

God's Plan For The Family

*A Series Of Lessons
by
Douglas L. Crook*

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Introduction

In the Bible we find that God has given us clear instruction on the divine order for the family. Obedience to these wise and loving instructions will result in a happy home and a successful marriage. A successful family consists of individuals who are happy and successful. Today, there are so many broken homes due to divorce, or abuse or any number of other reasons. The single parent home has become the norm in our society. In other families the parents don't separate, but there is a constant atmosphere of contention and bitterness. Many of the major social problems that we suffer today can be traced backed to the deterioration of the family. But such a dysfunctional family is not God's plan for His people. We can avoid so much pain, sorrow and unhappiness in our life if we will simply submit ourselves to God's plan for the family.

If the family as a whole is going to function as it should, each individual in that family (husband, wife, children) needs to know and obey God's will for his or her personal life. If each one fulfills their part in God's

divine order for the family, that family will be happy and each individual will be content. If they do not, that home will be filled with unhappiness and bitterness. Since the success or failure of a family depends on each individual knowing and obeying the will of God concerning their responsibilities in the family, I felt it would be profitable to compile the following notes on God's instruction to each member of the family. We will begin with the children, then we will look at what God says to the young people concerning choosing a spouse. Next we will look at the responsibilities of the wife in the marriage and then those of the husband. Finally we will study what God has to say about the raising of our children.

As Christians, our families need to conform to God's divine order because such a family brings Him glory and is a wonderful type of the family of God. The world is watching us, including our family life. When the world sees how our family functions, do they see God and the love, peace, contentment and joy that He gives to His family? May the Lord help us to conform to His blessed standard for our families and may He keep us from deteriorating to the level of the world's self-destructive standard.

Children

Before we consider the actual responsibilities of the children in the family, we need to understand their value and importance. Children and adults alike need to know that God places great value on children. Many parents consider their children to be nothing more than a nuisance. Certainly, children change our lifestyle considerably. We have to make a lot of sacrifices in the process of getting them raised. Nevertheless, the Bible teaches us that those sacrifices are investments in precious treasures. *“Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD: and the fruit of the womb is his reward. As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of the youth. Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them: they shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate.” Ps 127:3-5* Children born to Christian parents should not be considered a burden, but rather precious gifts from God. We should never complain about what our loving and wise Heavenly Father has given us. Of course, many use this verse to teach that you should have as many children as physically possible and that it is wrong to use any contraceptives to avoid pregnancy, but that is not the point of this passage. We are no longer under any obligation to replenish the earth since that has been done a long time ago. (**Genesis 9.1**) How many children you have is an issue of personally seeking the will of God for your family. My “quiver” is full with two daughters. The point of **Psalm 127** is that whether God permits one child or ten they are to be esteemed as blessings from the hand of the Lord.

Children are compared to arrows in the above

psalm. Arrows were used to fight off the enemy. In Old Testament times someone who had many sons had the advantage of using those sons as workers on the farm as well as using them as a small security force to protect the family's possessions. In many societies today that advantage is no longer necessary. However, I do feel that there is still a spiritual application to the comparison of children to arrows. As believers in Jesus Christ, our enemy is Satan. If we raise our children in the fear of the Lord, they will be used by God to proclaim the Gospel to their generation. This is a very real and painful arrow in the heart of our enemy. Therefore, parents, remember that children are gifts from God. Show to your children with your attitude and your words that you consider them to be important and of great value. Children raised in the fear of God and who are constantly reminded by their parents of their importance and worth will be a blessing for generations to come. *"Children's children are the crown of old men; and the glory of children are their fathers."*
Prov 17:6

Children need to be taught that they have an important part in the family of God as well. The love of God is not just for adults. *"Then were there brought unto him little children, that he should put his hands on them, and pray: and the disciples rebuked them. But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven."* **Matt 19:13-14** Jesus invites children to come and receive His blessings. He invites them to receive forgiveness of their sins and He will answer their prayers. It is important to teach our children that they have the privilege to come before their Heavenly Father in prayer and to know that He hears them and will answer them. **(I John 5:14, 15)** Praying before

meals in the home is essential in teaching them to be grateful for God's blessings. (*1 Timothy 4:3 - 5*) Whenever our children have problems, whether they be large or small, we need to take time to pray with them in order that they might learn to bring their needs to the Lord at an early age. In the public assembly or worship service, when we stand or kneel to pray, the children should not be permitted to do other things or they will never understand the importance of entering into the presence of God in the fear of the Lord.

