them you'd be glad to share with them how they can do that. Use a gospel tract for that or share G-I-F-T (included in this book). If they would like to turn their life over to God now, then tell them they can pray and tell God they have sinned, be willing to turn from that sin, and in prayer personally ask Christ to come into their heart and life. Pray with them if they are willing. If they receive Christ, go over 1 John 5:11 and 12 with them for assurance.

5. Purity/Porn

Intercourse outside of marriage is sin (Hebrews 13:4, Matthew 5:32), whether with a fiancé or someone else. And lusting, whether online or otherwise, is also a sin against God and your future or current spouse (Matthew 5:28-30). Get help if you're addicted to it.

6. Mother Working vs. Stay at Home Mom

(Janice) Staying at home or working outside the home is an issue many couples face. When looking into the Bible, we see women did hold many roles. Deborah was a judge and poet (Judges 4:4), Miriam was a prophet (Exodus 14:21, and Priscilla was a tentmaker along with her husband (Acts 18:3). But most importantly we see mothers in their special roles as mothers. Mary was the mother of Jesus, Elizabeth of John the Baptist, and Hannah was caring for her son Samuel. The Proverbs 31 woman is hard-working, takes care of her family, and also conducts business affairs. Some Moms can do all this, others probably shouldn't. But above all, God expects the children to be properly raised and cared for, and for the parents to possess godly character. In Proverbs 31, this particular wife did all this and is described as wise, gracious,

her children bless her, and she is called the crown of her husband. Words we'd all love to hear. Pray about what God would have you do.

7. Abuse

Domestic abuse can unfortunately happen in marriage today. Colossians 3:8 talks about putting aside anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech. "Let no unwholesome word come out of your mouth" (Ephesians 4:29), and verse 32 says we are to be kind to one another, tenderhearted, and forgiving, just as Christ was. These verses tell us as Christians to avoid verbal abuse in relationships. God hates wickedness and those who love violence. We need to avoid works of the flesh (strife, fits of anger, drunkenness) as Galatians 5:19-22 says. God desires husbands and wives to live together in harmony. Abuse has no place in Christian marriages. Get help if there are signs of abuse in your relationship.

8. Married to a Non-Christian (Unequally Yoked)

We know several families where one spouse was a Christian and the other was not. In one case, the husband was Jewish and he eventually came around and accepted Christ. In the other the husband is still on the way. In both cases the wife prayed regularly and also introduced their husbands to Christians. It may take a while, but God answers prayer. But don't use this as a license to go ahead and marry a non-Christian if you are single. Christian singles should only marry Christian singles.

9. Singleness

There is nothing wrong in being single. The greatest evangelist in all of Christianity was the Apostle Paul and he was single. The entire chapter of 1 Corinthians 7 is good for you to read and note the many advantages of being single.

10. Divorce and Children

(Ed) Divorce is hard on husband and wife. But it is especially hard on the children. I found out when I was a teenager that my Dad had been married several times before. I felt betrayed, and wondered if my Dad would leave me and Mom. God later helped me forgive my Dad, but don't let divorce be an option.

(Our daughter Joy passes this on) I liked how Mom and Dad always told us that divorce was not an option. When you have an absolute, there's really no question. I think it is important to know that we are all human, and we are going to disappoint our spouse. Maybe God is trying to teach us to learn how to forgive as He does.

11. In-Laws

(Janice) Getting along with in-laws can sometimes be a struggle for married couples. Maybe that is why there are a lot of mother-in-law jokes. But God desires more for us as Believers. The story of Ruth and Naomi in the Old Testament tells a daughter-in-law's devotion and love for her mother-in-law. Refusing to leave Naomi, Ruth says she will go with her anywhere, even to a strange land (Ruth 1:4). It may not always be possible to have a Ruth/Naomi relationship, but God desires honor and respect for our in-laws (Leviticus 19:23 and 1 Timothy 5:1).

12. Learning from your Kids and Grand-Kids

(Ed) We pick up many things from our children, their sensitivity, their exuberance, their love for life, and their trust in Mom and Dad. Take time with each of them, learning their strengths, and seeing how you can model some of their wonder. Jesus said that we must have faith like a child to enter the kingdom of heaven. That certainly is something worth picking up from them, isn't it?

