

RESET SERIES

FAMILY

DR. JONATHAN C. CAREY



RESET SERIES: Faith

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All Scripture quotations are taken from the Authorized King James Version of the Bible.

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*This series is dedicated to the Glad Tidings
Tabernacle Family, Key West, Florida.*

PREFACE

This series was developed to provide, in workbook form, concepts for personal and leadership success. It focuses on two groups: first, men and women who are in leadership positions globally, as a leadership and life-coaching tool, and second, believers who seek biblically-based personal development study materials.

The concepts are taken from biblical characters, reflecting part of their life's quest and challenges. I hope the series will be welcomed not only by leaders and believers for life-coaching/personal study, but also by Bible training institutes, mission organizations, Sunday school classes, cell groups, prison ministries, and all those who are involved in the maturing of the saints. The author is available, on a limited basis, to conduct RESET-related workshops and seminars.

Biblical Perspective

Successful personal-ministry developmental concepts flow from the pages of the Bible, but are these concepts applicable to believers today? Yes, they are. What then are we to do with these biblical concepts to success? Perhaps the first step is the creation and maintenance of an environment in our ministries and organizations where they are recognized, taught, and encouraged.

Biblically-related success occurs when believers respond in obedience to God's call. They recognize the importance of total obedience, allowing the Holy Spirit to develop their gifts, skills, and character. They carry out their kingdom roles with a deep conviction of God's will and a heightened awareness of the contemporary issues they and their peers face. Above all, they minister as stewards and servants.

We do not stumble across success. Success is a result of deliberate acts. To truly be successful, we must fulfill the will of God for our lives!

The Bible teaches that we can be successful only when we are in the right relationship with God. This right relationship is made possible by the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

INTRODUCTION

Early Saturday, March 14th, 2020, during my personal prayer time, I felt impressed to jot down an outline for this book. As a pastor, I was prayerfully pondering the possible implications for the faith communities and what our response would be in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic. What would ministry look like with the developing restrictions and heartache experienced by our community? After a while, my thoughts begin to shift from community ministry only to how can a believer in Jesus Christ reevaluates his or her walk with the Lord and, if necessary, hits one or more reset buttons. *Reset* echoed loudly in my spirit.

I believe this workbook focusing on family as a possible reset button may become a guide in these unprecedented times, adding value to individuals and leadership teams as a life-coaching tool during and after this season of global crisis. This workbook is the second of five workbooks in the series. Family reset can easily become an ongoing process for maintaining growth patterns in marriage and family life.

My writing style is slightly different from my norm. I want to be more direct and personal with *Reset*. The goal is to communicate from my heart to yours. I am convinced we have an opportunity to return to a more simplistic lifestyle and, as the body of Christ, regain or enhance a kingdom focus in this season. The family reset personal audit in part two is intended to create a commitment for change while offering a tool for its fulfillment. I am hoping the five areas of the *Reset* series will provide clarity of purpose and measurable expectations while reshaping the believer in the moment of crisis for the glory of God.

Reset presents five areas of personal focus (*faith, family, friends, finances, and fitness*). This workbook focuses on the area of family; study the five areas in their order because each one builds on the previous. If you step ahead, you will miss the intended impact.

The study format is consistent throughout. The method of study is derived from the acronym STEPS.

S T E P S

State the Step

Teach the Step

Evaluate the Step

Practice the Step

See the Success

PART I

FAMILY

STATE THE STEP

Family is best served from the foundation of a godly marriage.

TEACH THE STEP

RESET MY FAITH

Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.

—Genesis 2:24

I know it may seem odd to use the above Scripture when referring to family. However, I have, throughout the years, come to appreciate the position that family should have as its foundation marriage and a godly marriage at that. No family is greater than its foundation, as is true for everything we attempt to build. Do you agree?

My definition of a godly marriage is one where both husband and wife are believers in Jesus Christ and living out their faith according to Scripture. They are living out their faith from the foundation of their new nature (see book one), often with a growing reverence for the Lord and His Word (see Philippians 2:12). A godly marriage is the best foundation for the rearing of children because the purpose of God for each member of the family is more likely to be addressed from a biblical perspective. Roles and goals can be clearly found and stated from the pages of the Bible and modeled by parents for all to observe.

Many children were not afforded the privilege of growing up in a family where both parents were present and have yet matured and developed into productive individuals, my late mother being one of countless examples. The focus of this workbook, however, is to observe the desires of God in creating the first couple and how those desires still hold true for society today. However, let me share a few thoughts on a possible balanced approach to single and two-parent households.

Many organizations, both public and private, almost exclusively focus on providing programs and funding for single-parent homes. A Pew Research Center 2019 study of 130 countries and territories shows that the U.S. has the world's highest rate of children living in single-parent households. 23% of U.S. children under the age of 18 live with one parent and no other adult

(www.pewresearch.org). This is an alarming statistic, and these families deserve our attention and continual support, but I also believe we should do more to *promote, support, and provide* enrichment services for marriages and two-parent families. I believe the church has been given this twofold mandate.

Even when there is not the ideal biblical family dynamics in place, Scripture offers a support system through one of the roles of the local church. James 1:27 states: *Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this: to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and keep himself unspotted from the world.* This verse presents a clear mandate for the believer and the local church as it relates to a fatherly/male role.