The Bible teaches us that children can and should participate in our worship services. *"And when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying in the temple, and saying, Hosanna to the Son of David; they were sore displeased, And said unto him, Hearest thou what these say? And Jesus saith unto them, Yea; have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?"* **Matt 21:15-16**

Our children need to be encouraged to praise God in our public services. May the Lord help us to teach our children and young people that when it is time to sing praises to the Lord in our services, it is time to sing and not to talk or play. If we allow them to do other things during our singing, we are communicating to them that they cannot or should not praise God. The same is true concerning listening to the preaching of the Word of God. Many parents are teaching their children that the study of the Bible is only for adults by leaving their children at home on Bible study nights to watch TV or by letting them play outside or in some other part of the building. How sad! Children who grow up without understanding the importance of sitting quiet to hear the Word of God

will grow to be adults that do not understand the importance of sitting quiet to hear the Word of God. *“There was not a word of all that Moses commanded, which Joshua read not before all the congregation of Israel, with the women, and the little ones, and the strangers that were conversant among them.” Josh 8:35* The congregation consists of all the members of the family. Even though the preaching of the Word is many times not directed on their level of understanding, may we teach our children that it is a time to be quiet. It takes time for parents to teach little ones this lesson. Other adults in the congregation should be patient and not be critical of parents or children during this learning process. Many times it is necessary to begin the process by occupying the little ones with some kind of quiet toy or book, but our goal should be to teach them the need to honor an atmosphere of learning during the preaching and teaching of the Word. I believe it is also important for our churches to provide Sunday School classes where the Word is presented to our children on their specific level of understanding.

Well, so far we have learned that the majority of the responsibility for a child’s conduct and learning falls on the parents. Really, there is only one responsibility that falls to the child. *“Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord.” Col 3:20 (Ephesians 6:1 - 3)* When this exhortation is obeyed, it helps to cause the family to function properly and brings individual blessing to the child. God does not say that parents are always right, but He simply demands children to always respect, honor and submit to their authority. Such obedience will bring blessing in the child’s childhood as well as later in his or her adult life. Constant

disobedience to parents is no small matter. (*Deuteronomy 21:18 - 21, Proverbs 20:20*) Children, it is a wise and safe thing to obey your parents.

Children that are taught to obey the will of God for their life will be contented children that help to contribute to the success of the family. What's more, such children can be used by God as instruments to bless others. (*John 6:9, II Kings 5:2, 3*)

Young People

Now let's consider the responsibilities of young people in the family and in preparing to form their own families. Adolescence is a very difficult stage of life. The adolescent is part child, part adult. Though they still lack the wisdom of full maturity, they are already beginning to make many important decisions that will determine the direction of the rest of their life. They are making decisions concerning their careers, their relationships with the opposite sex and are forming opinions and attitudes on life in general. I know many adults who are suffering today because of the negative consequences of some bad decisions that they made as young people. I also know many adults who are enjoying the pleasant benefits of good choices that they made in their youth. This is why it is so important that young people understand the will of God for their life. "*Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them.*" *Eccl 12:1* Young people, if you seek and obey God's loving instruction for your life now, your youth will

be a time of great joy and you will avoid a lot of sorrowful regret as adults.

“Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;) That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.” Eph 6:1-3 Yes, young people, this still applies to you. As long as you are living in your parents’ home and are dependent on and benefit from their support, you are instructed to obey your parents. For the young person, who is almost an adult, this submission is perhaps one of the most difficult things to do. However, it is one of the most important things they can do for themselves and for their family. The rebellion of young people against their parents is a very serious offense in God’s eyes. *(Deuteronomy 21:18 - 21) “A fool despiseth his father’s instruction: but he that regardeth reproof is prudent.” Prov 15:5* Young people, don’t be a fool by constantly ignoring and despising your parents instruction and counsel. Very soon you will have the full responsibility of making all your own decisions with their full consequences, and you will find that it is a very heavy burden to bear. But for now, your parents have that responsibility. Submit yourself to their authority and you will be happy and prudent, and you will reap the benefits of being part of a successful family.

Having an adolescent child is also a difficult stage of life for the parents. We want to train our children in such a way that they will become adults that are fully capable of making their own decisions. Parents, ask the Lord for wisdom to teach your children how to make their own decisions and then ask Him for grace to allow them to make those decisions for themselves little by little. *“And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but*

bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.”
Eph 6:4

There is one subject that is of great interest to young people especially, and that is the subject of sex. The Bible has much to say about the importance of the sexual purity of believers. We need to teach our young people openly and frankly about the sexual morality that God demands of His children. Too many young Christians fall into the trap of fornication (sex before marriage) because they do not pay attention to the Bible’s instruction along this line. Once one sins in this area, many times the emotional and spiritual scars stay with them for the rest of their life. Of course, when there is true repentance, there is forgiveness and restoration in God’s sight, but the scars linger. So much pain and sorrow can be easily avoided by simply following God’s loving and wise instruction on the subject of sexual morality.

