

A MODEL FAMILY CONSTITUTION...

(from Pastors Notes)

So here is what will happen when you get together as a family and agree to write out a Family Constitution...

1. It will clarify what's really important to your family.
2. It will highlight how you'd strive to treat each other.
3. It will clarify what your goals and dreams are as a family.
4. It will give every member of the family the chance to contribute to the document.
5. It will give everyone a stronger sense of family identity.
6. It'll make it easier to correct bad behaviour & reward good behaviour.
7. A Family Constitution has the power to unite the family together.

Example of what our Family Constitution might contain:

Title: This is the **XXXXXX Family Constitution** (ratified on (date.))

Articles...

- 1.) **As a family, we will endeavour to put God first in everything we do.**
 - By praying and reading God Word everyday.
 - By obeying what He tells us to do—whether it's easy or not.
 - By doing everything in our power to please God & represent Him well...
- 2.) **As a family, we will treat each other as we wish to be treated.**
 - By honouring and respecting each other—no matter what happens.
 - By Communicating with each other respectfully and with care...
 - By listening attentively to each other's concerns—not just our concerns.
 - By being thoughtful... / By praying for one another everyday... etc...
- 3.) **As a family, we will honour & respect the people God put around us.**
 - By treating them as we would want to be treated...
 - By praying for them regularly / blessing them / pointing them to Christ...

4.) **As a family, we will endeavour to resolve our misunderstandings, offences & conflicts before the Sun sets** (or at the earliest opportunity.)

—By endeavouring to deal with issues as soon as possible after they happen.

—Not allowing offences to pile up / ≠bitterness to fester & grow, etc.

5.) **As a family, we will joyfully celebrate and honour each other.**

—By remembering to do something special for each person on their Birthdays, Anniversaries / when they achieve something special / and on special days like Christmas (Mother's Day, Father's Day & Children's Day.)

6.) **As a family, we will all commit ourselves passionately to the local Church.**

—By attending Services together regularly / giving faithfully

—And committing ourselves to any **role** the Lord leads us to take on...

7.) **As a family, we will take regular times away from everything to rest, refuel together & to strengthen our family union.**

—We will do that by planning at least one holiday together annually...

8.) **As a family, we will be careful to uphold and value integrity, excellence, faithfulness, humility, generosity and godliness...**

—We will uphold these virtues in everything we say & do... (So help us God)

***I encourage you to add your unique requirements to your family or marriage constitution and use your own words and scriptures where necessary.**

From Focus on the Family...

Ten Major Benefits of Writing a Personal Family Constitution

- 1. It brings the family into unity.** Romans 12:16 exhorts us to “be of the same mind toward one another.” We know that a house divided against itself cannot stand. If one member suffers, all the members suffer with it. (*See: 1 Corinthians 12:26.*) The Lord’s will is for all His children to walk in oneness. (*See: Philippians 2:2.*)
- 2. It follows the pattern of Christ and His Church.** Ephesians 5:23 explains that husbands and wives are to live by His example with the church. Headship and submission are well understood by the military. This is where the leaders lay out clear plans for training and battle.
- 3. A family constitution reduces prolonged or angry arguments.** One article of a constitution can be to agree to list all the negative and positive reasons to follow a certain course of action. Seeing the two sides of an issue can bring about quicker resolution to important decisions. This brings about the desired unity.
- 4. It forces meaningful and honourable communication.** When members of a family agree to live in oneness, they are more willing to engage in lengthy discussions. This is done in order to resolve important issues.
- 5. The family constitution gives greater security and stability for each family member.** Both parents and children find comfort in a firm foundation. Also, kids do not experience as many unsettling surprises in discipline.
- 6. It provides continual reminders of a family’s most important values and rules.** The constitution is usually displayed in a prominent household location. This is just as Moses and the Israelites kept a jar of manna as a memorial of God’s provision.
- 7. It allows a family to prioritise its most important values.** Many often settle for the mediocre and second-best, falling short of God’s high standards. Clear precedents will lead the way to unhindered obedience.
- 8. A written family constitution can become the policing force at home.** This actually allows each family member to show greater love and comfort whenever an article of the constitution is violated.
- 9. It can reduce stress and bring greater relaxation.** Each member of a family finds comfort in knowing that everyone is aware of the other’s needs and concerns.
- 10. The Lord’s contract with His children is that He will never leave them or forsake them.** And He promises to meet their needs through His riches in glory. (*Philippians 4:19*)

OTHER MODELS (1)

1. The goal of our marriage (family) is to...

2. We recognise that God has created each of us as unique individuals with differing strengths and personality characteristics. Therefore, we will endeavour to discover these unique differences and learn to accept and appreciate them by...