A tremendous amount has been written about religion and its place in modern society. Religion, by many, is rejected and seen as nothing more than a manmade institution containing a collection of beliefs and cultural systems. This assumption is adding to the decay of the moral fiber of society. I appreciate James, the brother of Jesus, inspired thoughts on the role of pure religion. Pure religion is religion without all the fluff we have added to it. It is living a godly life and providing a male or fatherly covering for those without one in times of distress. James signals out the fatherless and widows. We can easily add single mothers to this shortlist. James offers this because, in a complete family, the husband/father serves in this role. The husband/father is the priest of the home and should protect, provide, and have a heart of compassion that extends outside the home. Observe that James points out that we are to visit, not request those in distress to visit us. Pure religion has both godly reactions and assertiveness. Pure religion seeks out this target group in times of need.

Pure religion should be observed in the communities where we live and work and is the responsibility of the church. Pure religion should be fluid in all seasons and times. The church also has the mandate of promoting and supporting marriages and two-parent households. The church must be the voice of not only instruction but inspiration as well. What's your organization's twofold approach in seasons of crisis and distress?

In part one of this workbook, my intention is to address family from a biblical perspective taking a close look at the roles of the husband/father, wife/mother, and children. Part two provides you with a family reset personal audit. This audit will allow you to assess yourself in the areas presented and design a plan for personal and family growth. Let's get started.

HIS ROLE

Therefore shall a **man leave** his father and his mother, and shall **cleave** unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.

—Genesis 2:24

It is unsure if this verse represents the thoughts of Adam or that of the author of Genesis, which is credited to Moses. What we are sure of is that it was inspired by God.

If it was the thoughts of Adam, then he would have discovered that others were not formed from the dust of the earth as he was, but that they (his offspring) were all results of natural births. He would have had to accept a pattern that he was not created by. This, I believe, called for a level of maturity often lacking in adults today. We don't have to experience something firsthand for it to be legitimate. A pattern God used in our life might not be the pattern He chooses moving forward. I once heard one of my lecturers say that the principles of God never change, but often the methods do. He encouraged us to always attempt to differentiate between principles and methodologies. Adam was created in the image and likeness of God but formed from the dust of the earth. Eve was created from a rib of Adam but still in the image and likeness of God. Today, we still often hear parents say God gave or blessed us with a son or daughter. What we are certain of is all life comes from God, and all people were made in His image and likeness.

If the above Scripture was the thoughts of Moses, the author of Genesis, then it was an inspired and learned truth. As a child, Moses was hidden and given away for his protection. Even though in the early years he was raised by his biological family, he was legally the son of a single mother. Again, like Adam, the pattern of his life was different. Leaving his mother and the king was due to the mismanagement of a situation that backfired (see Exodus 2:11-25). In that process, he found his wife and worked in the business of his father-in-law for many years. Have you been judging the patterns of others by yours? Remember, principles never change. What is written in the word of God does not evolve into something else over time. Heaven and earth will pass away, and God's Word will still stand (see Matthew 24:25). What I am speaking

of here are methods and processes. Often, these are different from ones we are accustomed to and are visible in more than one area of a person's life. There have been times I misunderstood God's work and process in the lives of others and had to pause and hit a reset button.

The truth is, marriage requires a greater responsibility of the man toward his wife than toward his parents. The man must shift his focus from caring for his parents only and put his wife first in order of priorities. He must not look for a wife whom he wants to replace his mother's affection and care for him. Rather, he is embracing a life partner. The man must acknowledge he now has to shift his thinking. Let's get back to the topic at hand.

Leave

Saturday, December 20, 1980, Shena and I were married. Our wedding was in Freeport, Grand Bahama, and my parents, family, and some close friends traveled from Nassau to attend. At that time, I was living on my own for almost two years and starting to develop a plan for my future. Both Shena and I were working, but money was tight, so our wedding and reception was a combined morning occasion to save money and give us a few extra hours together before I returned to work at three Sunday morning. We always joke that we had the honey but no moon. We are still looking forward to a honeymoon. I keep reminding her that it was delayed but not denied.

After the reception, we transported my parents to the airport, and I checked them in. In the waiting area, I hugged my father and kissed my mother goodbye. As I was walking away, she asked why I was not staying until her flight departed. I froze in my tracks and for a few moments, was speechless. As it should have been, my mind was on my bride and how special this day was. I am sure my mother was happy for me and, in some way, was just processing what our future relationship may look like. Reader, this leaving is some serious stuff. It is more than simply a possible change of location. Some other words or phrases for leaving are:

- *Withdraw from*—Man is to withdraw from the household vision of his parents. Among other definitions, vision is referred to as one's preferred future. First, every home should have a vision. We set vision as we understand the purpose of God for our families. Second, vision will shift from family to family. The husband is mandated to start the vision process with his family. In 2009, I developed a 5R Circle Process, which helps in the establishment of vision and action steps for its fulfillment. If interested in hosting a workshop in your area, please contact us.

- *Retire from*—Man is to retire from the thinking patterns of a child under his parents’ authority and roof. A person develops into or becomes his thoughts (see Proverbs 23:7). Our thoughts lead to actions, and our actions often create our futures. A husband must intentionally shift from the safety both physically and emotionally of his parents’ home and begin to establish his own home. The Apostle Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 13:11 “*When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.*” There is a time and a season for everything.
- *Pull out of*—Man pulls out of the nurturing hands of his parents. It is difficult to reject nurturing, especially when it is offered by parents. Nurturing is help or encouragement in developing someone in an area of life. Even though the nurturing will continue in some form, a husband needs to pull out and change the dynamics of the parental nurturing pattern. The husband may, at times, need an unbiased approach to nurturing, as he leads his family in establishing their home.
- *Exit from*—Man exits from his parents’ protection to become a protector. My parents and grandmother were our protectors as children. We were always protected physically and emotionally. They provided a secure home in a safe neighborhood. They never left our sides during hurricanes, and always tried to protect us from the prejudices of our day. We grew up in a politically transitional time in The Bahamas that produced some unique challenges for those of mixed ethnicity, and as much as possible, our parents protected us or quickly came to our rescue. The husband must become a protector.