Our society tells us that everyone, including young people, can and should enjoy the pleasures of sex. The only thing necessary, according to society, is to take the proper precautions to avoid unwanted pregnancies and diseases. Many young people cave into peer pressure to enter into sexual relationships just to be accepted by the “in” crowd. Young people, don’t be fooled or confused. God, in His love and wisdom has declared, *“Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge. Heb. 13:4* Sex between one man and one woman, within the confines of marriage, is a wonderful blessing of God. Sex is not dirty or degrading. It is ordained and blessed by God. Nevertheless, outside the marriage this same sexual act becomes physically, emotionally and spiritually

destructive. Sex is much like fire. Used properly and controlled it is a wonderful blessing, but when uncontrolled and unconfined it is dangerous and destructive.

Dating and romance is very much a part of many young people's life. As Christians, young people, purpose in your heart to obey Paul's exhortation to Timothy: "*Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in (sexual) purity.*" **1 Tim 4:12** Abstaining from sex before marriage will give you a very special and unique bond with the person with whom you will spend the rest of your life. God has created you. He knows the exact person who will satisfy all your needs in this life. Take every precaution to avoid giving opportunity for temptation in this area. Don't spend excessive amounts of time alone with the opposite sex. Don't allow your relationships to become too physical before marriage or it will very quickly lead to immorality. Patiently wait for the time and the person that God has chosen for you.

Dating should be more than just having fun. It should be a time of seeking the will of God concerning your future spouse. Therefore, you should never date anyone who does not fulfill the requirements that God demands of the mate of a Christian. "*Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?*" **2 Cor 6:14** Christians should only date other Christians. You can make all the excuses and arguments you want to defend going out with an unbeliever, but God's standard, that leads to happiness, remains unchanging. What's more, you shouldn't go out with just any Christian, but only with

one who openly lives his or her life in the fear of the Lord. If he or she does not love the Lord with all his or her heart, that individual will not be able to love you as he or she should.

Young people, if you heed God's loving and wise instruction concerning sexual morality and choosing your future spouse, you will have an excellent start in forming your own happy and successful family.

Marriage

Marriage can be the most wonderful experience and relationship of your life or it can be the most painful and tragic. Some couples can't stand to be apart from one another for long periods of time because they miss one another too much. Others can't stand to be in the same room together because of the animosity that has grown between them. Once again, God has given us loving and wise instruction in His Word in order to enable us enjoy a happy and successful marriage. If we desire such a marriage, we need to understand God's divine order for this relationship and ask Him for strength to obey His will for our life. If both the husband and wife are not surrendered to God's will for their individual life, there will always be the danger that marriage will be unhappy and end broken.

Let's consider some of the practical counsel from the Bible, that if heeded, will lead us to enjoying a happy home. First, we will consider general instructions that pertain to both the husband and the wife. Next, we will look at what the Bible teaches about the woman's place in the marriage. Finally, we will contemplate the specific

responsibilities given by God to the woman and to the man respectively.

Many problems can be avoided in marriage if the believer, before getting married, will obey God's instruction about not being unequally yoked with an unbeliever. (**II Corinthians 6:14**) However, just because both the husband and wife are Christians does not mean that the marriage will automatically be a good and successful marriage. The simplest recipe to a happy marriage is for both individuals to obey the following exhortation from **Proverbs 3:5, 6**. "*Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.*" If both parties in the marriage relationship desire above everything else to honor the Lord with their lives, God will bless their life together with an abundance of joy, happiness and contentment. I believe with all my heart that any marriage that consists of two people that fear the Lord can be successful no matter what problems or difficulties arise. Such a couple will always have the unshakable foundation of the will of God that acts as a safety net as well as a blueprint to build or reconstruct the relationship as needed. "*Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain.* **Ps 127:1** God is the only one who can build a happy and lasting home. Enjoying a good marriage is not a question of how hard you work at it. It is a question of how much you yield yourself to the will of God for your individual life. If both the husband and wife are obedient to God's will for their individual lives and if they allow Him to transform them to the image of His Son, the Lord will bless their union together.

In many societies today, the commitment of marriage is considered unnecessary and undesirable because it is perceived to be too confining and enslaving to the individual. Society in general prefers many relationships with many different people with no lasting commitment to any. But God declares such a lifestyle immoral and self-destructive. It is sin, and sin always produces ruin in our lives. Many say that the institution of marriage is not a good thing, but God declares the opposite. *“Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the LORD. **Prov 18:22*** God looked at Adam standing alone in the garden and declared, *“It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him.” **Gen 2:18*** God’s plan in general for man is that he marry a woman and that they share the rest of their lives together. This union is good and leads to the fullness of God’s blessing in this life. There are some exceptions to this general plan. Marriage is not mandatory for everyone, but truly few are called to be single all their life. (***1 Corinthians 7***)