(Janice) Children and grand-children are indeed a gift from the Lord. Psalm 127:3 says children are a heritage and a reward from Him. I have learned patience, joy, and humility from our children, and that being a parent is hard work! But

the joy certainly outweighs the work as I have seen them mature into adults. And then there are the grand-children! They are each so unique and loving, it is like icing on the cake! They are so much fun! Having children and grand-children in my life helps me see things more through Jesus' eyes. And it seems a little bit like heaven to be able to share Jesus with them, and then see them put their trust in Him!

(Joy) Children have a way of making you evaluate yourself and what kind of steward you are being and their genuine and sincere hearts make it so fun to be with them. They truly are a blast and a blessing and so much fun! I am so glad I can stay at home with them. I still have to be careful at times not to get distracted with unnecessary things though and miss out on opportunities. It is so much fun!

13. Prayer

(Janice) The importance of prayer is seen throughout Scripture. From Jesus' example (Luke 11:1-5 and Matthew 6:1-15) to Hannah's prayer for her son Samuel (1 Samuel 1:27) and Jonah praying in the belly of a fish, we see prayer's importance. So, praying together as a couple makes for a stronger and more unified marriage. Ecclesiastes 4:9-11 says "two are better than one, for they have a good return for their labor. If either falls, the other will be lifted up." We can be closer to God and each other as we pray together.

14. Leaving a Legacy

(Janice) A legacy is also something we are remembered for, or that we pass on to others. Everyone has memories or things they did with their families growing up. God want us to use our family for His purpose. We need to be handing down His teaching and promises to the next generation (Deuteronomy 6:4-9). These verses talk about loving God with all your being and teaching these commands to your children. What a privilege to be able to influence your kids and grand-kids to live Godly lives.

15. Priorities

(Our daughter Joy passes this on) I really like the analogy of the pyramid-where when each person grows closer to God, their relationship to each other grows closer as well. It is good to be reminded of that, so that one can evaluate themselves and make sure as time goes by, that there are not things that are distracting one towards climbing that pyramid (such as commitments to other functions, children, and all the blessings that go along with them, etc.)

16. What God taught me through our children's births (Ed)

Janelle

When we found out we were going to have our first child we were thrilled. We were both 22 at the time, totally awed at the possibility, and a bit scared too. Well things progressed OK until about two weeks before the due date. Then the doctor told us we would have to have a cesarean delivery in just a few days as the baby was breach. That really kind of scared us, but we decided to trust the Lord as He had brought us this far.

On the day it was scheduled, I sat in the waiting room with the other Dads. (This was before Dads were allowed to come in for the delivery.) Two friends were there with me, but our parents were too far away to come. Needless to say I was nervous. As I waited, a nurse would periodically come out and say a last name (such as Mr. Jones or Mr. Smith) and the Dad with that last name would speak up and the nurse would say, "You've got a boy!" or, "You've got a girl!" Everyone would cheer! And so it went for all the Dads, except for me.

After a while I asked a nurse about my wife, and she answered, "Mr. Blankenship, you'll have to wait for an official statement from your doctor." That really unnerved me. Finally, several hours after the scheduled C-Section was to occur, a nurse came and called my name. I said yes,

expecting to hear the words all the other Dads had heard. But she pointed to a door with a sign that read, “Do Not Enter” and she said to me, “Go through that door!”

Well, by that time I figured the baby must not have made it, or they would have told me differently by now. As I walked to the door I remember praying, with tears in my eyes, “Lord, if you want the baby back, that’s OK”, but that was not an easy thing to say. Then as I went through the door, I saw Janice laying there shaking uncontrollably. That really scared me and I thought, “She must be dying too!”

I held her hand and tried to comfort her as she couldn’t speak, but I certainly didn’t know what to say or do. I knew if she was going to die, that was also God’s choice to make, not mine. It was the toughest moment of my life. I thought though that somehow this too would be OK. I felt like time stood still.

Just then the doctor came in and shook my hand and congratulated me. I said, “For what?” He said, “For your baby girl! Haven’t you seen her yet?” I said I didn’t even know that we had one! I then asked about Janice and he said she was fine too, as her shaking was just the anesthetic and was normal. Whew!

Then I got to see my new little girl. She was precious. They had her all bound up and she looked like a little china doll to me through the window. She was perfect. You can’t imagine the relief I felt. I felt like I had given both my child and my wife to God and He had just given them back to me! They were both a precious gift from God!