The role of a husband/father is a great and challenging one in any and all generations. I believe men can be successful regardless of the circumstances. I also believe a man can love and care for his wife and children more adequately from the foundation of a relationship with Jesus Christ. Love for Him empowers us to love others in a proper perspective.

Love

The Gospel of Matthew Chapter 10 records the sending out of the twelve apostles presenting instructions while explaining the social and spiritual climate of the day. It also presents possible rejections by family and community. In this chapter, Jesus also briefly but powerfully shares His sentiments on the priorities of love for His followers. At times, verses 37 and 38 are difficult for me to chew on. How about you? Here are the verses: *He that loveth father or mother more*

than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me is not worthy of me.

These are strong recorded words by our Savior.

It is important to see these two verses in context. Jesus was addressing His disciples, pointing out one of the costs of discipleship. In these two verses, four relationships are addressed. Let's take a brief look at them.

Our Relationship with Jesus

I have discovered in the last few years that our kingdom efforts as a ministry were more successful when we worked in relationships with similar-minded ministries. Relationships are paramount if we are to fulfill a purpose. A "ship" is equipped to take you somewhere. Relationships have destination points. However, every relationship has its own uniqueness.

A relationship with Jesus Christ must be the primary relationship in a person's life if navigating through the voyage of life is to be as rewarding as intended by God. We must be Christ-centric. What this means is we live our lives in relationship with and obedience to Jesus Christ. A part of this expression is sacrificial living. We position ourselves figuratively at His feet and position Him as the center of our lives. He demanded this of His first disciples and demands it of us as well.

Jesus Christ determines the tone of the relationship. His tone leaves us no wiggle or retreat room. The tone is either all in or all out (see Revelation 3:15-16). In the Book of Revelation, He speaks to the church about their works and refused them because the church didn't have a fervent passion. He stated I would prefer for you to be hot or cold. Our relationship with Jesus Christ can't be lukewarm. In the Carey household, we drink tea every day because we have that British influence imprinted on our Bahamian culture. Shena daily gets frustrated with me because I let my tea warm. On many occasions, she has reminded me that Jesus does not approve of lukewarm tea, and neither does she.

All in or all out draws a proverbial line in the sand. Have you ever wondered *why* the Master has this all in or all out mindset? I have and believe it is because of the heavenly benefits derived from a committed relationship with the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. I am sure if a survey was conducted on *why*, many different answers would be offered. Heavenly benefits, that's my number one answer.

As I mentioned prior, every relationship has a different feel or uniqueness to it. Here are a few things I appreciate about my relationship with the Lord. This list may not be as obvious as you might imagine.

- *His friendship*—In John 15: 15, He tells His disciples they are no longer called servants but are now called friends. He calls them friends because He shares heaven's conversations with them. As a pastor, I treasure the few intimate friendships in my life. Conversations that are not surface, but revealing. Have you ever been left out of a meaningful conversation?
- *His presence*—In Matthew 28:20, He tells His disciples and us by extension that He will be with us even to the end of the world. In our ministerial journey, we have traveled to some far-reaching places, both physically and emotionally. We have always known His presence. Have you ever felt deserted by others?
- *His peace*—In John 14:27, He informs His disciples of a gift He leaves with them. He states that this gift is greater than the world can offer; it is His peace. Jesus Christ left His disciples the greatest legacy possible, a peace that calms the heart and nerves. Have you ever experienced His peace in the middle of a personal storm?

I am aware my list appears selfish, as if it is all about my needs, but I invite you to view the topic at hand. If our foundation is rock solid, we can build the house of our lives. We are to live and minister from a foundation built in God's way. Our commitment to Jesus Christ affords us the qualities of a healthy relationship and the establishment of a solid foundation. The three relationship qualities mentioned here are *communication, connection, and compassion*.

Our Relationship with Parents

Those of us who have experience living with parents know of the bonds that may have developed over the years. A healthy relationship with your parents is one of the greatest treasures one can possess. Parents, by and large, have the best interest of their children at heart. They work tirelessly to provide better opportunities for their offspring. One of their aspirations is that their ceiling of success becomes the floor or starting point for their children. The role of parenthood is highly respected by God, so much so, that to honor one's parents is the first command with a promise, the promise of a long life with favor (see Ephesians 6:2). More of this command is shared in *Their Role*.

My parents were hardworking and loving. At one time, Dad worked three daily jobs, and he and Mom modeled faithfulness and consistency. As time passed, and they started to venture into the business world as entrepreneurs, the children were included, and we were taught work ethics. Later we were taught the value of money. At first, we mostly packed and delivered boxes,

but also did anything required of us by our parents. I am proud of the accomplishments and mentorship of my late parents.

In my early teens, I visited a Pentecostal church and subsequently accepted Jesus Christ as my personal Savior. Having grown up a Roman Catholic and serving as an altar boy, my conversion to Christ and attendance at a Pentecostal church didn't sit well with my mother, uncle, and the priests. For a number of years, my relationship with my mother was strained as I tried navigating through the process of responding to the call of the Lord upon my life, and to this day, remain thankful for godly counsel received.

I recall the conversations mother and I had about fulltime ministry. Her advice (and looking back, it was great advice) was to join the family business, and in time, fulfill the ministry call when I was both more matured and self-sufficient. Her reasoning was that it would be difficult to support a family on a preacher's salary in The Bahamas, and if a business owner, I would stand a better chance at being successful at both ministry and family dynamics. The only issue was I heard the voice of the Lord calling me. Needless to say, that relational part of my life was difficult. I was witness to the entrepreneurial journey of my parents and at the beginning of my spiritual journey and seeking to discover balance.