There is a common misconception about what a successful marriage is. Many think that a good marriage is one in which the couple never argue. Such a couple does not exist. A marriage that functions well is one in which the two individuals know the importance of self-control, forgiveness and of forgetting past offenses. *“Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: Neither give place to the devil.” **Eph 4:26-27*** This commandment applies to all of our relationships with others, but it is especially important that we obey it in our relationship with our spouse. In those times when you do not agree and are angry with your spouse, do not sin by degrading or insulting your spouse. Never use divorce as

a threat in the heat of an argument. For the believer, divorce should not be considered as an option except under extreme circumstances of immorality and abuse. Therefore, it should not be mentioned lightly or angrily. Once the threat of divorce is raised, even if there was no intention of following through with it, it creates an unstable atmosphere and gives the Devil place to work his work of destroying the family. Learn to take your problems to the Lord in prayer. It is very difficult to remain angry in the presence of the Lord. If you were wrong or said something spiteful in the heat of the argument, admit it and ask forgiveness of the Lord and of your spouse. If you have been offended by your spouse, learn to forgive and forget. Many marriages fail because every time a new argument comes up, someone brings up all the offenses of the past. If you do not learn to forgive and forget past offenses, there can be no trust or respect in the marriage.

The Responsibilities Of The Wife In The Marriage

Now, let's see what the Bible has to say about the woman's place in the marriage relationship. "*Every wise woman buildeth her house: but the foolish plucketh it down with her hands.*" **Prov 14:1** The Hebrew word translated, "*buildeth*" means to "establish" or "cause to continue." The word "*plucketh*" means to "destroy" or "ruin." After reading all these lessons on the family, I hope that everyone will fully understand that the Bible does not teach that the woman is an inferior, powerless slave to the man. The man is the earthly head of his wife and is responsible before the Lord for the direction and welfare of the family, but it is to the woman that God has given the power and ability to build or destroy the home. The power of authority has been given to the man, but the power of influence has been given to the wife. I have seen wise women strengthen the weak character of their husbands and help them to become good and noble men. I have also seen foolish women destroy the good character of their husbands and ruin them and their home. Truly, their power of influence is great.

A wise woman uses her influence to encourage her husband to seek the will of God and to depend on Him. She uses all of her abilities to support him and assist him in obeying God's will for the family. Read God's description of an ideal woman in **Proverbs 31:10 - 31**. This is not a description of an ignorant, incapable slave. What we see is a wise woman who builds her house by being a companion to her husband who is worthy of his

trust and who is willing and able to contribute to the success of the family in many different ways. She is intelligent, diligent and capable of administrating her own business. She is strong and firm and yet meek and humble. Her abilities strengthen her husband and add to his good reputation. Her mouth is full of wisdom and kindness. All that she does, she does as unto the Lord. As a result of being such a wife, she benefits from the success of her husband and enjoys confidence, peace, great joy and contentment.

The foolish woman uses her influence only to demand what she wants for herself. The virtuous woman of Proverbs 31 is priceless, but the foolish woman is a torture. (**Proverbs 12:4, 21:9 and 19, 27:15**) If the woman lives only for herself, she is destroying her own home. If she lives only to obtain what she wants, sooner or later, she will lose all that she has.

Dear sisters in the Lord, you have immense power and abilities. Use them to build a strong and stable family and home. Use them to strengthen your husband. Do it out of love for the Lord Jesus and in obedience to Him. For being such a wise woman you will enjoy the fullness of the blessing of God now and for eternity.

In studying what God has to say about the family, I have discovered a list of responsibilities for the wife and for the husband. Let's consider the list for the women first.

1) "*Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.*" **Eph 5:22** Many women hate the idea of being submissive to their husband and many men abuse the sense of this word and use it to enslave their wife in guilt and condemnation. However,

despite all the misconceptions and abuses of this truth, it is essential that Christian women obey this command from the Lord. The first thing that both men and women need to understand is that the term submit is not a term that denotes inferiority. The Greek word is a compound word. The first word means “below”. The second word means “to arrange in an orderly fashion.” Submission carries the thought of subordination for the sake of order which results in the well-being of the whole family. The man is the head of the family and has the responsibility and authority to make the final decisions that affect the direction and well-being of the family, but never do we read anywhere in the Bible that the woman is inferior to the man in importance, intelligence or value. Never do we read that the woman was created to be the slave and personal property of the man. A Christian couple, male and female, are equal heirs of the promises of God’s grace without any distinction. (*Galatians 3: 26 - 29*) In *Genesis 2:18* the woman is called an “help meet.” This phrase means “a helper that complements and corresponds to the man.” Eve was created to be a necessary companion and a competent assistant to Adam. Adam’s joy could not be full without someone, like himself, to share all God’s blessings bestowed upon him. What’s more, the Hebrew word “help,” used to describe the woman is the same word used throughout the Old Testament to describe God Himself as our Help or Helper. So we can clearly understand that the word does not mean that one who is a “help” is inferior.