Joy

The birth of our second child was much more relaxing for me. We knew from the start that Janice would have a cesarean delivery so we weren’t so nervous this time. I also had some idea what to expect after the delivery. Well this

time things went more as I thought they should. I got the call from a nurse just like the other Dads. “Mr. Blankenship?” I said, “Yes?” “Congratulations, you’ve got a girl!” she replied. The other Dads cheered. Wow, what a feeling! To know right when it happened that we had another child! It was wonderful and I felt so proud! Another nurse then brought her out and I got to see her. She was beautiful! And her face was so smooth!

I then got to go back and see Janice and she was doing much better this time. She seemed much more relaxed! We held hands and then talked about our new expanded family. I said I wanted Janelle (who was now two and a half) to see her little sister. But at that time they wouldn’t allow children to visit. So we set it up that I would bring Janelle at a certain time and Janice would hold Joy up near the window. Well we did that, and Janelle still remembers seeing her cute little sister at the window. So we started “bonding” as a family early, which is important! We also had our parents visit soon afterwards which made it even more so!

Scott

It was about eight years between our second and third child. It was almost like starting over. Some things were different too. I could come into the delivery room now, even with a cesarean delivery. I was a little nervous, but definitely wanted to be there, so I did. On that day I put on a surgical gown and cap and then sat by Janice’s head. (All the action was at her pelvis area, naturally.) Things went well, meaning I didn’t pass out! We didn’t know the sex of our third child before the delivery, but when the doctor lifted the baby out, he said, “Well he has ‘male plumbing’!” We were surprised, having two girls, to now have a boy. It was wonderful to be there. I have to admit, while all the births were special, actually seeing it happen confirms the miracle of God that all children really are. All the little toes, the tiny fingers, the cute little nose and mouth. Yes, all little children are special

– special to their parents and special to God. All perfect little miracles!

17. The Adventures of Quack-Quack, Squeak-Squeak, Glug-Glug, and Peter the Crab

While never rising quite to the fame of Larry and Bob in Veggie Tales, “The Adventures of Quack- Quack, Squeak-Squeak, Glug-Glug, and Peter the Crab” were nightly favorites in our house when the kids were growing up! These were characters I dreamed up that always seemed to have very similar adventures to what our kids did that day. If our kids went to a park, this story talked about going to a park. If our kids were sick, then one or more of these characters was sick. Quack-Quack was a young duck and was kind of the ringleader. Squeak-Squeak was a mouse, Glug-Glug was a frog, and Peter the Crab was obviously a crab. (I didn’t know what sounds a crab makes so he became just “Peter the crab”!) Peter was also kind of co-ringleader as I used my hand to make a crab walking when I talked about him, and the kids liked that when they were young. So Peter the Crab and/or Quack-Quack was in every adventure. At least one of the animals parents usually also were involved. We just called them Quack-Quack’s Mom or Dad, for example. As I mentioned previously the characters always seemed to have very similar adventures to what our kids did that day. When we would put the kids to bed, we’d always first sing some songs. (Mom was much better at that than I was!) Then we would tell a story about Quack-Quack or Peter the Crab. If the kids had had a good day, it was a good story. If they had a “bad” day, I tried to make it such that the story ended positively. And the story tried to have a moral. Maybe it was about being faithful to a friend, or being happy, or loving somebody, etc. Often the character’s parents would get involved in helping show how there was good that came out of something, or they would help point the characters towards doing something good. Our attempt was to help our kids see how everything ultimately works for good for those

who love God, and to also broaden their hearts. Sometimes we'd also read a story, but usually after Peter or Quack-Quack it was time for a bedtime prayer and a kiss. Then it was lights out...

18. Marriage is not a Fifty/Fifty Proposition

(Ed) It's got to be a 100/100 proposition IF you really want it to work. You give your all (100%) and your spouse gives their all (100%). Remember, God gives His all for us. If you do that you'll have a happy marriage. Anything less and you'll be short-changed.

19, Getting the Most out of Church

It is a tremendous privilege and opportunity to go to church. Psalm 122:1 says, "I rejoiced with those who said to me, "Let us go to the house of the LORD." And Hebrews 10:24-25 says, "And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another--and all the more as you see the Day approaching." Yes, God wants us and our family at church for several reasons:

1. To show Him we love Him.
2. To build us up spiritually.
3. To give us an opportunity to help others.

To maximize your time in church, here are a few hints:

- Go to bed early, set your alarm, and plan to be on time.
- Bring a Bible, paper, and pen **and then take notes.**
- Pray for an open, receptive heart.
- Participate – Sing, Give, Find a task you can do.
- Stick around afterwards to meet people.