My position was to always honor and love my parents, but my love for them had to be swallowed up by my love for Jesus Christ. It was a matter of love priorities. A few years ago, I was in Nassau, Bahamas visiting with my mother, and she asked (told) me to accompany her to lunch with some of her friends. It was a nice sunny Bahamian day, and the luncheon was outside at the Nassau Yacht Club. Anxious and not knowing what to expect, we settled into our chairs. I had not been in her circle of friends for a number of years and had no idea who was who. Suddenly, she introduced me as her son, a successful pastor visiting from America, and went on to say how proud she was of me. Jesus doesn't guarantee that all stories develop as nicely as mine.

Jesus demands that our love for Him may, at times, have to swallow up our love for our parents and/or children. Many have not learned this truth and have attempted to have their cake and eat it, too, resulting in a life of spiritual indifference.

Marriage is a divine institution, and the husband is commanded to leave father and mother and cleave to his wife. This is difficult if the husband is not already clinging to Jesus Christ.

Cleave

As defined by Merriam Webster, Cleave means “to adhere firmly and closely or loyally and unwaveringly.” The husband is in it for the long haul regardless of the circumstances and challenges the marriage may face. By cleaving, he is setting the tone for the relationship. For the greater part, we don’t choose the family we are born into but have the freedom to choose the family we create. We have to live with what we create.

The story of Abraham and Sarah in Genesis Chapter 16 is an interesting one and a constant reminder of our responsibility to what we create. God had given Abraham and Sarah a promise of a son. It is difficult at times to wait for God’s timing, so it was for this couple. They took matters into their hands. Yielding to cultural permission, a son was born to Hagar, the maid. Their first thought was to dismiss what they created but came to understand and appreciate that what you create you are responsible for. In the same manner, we are responsible for and to our marriages. Commitment matters.

Shena and I, for the majority of our ministry, have been called to churches and ministries in transition and often in need of stabilization. It is, at times, difficult to keep focus when you’re always repairing and leading groups through transition. In the early years of our ministry, we were misunderstood by our peers because of our limited time in each location, some assignments were as short as eighteen months and some more than ten years. I can still vividly recall the words of one of my friends, “Johnny, you don’t stay with anything long.” That assumption disturbed me for years and, at times, hindered my focus.

The truth is, we were functioning in the role assigned to us by the Lord, and when the assignment was completed, we were released from the place of ministry. Our locations changed, but never our commitment to the area of ministry we were called to. I humbly think we are rebuilders of walls. I believe some of our assignments were connected to leaders not willing to live with what they created. Let me explain.

We hear clearly from the Lord to enter a building program, and at some juncture, we have to borrow funds to complete the project. What then is our commitment to the process of retiring the loan? More times than I wish to confess, I have witnessed leaders proclaim that the Lord called them to build it, not satisfy the mortgage. This may be true in some circumstances, but...

One of the commitments I have made is never to start a project that I am not willing to see through to the end, especially if I know I am in an exit season. I believe this is good old-fashioned integrity. We are responsible for what we create. Do you need to consider hitting a reset button in this area? If yes, follow through and know the same God who brought you to

it will take you through it. The God who instructed you to build it also instructed you to finish it. Tough times are not a sign from heaven, giving permission to walk away from responsibility.

The Vows

In 1984, I became a marriage officer in the commonwealth of The Bahamas, and since that time, performed countless ceremonies in The Bahamas and Florida. I have participated in ceremonies in various settings from the sanctuary to the beach and everywhere in-between. Decoration choices differed as well as choices of music. I performed ceremonies for multi-ethnic couples, young couples, and older couples, but what was consistent in all of the ceremonies was the vows.

Here are the vows I used in performing those ceremonies. They have been used within the Christian church for decades. They have been repeated by men and women on their special day as a lasting pledge for the future spouse: *“I (Shena/Jonathan), take you (Shena/Jonathan), to be my (wife/husband), to have and behold from this day on, for better or for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish: until death do us part.”* Merriam Webster defines a vow specifically as: one by which a person is bound to an act, service, or condition.

In the vows, each person begins by acknowledging that he/she is taking the other person to be their spouse. There are four mentioned in the vows. Let’s take a brief look at each.

- *To be my wife/husband*—A choice and decision are made willingly. A desire to enter into a covenant relationship to blend lives and hearts is made by and cemented with love. Two lives will become one, and the pledge is made with optimism and anticipation. Take another look at *To be my wife/husband*. This speaks clearly to me about two things. First, equality: Men and women are equal in the eyes of God and should be seen as equals in the eyes of others, as well as in their eyes as a couple. There is no junior partnership insinuated here, rather an equal one. Second, there is a difference between equality and sameness. Husband and wife are equal but have different roles within the structure of a godly marriage and family life. The man may hold the tiebreaker in domestic matters, but that does not make him superior to his wife.
- *To have and behold from this day on, for better or for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health*—Much is expressed and expected in this declaration. Each has permission to each other and the right to gaze upon their spouse with love and admiration. In a sense, a couple has the license to have and look upon each other as the apple of their

eye. I remember when I first saw Shena and the way it left me, after thirty-nine years of marriage, I still catch myself gazing upon her beauty. To have and behold is followed by *better, richer, and health*, but it also encompasses *worse, poorer, and sickness*. Regardless of unforeseen circumstances and turn of events, a couple vows to share experiences together displaying for others to witness unconditional love in action. The marriage vows leave no wiggle room with death as the only exit clause or alternative. A few years ago, I was called to the home of a couple verbally attacking each other. It was two in the morning and not my favorite time for crisis intervention. They both were practicing physicians, so I appealed to their knowledge of medicine. What does it mean, I asked, if the EKG machine has only straight lines? They quickly got the point. To live is to experience ups and downs, mountains and valleys.