A good example of subordination for the sake of order that results in the well-being of all can be found in the relationship of former President Bush with General Schwarzkopf during the Persian Gulf War. President

Bush was not necessarily more intelligent or valuable than the General. In fact, on military matters, Schwarzkopf was probably far more knowledgeable. Before President Bush made any final decisions about attacking Saddam Hussein, he sought Schwarzkopf's counsel and opinions. They had some differences of opinions on several issues. Nevertheless, the General's opinions were highly esteemed and regarded by the President. When it came time to make the final decision of how and when the offensive would take place, President Bush was the only one who had the power and the responsibility to make that decision. When the orders came, Schwarzkopf carried them out. How tragic it would have been if the President and all the generals and soldiers had worked independently from one another, each doing what he thought was best! There would have been utter chaos and the mission would have failed with devastating casualties. As it was, the mission was a success because each one was faithful to fulfill his role and contribute to the success.

How tragic it is when a wife does not respect the authority of her husband and ignores his wishes concerning the direction and well-being of the family! It is equally tragic when a husband does not seek the counsel and help of his wife when making important decisions concerning the family! A husband must value the opinions and abilities of his wife. If he does not, he is a foolish head and the whole family will suffer.

Sisters, God does not demand that you blindly obey your husbands when what they are demanding is clearly against God's will, but He does demand that there be order in the family. You are not inferior, but you are to be subordinate to your husband. You have been given the power of influence, but the power of authority belongs to

the man. (*1 Peter 3:1, Titus 2:5, Colossians 3:18*) Ask the Lord for wisdom and patience to submit yourself to your husband and God will bless you and your family.

2) “...And the wife see that she reverence her husband.” **Eph 5:33** The Greek word translated “reverence” has the meaning of “being in awe of” someone. It is used many times in the New Testament to speak of being afraid of something, but is also used in reference to reverencing God. Paul is not saying that wives should be afraid of their husbands or that they should reverence them as they reverence God. He is simply emphasizing that wives are to always highly esteem and respect their husband. They should always be able to consider their husband and his abilities and character and be able to say with great pleasure and satisfaction, “that’s my husband.” Every man has his weaknesses and faults. Women do not have to pretend that their husbands are perfect in order to reverence or respect them. Nothing destroys a man or a marriage faster than a wife who is constantly belittling her husband to family, friends and neighbors. Sisters, speak to your husband concerning his faults and weaknesses and help him to improve in those areas, but always respect him by acknowledging his virtues to him and to others. If you are always speaking ill of your husband to others, you are destroying your own home. Look for things worthy of praise in your husband. Encourage him in those things and you will help to make him a noble man worthy of respect.

3) “*Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; While they behold your chaste conversation*”

coupled with fear.” 1 Pet 3:1-2 The word “chaste” means “innocent, modest and without moral blame.” Such should be the conduct of every Christian wife. I have known many marriages that were broken up because the wife was not careful in her conduct with other men. The Christian woman must purpose in her heart to always conduct herself in such a way that there is never any question that she has no other attractions or affections than the ones she has for her husband. Today, there are many women who must work in offices with other men where there are many temptations. It is essential in such situations that you make it clear with your actions and modest apparel that you have no interest in any other man than your husband. Our “open” and “free” society will mock this next exhortation, but if heeded will keep you from the snare of your own flesh. You must maintain a physical distance between you and other men. If you are always hugging, touching and even kissing other men in public, it is too easy to progress to doing it in private. You may think that you are mature enough to keep such things under control, but the first step to immorality is to underestimate the power of your own sinful flesh. “*But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.” Rom 13:14* If the wife is not diligent in her conduct with other men, she is making provision for the lust of the flesh which leads to immorality and the destruction of her marriage. A wife who conducts herself in a chaste manner gains the trust and admiration of her husband and their mutual love for one another grows stronger. Both then benefit from the blessings of a successful marriage.

4) “*Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of*

putting on of apparel; But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.” 1 Pet 3:3-4 We continue to go to the Greek definitions to find out exactly what God expects of Christian wives. The word “*meek*” means “humble.” “*Quiet*” means “tranquil”. It is a compound word whose literal meaning is “to remain seated.” The true beauty of a woman should be the inward beauty of her heart, attitude and character. Many ladies waste a lot of time and money trying to adorn their exterior, but few take time to consider the condition of their spirit. God highly esteems and considers a thing of beauty the quiet and meek spirit, in both men and women, but in reference to the success of the marriage, it is essential that the wife have such a character.