3. We each recognise the great importance of daily meaningful communication between one another. Therefore, we purpose to spend the necessary time each day, as much as possible, to carefully listen to each other. And then we will express our deepest thoughts and needs; pray together; encourage each other, etc...

4. We resolve to care for one another in a tender and affectionate manner. We will do this by...

5. We agree to believe the best in each other. Plus, we trust the words and actions of each other as honest. If this trust is broken at any time, we all agree to restore the trust by confessing the untruths. This is to be done by seeking forgiveness, and by making any necessary restitution. We will wholeheartedly use words and phrases like "I am very sorry for... / Please forgive me for... / I thought I was right, but I now know that I was wrong. / What can I say or do to make things right?".

6. We agree to resolve any angry conflicts between ourselves each day before the sun sets. So, we will...

7. We resolve to touch each other lovingly and sincerely as needed on a daily basis. So, we will...

8. We understand the value of spending meaningful time together. Therefore, we agree to schedule regular weekly (monthly) activities that each family member can enthusiastically support.

9. We recognise that all our money belongs to the Lord. So, we purpose to seek His will and wisdom regarding the earning, giving, saving and any other use of His funds...

10. We recognise that God loves us and will meet all our needs through His riches in glory. Therefore, we will...

MODEL FOR FAMILY CONSTITUTIONS (2)

HONOR:

We honour God above all by submitting to the authority of His word in all things. This honour must extend to our families first, and then to others. We must honour God's creations and those He has put in positions of authority. Traits of this honour are obedience, understanding, respect, responsibility, praise and, above all, love. We will show honour by how we treat others, possessions and God's creation, thinking more highly of others than ourselves.

PERSONALITY STRENGTHS:

Realising that our differences were a major factor in our being drawn together as husbands and wives, we will seek always to keep that "first love" commitment alive. We will do this by valuing our differences. Additionally, we will actively seek to understand more about the other person's viewpoint, thought process, and natural reactions as a way of increasing our understanding and appreciation. We take seriously the admonition that we are not all an "eye, or an ear" but different yet important parts of God's body. We will seek to value all members of our households and live with them in an understanding way.

ANGER:

In our families, we purpose to shut out unhealthy anger with each other. When we talk about issues, we will be slow to speak, quick to listen, and slow to anger. (*James 1:19*) When anger occurs, we will recognise the individual differences among us. But we will not allow the sun to go down on our anger. (*Ephesians 4:26*) We will strive to identify the causes of the anger and deal with those causes instead of ignoring them. And without exception, if we cross the line into unhealthy anger with our tone of voice, words or actions, we will seek the forgiveness of those we have hurt. (*Matthew 18:22*)

MEANINGFUL TOUCH:

We agree to provide every family member with abundant praise and encouragement, combined with affectionate touch. This may include hugs, holding hands or other loving expressions agreed on by the couple. We pledge to do this consistently, even when our feelings may be in conflict.

COMMUNICATION:

We pledge to take time to speak regularly about those things that are important to us and our loved ones. We will take seriously their frustrations, fears, disappointments, burdens and dreams. Further, we pledge to seek actively to communicate our love verbally. We will do this daily. Additionally, we will carve out the communication time our spouses need. That is so that we might find unity, intimacy and peace in our relationships that God might be honoured.

FAMILY BONDING EXPERIENCES:

Because we are called to "number our days," we make a commitment to measure out meaningful time with our wives and children. We will seek to provide consistent family

bonding activities. These are not based on money spent, but on time spent together. To do so, we will sit down as a family and find out each person's needs and likes. And then we will develop as many activities as we can that provide a warm, family experience—including prayer and study time.

FINANCES:

We pledge to communicate the financial needs of our families. We will set goals to establish a budget in order to free ourselves from the bondage of poor money management. And we promise to limit the use of credit cards and to never use money as a means of controlling our families. Our resources are to be shared in an honouring way and used to further the gospel of Christ.

NB: This part comes from the ministry of Focus on the Family. It has been made available as an information sheet for those who request it.