- *To Love*—There is a Scripture that, for me, best explains love. Ephesians 5:25 states: *Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it*. This verse addresses the attitude that a husband should have towards his other half. We know that part of the role of the husband and father is that of protector and provider. I believe this verse also has a deeper meaning. Fifteen years ago, I came into the realization that Shena had supported all my ministry endeavors often at the expense of her own dreams. I had grown to take her sacrifice for granted. I reflected on this Scripture and how Christ loved the church. He gave up His divinity and walked the earth as the Son of Man. He died so that we may live. I supported Shena's dream of developing a preschool for disadvantaged families. During the summer of 2019, a basketball team from West Grand Bahama, Bahamas, where the preschool was situated, visited our church in Key West, Florida. One of the star players was a graduate of Shena's Little Almond's Preschool. It was a precious reunion, and fun to watch their daily interactions.
- *To Cherish*—One of Merriam Webster's definitions for cherish is: to keep or cultivate with care and affection. Your spouse is a keeper. No mention or hint of that dreaded word divorce is mentioned in the vows. No courting couple exchanges talk of love for the subject of divorce. Divorce is a subject and act that plagues society. To cherish is to keep and cultivate or nurture one's spouse, which strengthens marriage and family life. It is impossible to nurture what you don't keep.

Dr. Brad Wilcox, director of the National Marriage Project, states, "active conservative protestants who attend church regularly are actually 35% less likely to divorce than those who have no religious preferences" (quoted by Stetzer, Ed. "The Exchange." *Christianity Today*. "Marriage,

Divorce, and the Church: What do the stats say, and can marriage be happy?” Feb. 14, 2014. WEB. Oct. 26, 2015). In her studies, Shaunti Feldhahn (author of *The Good News About Marriage*) found that 72% of all married people were still married to their first spouse. Of those marriages, four out of five are happy.

During the global coronavirus, pandemic debates were held on social media on the value and role of the church. I have always advocated that the church is an essential institution. How can the liquor stores be deemed essential and not the church? In The Bahamas, the country of my birth, those on social media ridiculed pastors for wanting to return to their physical building to hold services. Their motives have been questioned, and one of the buzz statements was the building is not the church and that church can be online. It is true, the building is not the church; rather, the believers are the true church, but the assumption that a sanctuary or building has little or no value is short-sighted and misguided.

Hebrews 10:25 states: *Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.*” This verse speaks to an issue of that day. Some were teaching that Jesus was not returning for the church (the great gathering). The writer encourages the church to stay unified and encourage one another. Much of spiritual and emotional encouragement takes place in person. This is where we apply the word koinonia.

Merriam Webster dictionary defines koinonia as the Christian fellowship or body of beliefs. Also, as intimate spiritual communion and participative sharing in a common religious commitment and spiritual community. There are many benefits to attending church; one is encouragement for couples. Husbands/fathers don’t send your family to church rather accompany them. It helps with preserving and cultivating your marriage. Do you need to hit a reset button? The church is here to support you.

We are not going anywhere!

This chapter is longer than first intended, but I felt it was necessary to carefully explain the role of the husband/father. Many of our homes across the nation and around the world are minus a male figure, and this has added to the challenges contemporary families face. Let’s work together to see this change.

HER ROLE

Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be **one flesh**.

—Genesis 2:24

The husband and wife are seen by God as one flesh. Contrary to the popular cliché, he/she is my better half, men and women are equal in the eyes of God and should be seen that way in the eyes of each other and society. They are a united team assigned to different roles. They are to be committed to their marriage and willingly accept their roles and support each other as a cohesive team. As one flesh and submitted to Christ, they are inseparable and unstoppable. 1 Corinthians 12 gives a great explanation of the unity and need of members of a physical body and of the church. Even if one member declares, *“I don’t need you,”* that member is still a part of the body. Our perspectives never alter the truth, but often hinder godly purpose from being realized. Our roles are fixed by God and vital for overall health and success. When we neglect or misapply our roles, everyone suffers.

A few years ago, I realized as a pastor and educator that I was surrounded by some extraordinary teams. During a meeting, I asked why they supported me and was shocked at the overwhelming response. “We support you because you place the same value on our abilities and gifts as you put on yours,” was the response. Even if it was not true, it changed my way of viewing the *gifts, talents, and roles* of others. I have found this concept to be very rewarding and vital to building a ministry team. This mindset is also vital to the health of a marriage. Husbands, don’t undervalue or underappreciate the role of your wife. She is not a junior partner in the marriage but rather an equal partner. See and appreciate her true value. She is your other equal half serving in her role for the good of the marriage and family.

In this short chapter, I will present a few of the roles of the wife/mother. It is not an extensive study but hopefully covers some basic framework of this important role. The husband and wife become one flesh united as one, although they have separate roles. Even though a couple may share in each other’s roles, it is not designed for it to be on a continual basis. A role

is the primary part we play in marriage and family life. At times, we may have to take on our spouse's role, but it is never meant to be permanent. God may grant us the grace for it for a season. To continue in a role not designed for us hinders the other person from functioning in his/her role.

WHAT TO TEACH

Titus 2: 2-5 states: *But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine: ² That the aged men be sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in charity, in patience. ³ The aged women likewise, that they be in behavior as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things; ⁴ That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, ⁵ To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed.*

The focus of this chapter is on the role of the wife/mother. Therefore, we will look at verses three through five of the above Scripture. It is important to note that Apostle Paul wrote Titus as one of his three pastoral epistles and, among other topics, shares with his readers some of the responsibilities of the older women who may or may not have been married and have raised their families. He points out that they have responsibilities to God, themselves, and younger women.