20. PRAYER – The One Thing I Needed to Do!

(Ed) My Dad was 49 when I was born. As a teenager I thought it was odd that my friend's parents were so young. Mine were in their 60s by that time, and not in the best of health. So after I went away to college and became a Christian at age 18, I was excited and came home one weekend and told them what I had done. My Mom was pleased that I had become a Christian, and I found out she was one too. My Dad, however, seemed bothered by what I said and asked if I thought he had raised me wrong, and then told me “not to go off the deep end on this”. Well as I grew in my faith I learned several ways to share the gospel, and whenever I came home I would talk with my Dad, but he would always change the subject. As the years went by his health issues increased and despite having had cancer twice, he reached age 79, yet still wasn't interested in the gospel. I began to think to myself, “You know, my Dad's not going to make it spiritually.” I had shared with him every way I knew how to become a Christian. I didn't know what else to do. So I resigned myself to the fact that the only thing left for me to do was pray.

I started praying for my Dad regularly. Don't get me wrong, I had prayed some for my Dad before, but I now made a commitment to God that I would pray daily for my Dad to come to Christ. I also prayed that if God had anything else He wanted me to do regarding my Dad that He would let me know. Well I believe He did tell me one thing. The Good News Bible had just come out, and so I got the idea to get two copies, one for my Dad and one for my Mom (so my Dad wouldn't feel singled out) and I wrote something in the front of each one. To my Dad I said, “Thanks Pop for all the things you've taught me”, and then I listed 12 things and then signed it. I wrote a similar thing for my Mom. I gave them to my Mom and my Dad. Then I began praying daily that my Dad would somehow read that Bible.

I bet I prayed that daily for almost a whole year. Well we lived about 1,000 miles away and so didn't see them for about a year and when we did come home to visit as soon as we came in the house my Dad said, "Son, sit down here." Well my Dad started asking me questions about the Bible. Questions about Moses, questions about Abraham, questions about David, questions about Jesus, questions about Peter and Paul. I had answers to some of them, but he had answers to all of them. I said, "Pop, how do you know so much about the Bible?" He said, "Son, you know that Bible you gave me a year ago? I bet I haven't missed a day reading that thing!"

Well I about fell off my chair! I had prayed that he would read it, and had wanted to believe that he would, but hadn't really thought it possible. But God took my tiny scrap of faith and blessed it. So I talked some more with my Dad that day. I had just learned a new way of sharing the gospel and asked him if I could tell him what I was learning. He now said, "Yes!" which was definitely different from past conversations. I shared what I had just learned. That God has a wonderful plan for our life, but that we are all separated from God and His plan because of our sin. That we need to be convicted of that sin and be willing with God's help to turn from it. That Jesus died on the cross to pay the penalty from those things and to give us the gift of eternal life. That we need to ask Him to come into our life, take away our sins, and give us the gift of eternal life. I then asked him if he would like to receive Jesus Christ personally. He said he would think about it. The next day Janice and I visited my wife's parents for a few days and I kept praying for my Dad. When we came back a few days later and walked in the door he grabbed me by the shoulder and said, "You know that thing you talked with me about the other night? Well I prayed and asked Jesus into my life just after you left!"

So my Dad became a Christian at age 80, and he lived to 83. I got him memorizing a few key verses and having a Quiet

Time. (He was already reading the Bible daily.) I saw changes in my Dad's life those last 3 years that you sometimes don't see in someone much younger who comes to Christ. He had been very prejudiced towards certain people, but God softened his heart towards others. And he and Mom started going to church, something they had never done before. Mom was thrilled!

Yes, I had discouragingly thought that the only thing left for me to do was pray for my Dad as I had exhausted all possibilities. I was relying on myself, not God. Now I know that committed prayer was the one thing I needed to do! And I also now firmly believe that we should pray not only for someone to come to Christ, but also pray for ourselves that God would show us what He wants us to do in regards to that person. I believe God laid that Bible and the inscription on my mind and heart. I found out later that my Dad was so proud of that Bible after I gave it to him that he showed it to everyone he knew. He'd say, "See what my Son thinks of me!" I bet after saying that numerous times he thought, "Gee, if my Son thinks so much of me, then maybe I should read the book that he gave me." He probably started reading it just to please me, but it helped change his life. And God used it to change me too!

One Final Important Word...