We express what’s in our heart by our words. A woman who possesses a meek and quiet spirit is a woman who is not constantly interrupting and correcting her husband when he is talking or doing something. She is a woman that does not demand to dominate the conversation by insisting on expressing all her opinions in great detail as if the opinions of others, including those of her husband, are not important. The Bible doesn’t teach that a woman shouldn’t express her opinions, but she is to do it in a meek and quiet manner and not with sharpness. In *Titus 2:5* Paul tells the older women to teach the younger women to be “*discreet*” = “moderate in opinion or passion.” The Christian wife has the right to express her opinions to her husband, even in public, but if she does so in a negative, contentious way, she creates an atmosphere of contention and disunity. If she is discreet in presenting her opinions, she creates an atmosphere of

positive discussion and the result will be the well-being of all.

The Bible has much to say about the words of our mouth. *“In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin: but he that refraineth his lips is wise.” Prov 10:19* *“Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear; slow to speak, slow to wrath:” James 1:19* *“Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.” Eph 4:29* These exhortations are to all believers, male and female. However, if the woman will allow God to work this meek and quiet spirit within her, her husband will be attracted to the beauty of her wisdom. She will be like the virtuous woman who, *“...Openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness.” Prov 31:26* The husband of such a woman will trust in her and seek her counsel. The wise woman with her meekness and quietness gains much more than a foolish woman does with all of her constant nagging and complaining.

5) *“That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children.” Titus 2:4* Once again the Greek sheds some light on this requirement for Christian wives. The word “love” literally means “to be fond or affectionate to her husband.” It has the sense of being his best and most intimate friend. A friend is someone who can be trusted and who will always stand with you and support you in every situation. A true friend is always ready to help and encourage in difficult times. *“A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.” Prov 17:17* *“Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow:*

but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up.” Eccl 4:9-10 There is no marriage more stable or happy than one in which the wife is a faithful friend to her husband.

6) *“To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed.” Titus 2:5* According to the sense of this phrase in the original, the wife is to be “one who guards the home” and who is “domestically inclined.” The Bible does not prohibit women from working outside the home, but does clearly state that her primary responsibility is to guard, protect and manage the home. She is the administrator and caretaker of the daily needs of the home and of each member of the family. The husband is the head of the family, but the wife is the chief administrator of the home. A business would not be successful without a good manager or administrator that is responsible to provide for each employee the daily supplies needed to do their job and to run that business. The same is true of the family. If the wife is negligent in ministering to the daily needs of her family, that family will not be successful. The administration of a home is no small or easy task. There is the constant need of planning and preparing meals, seeing to it the everyone has clean clothes and a mountain of other daily and unending tasks. I’m not saying that the Bible teaches that the woman has to do all of these things by herself without help from other members of the family, but she is the one who has the responsibility to administer these things. A good manager is also a good teacher who teaches others how to be responsible. Many women who do not work outside of the home feel unfulfilled and inferior to those who have a professional career. How sad! A woman who cares well

for her family is a woman who out of necessity must be strong, intelligent and creative. Some women are able to work outside the home and still faithfully minister to the needs of the home, but many are sacrificing their marriage and children to satisfy other interests and priorities. Sisters, above everything else, be “*keepers at home*”. There is nothing more satisfying or valuable than the joys of a happy successful family.

7) “*Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord.*” **Col 3:18** Finally, let’s consider the motive with which the Christian wife should desire to fulfill these God-given responsibilities. It is not merely to please her husband, but rather it is done in loving obedience to the Lord. A godly woman serves God and wants to please Him in all things. Many times, the husband of a godly woman does not appreciate her as he ought, yet she remains faithful in fulfilling her responsibilities in obedience to the Lord. She will personally be blessed and strengthened of the Lord. A woman who fears the Lord does not complain about her role in the marriage, but rather asks the Lord for strength and wisdom to do the will of God and to bring Him glory. The supreme reward for all (male or female) who faithfully do the will of God in this life is to sit with Christ in His throne to rule with Him as a Queen with her King. (**Revelation 19:7, 8**) Truly it is advantageous to obey God’s wise and loving instructions concerning our responsibilities and attitudes in the marriage relationship. Such obedience leads to the fullness of God’s blessing both now and for eternity.

The Responsibilities Of The Husband In The Marriage

One of the ladies in the Church where I once pastored told me a funny story about her late husband. She said that he was listening to a preacher on the radio who was offering a tract on the importance of women submitting to their husband. He immediately ordered one for his wife. When the tract arrived, he was very disappointed because it also dealt with the subject of the man's responsibility to his wife. He found that though he demanded that she fulfill her responsibilities in the marriage, he himself had been negligent concerning his. So it is with many Christian men. They demand that their wives obey the Scriptures, while they ignore the Scriptures concerning their own responsibilities in the marriage. Hypocrites!