The responsibilities of older women are:

- *Reverence to God*—Their reverence to God is displayed for all to see by their behavior. The position of equality claimed for them in a culture that didn't see women as equals to men was not without weighty responsibilities. Therefore, women were encouraged to live in light of this. The equal position of women had now become one of the guiding principles of the faith. Older women, even though they may be empty nesters and have finished their careers, must still live out their relationship with God through appropriate behavior. This is important for a number of reasons, one being they are to be examples or role models to the younger women. The older women had become the pacesetters for displaying godly ways of living and interacting with husband, family, and community. They received their assignment to live as role models as all Christians have received (see Philippians 3:17 and Titus 2:7-8).
- *Image for God*—The Greek word used here for behavior or demeanor includes dress or overall appearance and conversation. Christian women are to represent their faith properly in a dignified way, and sometimes it goes against the prevailing culture of the day. As an older woman conducts herself in her *dress, speech, and overall appearance*, the

younger women will learn respect and reverence for this demeanor. My wife is a perfect example of this. When we became pastors of our current church, I observed how some of the younger women over time changed their dress code for worship services. Shena never said a word to them, but simply displayed a certain reverence for the House of God by her dress and conduct. I have come to appreciate that some things are “*Caught not Taught.*” Use your place of influence wisely by lifting or maintaining a standard, not lowering it (see Proverbs 31:25).

- *Not false accusers*—Older women, or any age women, must never be seen as false accusers or slanderers. This is also true for Christians of any age or gender. However, as we age, there is a temptation to become intolerant. We must not yield to this temptation. Temptation is not sin, but yielding to it is. There is the tendency (at times) to forget the days of our youth and paint everyone and every generation with the same paintbrush. As a pastor, I know there are some aspects of corporate worship that I prefer and have been guilty of passing judgment on others with different expectations for the worship experience. If not careful, this can easily blossom into gossip, and no one is bettered by gossip. I believe one of the greatest tragedies for an older believer is becoming bitter with age. We all have convictions on how life should be lived, as well as regrets on actions we committed during our lifetime. Don’t let your pain spill over into false accusations or gossip; it will not only destroy you but also hinder unity among the saints (see Proverbs 6:16-19). Use your voice for righteousness’ sake.
- *Living sober*—Older women are encouraged to live soberly or clear-headed to be taken seriously. Have you ever attempted communicating with someone intoxicated? I have, and it was virtually impossible to come to a clear understanding. I believe Apostle Paul is referring to this and more here. Older women are to live soberly or in full command of their senses, so whatever they say or model will be positive to the younger women. By this approach, their lifestyle and conversation will be consistent and cause them to be emulated by their target group. Older women are to live in such a way that they are constructively impacting eternity and not simply pleasing earthly impulses (see Ephesians 5:15-16). Ephesians 5:18 states this viewpoint beautifully, “*And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit.*” We are at our best when we are led by the Spirit and not fleshly impulses. Do you want to be taken seriously?
- *Teacher of good things*—Older women are to be teachers of good things. This does not imply they have to seek out a teaching profession, but rather that they share golden

nuggets of truth with the younger women. These nuggets are in word and lifestyle. We all teach by our words and actions. Here, Paul emphasizes good things are to be taught or modeled. I have discovered, to truly influence others, I must first connect with them, and to connect must make myself available. Second, I must intentionally think about good things (see Philippians 4:8). Our thoughts create our actions and responses. Are you available to your God-assigned target group? Let's now take a closer look at the good things that are to be taught.

Clear-Headed and Loving

Wives and mothers are to be clear-headed and loving. They are to be discreet and not rash or unpredictable, clear-headed in their assessments and affections. However, this is not always easy for young wives and mothers but necessary if the marriage and home should become a reflection of Christian values. I am eternally grateful for the mothers of the church who took an interest in Shena and me when we first married. Yes, we had marriage counseling, but not everything is covered in those few sessions. Yes, we had the experiences of watching others as married couples, but we needed a coach or guide, and the mothers of the church provided some of that. The counsel and support we received helped us avoid indiscretions and other costly mistakes. We were coached on how to think as a married couple and not as individuals simply living together (see Proverbs 2:11).

You recall how the husband must leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife? Now, the focus is on his wife loving him and the children. Please notice the order in the verse, husband and then children. It is purposely placed in that order. As a counselor, I have often had to remind couples that their love for each other must be greater than love for their children. It may be a different kind of love, but they must love and appreciate each other in a way that sustains the balance of a healthy marriage. Mothers have that maternal instinct that, at times, may blur the lines, but the health of the marriage and family life partly depends on the love commitment of husband and wife to each other. If the right order is not maintained, it will produce continual missteps and eventually make adjusting to the empty nest syndrome even that much more difficult. Husbands and wives must guard against growing apart.

The Etiquette of a Queen

Returning home after a deployment as a chaplain in Minneapolis, Minnesota, in the aftermath of the George Floyd tragedy, Shena greeted me with my favorite meal. I sat and enjoyed my

plate of curry chicken and white rice, thinking how good it was to be home. Anytime I travel for more than five days, that meal is prepared and always appreciated. I travel a lot and always look forward to returning home. Truly, a man's home is his castle. Later in the evening, Shena hugged me and affectionally said, "*It is good to have my king home.*" My equally emotional response was, "*thank you, my queen.*"

After thirty-nine years of marriage, I knew what her words meant. I am the head of our home but not a dictator and lead by example. I am her king, and Shena is my queen. I am the main provider and protector of her and our small kingdom, and she manages the home and labors alongside me in fulfilling God's vision for our lives together. We honor each other and support each other in our God-given and anointed roles. We are a united team, and together we accomplish more.