This has been a book on marriage with verses from the Bible. Jesus says in John 5:39-40, “You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life”. So we don’t want to just study the written Word without first knowing the Living Word! So have you realized that God has a wonderful plan for your life, but that we are all separated from God and His plan because of our sin? Have you been convicted of that sin and are you willing with God’s help to turn from it? Do you believe that Jesus died on the cross to pay the penalty from those things and to give you the gift of eternal life? Have you asked Him to come into your life, take away your sins, and give you the gift of eternal life? Turning your life over to Christ is the only way to really understand His Word, because only then do you know the author. That is the key to the best marriage possible!

OLD TESTAMENT READING CHART

It is important for every Christian to read their Bible regularly both for encouragement and for guidance. Psalm 119:9 says that a person should guard his (or her) life according to God's Word. But to do so you must be in The Book, not just have it in your house! The Old Testament is an excellent place to start. Some people like to keep track of where they read to record their progress. Use the chart below to keep track of your reading in the Old Testament. Put a line (or an "X") through every 10 chapters as you read them. Our prayer is that this will encourage you to read through the entire Old Testament. 3 chapters a day will get you through the entire Bible in about a year.

HISTORY BOOKS

Genesis	1-10	11-20	21-30	31-40	41-50
Exodus	1-10	11-20	21-30	31-40	
Leviticus	1-10	11-20	21-27		
Numbers	1-10	11-20	21-30	31-35	36
Deuteronomy	1-10	11-20	21-30	31-34	
Joshua	1-10	11-20	21-24		
Judges	1-10	11-20	21		
Ruth	1-4				
1 Samuel	1-10	11-20	21-30	31	
2 Samuel	1-10	11-20	21-24		
1 Kings	1-10	11-20	21-22		
2 Kings	1-10	11-20	21-25		
1 Chronicles	1-10	11-20	21-29		
2 Chronicles	1-10	11-20	21-30	31-36	
Ezra	1-10				
Nehemiah	1-10	11-13			
Esther	1-10				

POETRY and WISDOM BOOKS

Job	1-10	11-20	21-30	31-40	41-42		
Psalms	1-10	11-20	21-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	61-70
71-80	81-90	91-100	101-110	111-120	121-130	131-140	141-150
Proverbs	1-10	11-20	21-30	31			
Ecclesiastes	1-10	11-12					
Song of Solomon	1-8						

PROPHECY BOOKS

Isaiah	1-10	11-20	21-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	61-66
Jeremiah	1-10	11-20	21-30	31-40	41-50	51-52	
Lamentations	1-5						
Ezekiel	1-10	11-20	21-30	31-40	41-48		
Daniel	1-10	11-12					
Hosea	1-10	11-14					
Joel	1-3						
Amos	1-9						
Obadiah	1						
Jonah	1-4						
Micah	1-7						
Nahum	1-3						
Habakkuk	1-3						
Zephaniah	1-3						
Haggai	1-2						
Zechariah	1-10	11-14					
Malachi	1-4						

NEW TESTAMENT READING CHART

It is important for every Christian to read their Bible regularly both for encouragement and for guidance. Psalm 119:9 says that a person should guard his (or her) life according to God's Word. But to do so you must be in "The Book", not just have it in your house! **The New Testament is an excellent place to start.** It tells about Christ's time on earth and God's dealings with Christians, and it also tells of the Messiah's future second coming and the end of the world. Some people like to track their progress as they read. Use the chart below to keep track of your reading in the New Testament. Put an "X" through the chapter numbers as you read them. Our prayer is that this will encourage you to read through the entire New Testament. You should be able to do so in about 9 months if you read 1 chapter daily. 3 chapters a day will get you through the entire Bible in about a year.

Matthew	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28										
Mark	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16			
Luke	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
	20	21	22	23	24														
John	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
	20	21																	
Acts	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28										
Romans	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16			
1 Corinthians	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16			
2 Corinthians	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13						
Galatians	1	2	3	4	5	6													
Ephesians	1	2	3	4	5	6													
Philippians	1	2	3	4															
Colossians	1	2	3	4															
1 Thess.	1	2	3	4	5														
2 Thess.	1	2	3																
1 Timothy	1	2	3	4	5	6													
2 Timothy	1	2	3	4															
Titus	1	2	3																
Philemon	1																		
Hebrews	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13						
James	1	2	3	4	5														
1 Peter	1	2	3	4	5														
2 Peter	1	2	3																
1 John	1	2	3	4	5														
2 John	1																		
3 John	1																		
Jude	1																		
Revelation	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
	20	21	22																