That brings us to our list of the responsibilities of men in the marriage relationship as defined in the Bible. It would be much easier for women to fulfill their obligations in the marriage if the men were faithful to fulfill theirs. A happy and successful marriage depends on both husband and wife seeking strength and wisdom from the Lord to obey His will for their life. If one or the other is negligent in doing their part, it puts a heavier burden on the other and strains the relationship. When both are constantly learning how to obey God's will for their lives, both enjoy the blessings of a sound marriage.

Since constantly learning to obey the will of God is the secret of a happy marriage, it is essential that the whole family (husband, wife and children) attend a local

assembly where they can continually hear the Word of God preached. We need to be constantly reminded of God's loving instructions in order that we might continually examine ourselves in the light of His Word. If we neglect the assembling of ourselves together, we quickly forget His Word and begin to make excuses for our disobedience. The result is an unpleasant marriage.

Men, here is your list of Biblical responsibilities in the marriage.

1) "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it... Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself..." **Eph 5:25** This first commandment to the husbands could not possibly be any stronger or more full of responsibility. The Greek word translated "love" in this passage has a much stronger meaning than the word translated "love" in the passage demanding that wives love their husbands. (**Titus 2:4**) The wife is charged to be a faithful friend to her husband, but the husband is charged to live solely for the well-being of his wife. It is the same word that is used in the Greek to speak of the love of God for us. The word literally means "to love much." If one loves his wife with this kind of love, he will not live for himself, but for her. Machismo is the idea that women exist solely to serve men and satisfy all their needs, but the Bible never teaches such a thing. It is the responsibility of the husband to supply his wife's every need, whether it be material, physical or emotional.

Jesus is our supreme example of this kind of love. He "gave Himself" for us. Christ surrendered Himself to the suffering of the cross because He knew that it was necessary in order to provide for us eternal life. It is with

this same kind of love that the husband is to be willing to make any sacrifice, in the will of God, to care for and provide for his wife's needs. Men, we need to spend more time considering our wives' needs and emotions and less time thinking about what we want for ourselves. Before we demand submission from our wife, let's examine our obedience to God's commandment to us to "*love our wife.*" How easy it would be for a wife to submit to a husband that loves her as Christ loves the Church!

"So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church." **Eph 5:28-29**

If a husband loves his wife as he should, he will nourish her and cherish her. The Greek word translated "*nourish*" has the meaning of using great tenderness to help her reach maturity. We nourish our bodies by faithfully ministering to its daily needs of food, clothing and cleansing. With much tenderness and patience we do whatever is necessary to keep it strong and in good health. Many husbands demand perfection from their wife, but it is the husband's responsibility to help her flourish in her role in the family by tenderly, patiently caring for her every need. Men, a gentle embrace from time to time will do more to form your wife into the ideal woman than many angry and loud words.

The Greek word translated "*cherisheth*" means to "brood" or "warm". The word conjures up a mental picture of a mother bird sitting atop her delicate eggs, warming them with much care and tenderness. When some part of our body is injured or not functioning properly, we give it more attention and tenderly care for it. If our finger gets smashed, we understand that pain because its pain is our pain. We pamper it back to health

and usefulness. A husband should do no less for his wife. Too many men treat their wife as if she was made of stone and had no feelings at all. Many times when the wife is going through a difficult time emotionally, the husband will get angry with her because he simply doesn't understand what the problem is nor does he care to know. Men, God requires of us that we be compassionate towards our wife's emotions and needs. We are not required to understand all of her emotions. I am convinced that men can never fully understand all the woman's emotions. We think differently and react differently in almost every situation. Nevertheless, husbands need to learn to continually comfort, console and encourage their wives. It is beneficial to care for your own body with tenderness and compassion. It is equally beneficial to care for your wife in the same manner.

2) *“For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh”.* **Eph 5:31** Many marriages fail because the husband never matures to the point that he quits being dependent on his parents. Many simply never learn to take responsibility for caring for their family as the head of the family. Too many men are more sensitive to the needs and wishes of their parents than they are to those of their spouse. There is certainly nothing wrong with seeking your parents counsel, in fact it is a very wise thing to do, but an essential principal to remember is that the man's loyalty is first and foremost to his wife, and not to his parents. The same is true of the wife. Her submission is to her husband, and not to her parents. At times, making this practical in a marriage can be very difficult, especially if there are domineering parents involved, but it is essential that the loyalties of a husband

and wife be to each other over and above those to their family. If everyone involved, parents, husband and wife, are in the will of God, all will enjoy a good and sweet relationship with one another, but there is no sweeter relationship than that between a husband and wife that are committed to one another. Men, protect and value your relationship with your wife. Leave all other loyalties behind that are in conflict with your loyalty to your wife.