The wife is the queen of the home, and with that status, there are some expectations. Apostle Paul lists some of these expectations as *discretion, virtue, homemaking, goodness, and obedience to their own husbands*. These expectations are vividly painted for us in the *Virtuous Woman of Proverbs 31*. Proverbs 31 is a wonderful portion of Scripture for the older women to share with younger women. It definitely is worth exploring. One of the results of reaching these expectations is that the word of God will not be dishonored.

The king and queen must work together to secure a successful marriage and/or family. One of the major decisions Shena and I had to make was in the area of caring for our infant children. Shena's desire was to be a stay at home mom once a child was born and nurture the child until he or she was ready to enroll in preschool. Together, we decided on this plan of action and adjusted our budget to accommodate this path. It was difficult financially, and worth every sacrifice we made. In the end, Shena opened a preschool in our home and taught and nurtured children from the community. This was a special time in our lives.

We are blessed with three well-adjusted adult children, and Shena has stayed this course with our grandchildren. Our grandchildren are well mannered and excellent students. They were privileged to have had their grandmother as their first teacher. The queen has done it again.

THEIR ROLE

Honor thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;).

—Ephesians 6:2

As a child, I doubted my father's love for me. My father was always a hard worker and, at one point, worked three jobs a day. We always had food on the table, and our home was a happy one, but dad was not the physically affectionate type or the one to attend our sporting and educational events. During my teen years, I heard the story of how he left school at thirteen years of age to support his siblings, and this dramatically changed my perception of my father.

My father provided for his family in the best way he knew, and losing his parents at an early age hindered him from seeing some parental relationship skills modeled. What I am thankful for is that we always honored our parents, but knowing their struggles and the journey of their lives helped enhanced my appreciation for them.

As a parent, I wanted to improve on the foundation I received from my parents, so when the opportunity presented itself to teach in a public school as a bi-vocational pastor, I jumped at it. My reasoning was simple. I could be more involved in the lives of our children and offer them some of what was lacking in my upbringing. The quality time and objectives were reached, but the economic empowerment was not at the level I wished. I am sure our children will improve their upbringing with their children. Every generation should improve on family dynamics, but one thing that must remain intact is honor for parents.

Honor is high respect and is required of children toward their parents. As our focus Scripture implies, it is a command. The commandment to “honor your father and your mother” appears four places in the Scriptures. You will find the references in two Old Testament books (Exodus 20:12; Deuteronomy 5:16), and two New Testament books (Matthew 15:4; Ephesians 6:2, 3). Honor for parents may be seen in a number of actions, here are four:

- **Appreciation**—Children display honor by having a thankful disposition. Shena and I observe this in our grandchildren towards their parents and other adults. Unsolicited hugs and small acts of kindness are the order of the day in their homes. This attitude of gratitude often spills over to appreciation towards each other. Children can show their appreciation by valuing the guidance of their parents, teachers, coaches, and other caregivers (see Proverbs 7:1, 2; 23:26). Children are to be proud of their parents and express it (see Proverbs 17:6).
- **Recognition**—Children display honor when they accept the authority of their parents. Children are to obey their parents in all things. When children are obedient, it is honorable (see Colossians 3:20). In the Gospel of Luke, chapter 2, we are given an insightful look into the life of Jesus. Jesus was missing and found in the temple conferring with the elders. He was just twelve years old and probably more advanced than His parents, at least spiritually. After being confronted by His parents, He submitted to their authority, and He resurfaces at thirty years old. Chapter 2: 51, 52 bears this out and states some of the possible growth results of respecting parents.
- **Admiration**—Children are to treat their parents with respect (see Hebrews 12:9). This admiration or respect is best observed in how children speak and act towards their parents. I cringe whenever a child is disrespectful to a parent in any form in my presence. Once one of our children was disrespectful to Shena, and my corrective measure sent shock waves to the other siblings. We never had another incident. I know the actions of some parents don't appear to warrant respect (see Ephesians 6: 4), but children can still honor their parents by avoiding disrespectful actions (see Proverbs 30:17). It is a major offense to speak rudely to parents (see Matthew 15:4).
- **Provision**—When our sons were young, I prayed a special prayer asking the Lord to keep me alive long enough to see them become responsible men. I wanted to instill in them the importance of providing for their mom if something happened to me. The Scriptures contain numerous accounts of sons expected to provide for their mothers, but the greatest example is found in John 19:25-27. While Jesus was hanging on the cross, He instructed one of His disciples to take the responsibility of caring for His mother. His disciple/friend became her son, and she his mother. She moved into his home (see 1 Timothy 5:4, 8).

What is the promise attached to keeping this commandment of honoring father and mother? Deuteronomy 5:16 explains the twofold promise for honoring one's father and mother as long

life and that things will go well. It is amazing that the first commandment with a promise has to do with how we treat our parents. Every person has the opportunity to honor a parent or a parental figure and embrace these two promises by faith.

EVALUATE THE STEP

To evaluate means to look over or inspect and see the good and bad in something. When you evaluate here, you will briefly review FAMILY and set some goals for improvement in areas of concern.

Personal Discovery

What concerns you the most about your family?

Which aspect of family reset is most difficult for you, and why?

Name three persons who you feel would give you godly advice regarding a possible family reset. Make an appointment to see at least one and seek advice or steps to overcome that which most hinders your family reset.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

PRACTICE THE STEP

As we learn and develop steps to success, it is important for us to walk in these steps. By practicing, they become a part of our everyday life and ministry. The step we have just studied is family reset. How can we practice this step? We practice it daily by evaluating our thoughts and actions. Conduct a daily personal inventory, allowing the Holy Spirit to search the inward parts, revealing what is in your heart.

As revelation comes, write down your personal adjustments. This will be accomplished over a period of time. As goes the family, so goes the community. We must have marriages and families according to God's Word to be salt and light in the communities where we live and serve. You can also make this a complete family exercise. It is extremely rewarding when Christian principles are taught and learned in the home.

YOUR PERSONAL ADJUSTMENTS

List ten adjustments that you will make to ensure you always abide by the family principles presented. Be specific.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

Practice, Practice, Practice. It is important to practice this exercise often and continually make the necessary adjustments to ensure you continue developing in this area. God is interested in us having longevity in our personal and professional lives and endeavors. Practice this step and maximize opportunities and manage challenges that flow into your life and ministry. Practice still makes perfect.

SEE THE SUCCESS

Success may be instant and progressive. True success is derived from facing the seasons of our lives God's way. Family reset may very well set the stage for a productive and meaningful journey. A family reset will most assuredly strengthen your marriage and/or family dynamics.

I encourage you to observe others in life and ministry as they model the concepts presented in family reset. Don't be afraid to glean from other believers and successful leaders. I believe family reset is part of a believer's/leader's lifeline. We are disqualified for certain ministry positions when our marriages and/or families are out of line with biblical principles (see 1 Timothy 3:1-10). I encourage you to follow through on further developing this step in your personal life and family roles.

You may wish to develop the habit of keeping a journal. Document your steps, pausing at times to *reflect, readjust, and ready* yourself for future success. Practice the step; see the success.

The second part of this workbook contains your family reset personal audit. This audit is designed as a personal development tool. It will allow you to further evaluate your life with respect to the concepts presented and design an improvement plan. I highly recommend you take the audit.

PART II

FAMILY RESET PERSONAL AUDIT

FAMILY RESET PERSONAL AUDIT

Please read each of the following statements. Circle the number that best describes how true each statement is of you.

His Role

1. I fully understand and embrace the principles of leaving and cleaving.

1. True
2. More true than false
3. More false than true
4. False

2. I am presently living my best relationship with the Lord.

1. True
2. More true than false
3. More false than true
4. False

3. I have or had a healthy relationship with my parents.

1. True
2. More true than false
3. More false than true
4. False

4. I fully accept the biblical roles of husbands and fathers.

1. True
2. More true than false
3. More false than true
4. False

5. I am totally committed to keeping the vows and promises I make.

1. True
2. More true than false
3. More false than true
4. False

Her Role

1. I always live clear-headed.

1. True
2. More true than false
3. More false than true
4. False

2. I always live as a witness of Christ.

1. True
2. More true than false
3. More false than true
4. False

3. I am fully committed to my marriage and/or family role.

1. True
2. More true than false
3. More false than true
4. False

4. I am never involved in gossip.

1. True
2. More true than false
3. More false than true
4. False

5. I am fully supportive of my spouse's aspirations.

1. True
2. More true than false
3. More false than true
4. False

Their Role

1. I always show appreciation to loved ones.

1. True
2. More true than false
3. More false than true
4. False

2. I always teach my children, or those in my care, proper respect for adults.

1. True
2. More true than false
3. More false than true
4. False

3. I am committed to improving my family's foundation.

1. True
2. More true than false
3. More false than true
4. False

4. I fully understand what honoring represents.

1. True
2. More true than false
3. More false than true
4. False

5. I am never a stumbling block to my children or others.

1. True
2. More true than false
3. More false than true
4. False

Total Your Score

Total the numbers and place them in the spaces provided, then multiply them by the given number.

| | True | More true than false | More false than true | False |
|----------------|----------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|
| # of Questions | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> |
| Score: | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Total: | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> |

Add the numbers together and read the results of your audit.

If Your Total Score Is

- 15-25** The three family areas are engrained in your personal life and leadership role.
- 26-35** You are practicing the three areas. If your total score is closer to 35, you need to pay more attention to one or more of the areas.
- 36-45** You need to continue to work on developing all three areas.
- 46-60** Others probably do not view you as a sincere believer. You may want to take some time to rethink your relationship with the Lord.

Personal Improvement Steps

The purpose of this exercise is to focus on identifying areas that need improvement and developing a plan for the same.

Step One: List an area where your score is a 3 or 4.

His Role

My score is:

Step Two: Develop a plan for personal improvement. Refer to your personal adjustments list of ten to draw your information for developing the plan.

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Step Two: Develop a plan for personal improvement. Refer to your personal adjustments list of ten to draw your information for developing the plan.

You have now completed your personal development plan. As you begin to implement your plan, it will be wise to continually review and seek guidance from the Holy Spirit. Your plan will assist you in moving forward in your walk in the Spirit. It is important to strengthen your weak areas and build upon your strengths. This process may be repeated as necessary.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jonathan is the lead pastor of Glad Tidings Tabernacle, Key West, Florida, chief visionary of the CTC Network, and a metropolitan bishop with Global United Fellowship overseeing the Caribbean. Jonathan also serves as the Dominican Republic representative for the *Caribbean Israel Leadership Coalition*.

Jonathan and his wife, Shena, have three adult children: Jonathan, Stephen, and Joyanne, two daughters-in-law, Sherry and Violet, and four grandchildren.

Jonathan's personal strategic philanthropy policy: I feel strongly about helping causes related to faith and education that specifically address the needs of clergy and people of other countries who need help with the fulfillment of purpose and personal empowerment to change. I envision fulfilling my strategic philanthropic goals with faith-based ministries that are multidisciplinary-oriented, are visionary in nature, and whose areas of influence are regional in scope.

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