3) “...*And shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh.*” **Eph 5:31** This phrase may have several applications, but principally refers to the physical union between a man and his wife. Sexual relations are reserved by God for a man and his wife. God demands that a man remain faithful to his wife. One of the deceptions of machismo is that the wife is obligated not to cheat on her husband, but it is commonly accepted and expected that the man have sex with other women. Such thinking is foolish and hypocritical and leads to the sin of adultery that has destroyed more homes and lives than we can imagine. “*Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.*” **Heb 13:4** There are many scriptures in both the Old and New Testaments that clearly declare that adultery is sin and self-destructive. The fullness and joy of life is found only in the will of God. If we walk outside of that will, we will suffer the miserable consequences. Adultery is a very serious offense. If a man would break this most intimate and personal of trusts, what trust would he not break? Men, there is never any excuse for committing adultery. Be careful to avoid situations in which you may be tempted. Our Creator is all wise and has declared that the way to his blessing in this life is the way of faithfulness in the marriage relationship: one man faithful

to one woman for their entire lives.

4) “*Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.*” **1 Pet 3:7** The Greek word translated “*knowledge*” means “to seek to know, to ask or investigate.” In other words, men, we are not to be insensitive to our spouse’s needs, emotions or opinions. She is to be our true companion and partner. Too many men ignore their wife except for when it’s time to eat or go to bed. They never take time to really converse with their wife to understand her thoughts, ideas and desires. The husband is ordered by God to investigate and seek to know his wife. For the majority of men it seems to be very painful to sit down with their wives and have a genuine conversation to get to know them better. To ignore God’s will along this line will be more painful.

5) “...Giving honour unto the wife...” “*Honour*” means “to value something highly.” Christian men need to constantly show and express their appreciation to their wives. When was the last time you told your wife how much you appreciated her talents and abilities? When was the last time that you expressed to others how happy you are that the Lord gave you such a good wife? Many times, in the heat of an argument we’ll say something rashly that is an expression of spite and disdain. Be careful not to give in to the temptations to use such expressions in the anger of the moment. If you do fail and speak despisingly, ask her forgiveness and express to her your understanding of her great value to you. The marriage relationship is to be a mutual appreciation for one another. It is important that you guard your fellowship with your spouse because

if it is not what it should be, it will affect your fellowship with the Lord. “*That your prayers be not hindered.*” If your fellowship with the Lord is not what it should be, it will affect every area of your life. It is no small matter to be negligent in honoring your wife.

6) “*Young men likewise exhort to be sober minded.*” **Titus 2:6** The exhortation that precedes this one in the passage is directed to the young wives. Therefore, we can conclude that this exhortation is directed to the young married men. The phrase “*sober minded*” means “to be of a sound mind, sane, moderate.” It’s from the same root word translated “*discreet*” in **Titus 2:5**. The wife is to always be moderate, discreet and prudent in expressing her opinions, but the man is always to be moderate in the use of his authority. Although he has been given authority as the head of the family, he is not to abuse that authority by irrationally demanding anything and everything he wants just to have his own way. “*...For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required...*” **Luke 12:48** God will judge how we have used our power of authority as the head of our family. That truth should motivate us not to abuse our privilege and place.

7) “*Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them.*” **Col 3:19** It is so unbecoming for a Christian man to speak to or treat his wife in a rude and sharp manner. The wife is not a personal slave to whom you can speak in just any fashion. She is a friend, companion and partner and is worthy of being treated with respect and decency. There can be no happiness in a home where the husband is bitter against his wife. Many times such bitter conduct is the result of many years of unresolved problems. Resolve your problems quickly by

seeking God's wisdom and love in dealing with your differences. Guard your heart against bitterness against your wife by always treating her with respect and admiration.

8) *“And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men.” Col 3:23* All of the responsibilities that we have listed in this study are given by God to Christian husbands. At times, perhaps, some of them may seem humanly impossible to fulfill. However, if it is our desire to do the will of the Lord and to be pleasing to Him, He will always give us the wisdom and strength to do what He has demanded of us. Such obedience unto the Lord will produce immense peace and joy in your heart and in your marriage.

The Discipline Of Our Children

“Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.” Prov 22:6

The last section of our lessons on the plan of God for the family is on a very important subject. However, it is a subject that offends many parents. The subject is the discipline of our children. It is a very touchy subject because nobody likes to be told how to raise their children. If someone even suggests that your child may need a little discipline, it is many times taken as a personal insult. The truth is that the Bible teaches us that every child needs discipline and that it is the parents' responsibility to discipline them. God's instruction on the

purpose and manner of discipline is very clear and simple. We are going to read several verses in the Bible that specifically deal with this subject.

If we are going to be faithful in disciplining our children, we need to understand the purpose of godly discipline. The word translated “*train*” in our previous text is translated elsewhere as “dedicate.” When the Lord gives children to a couple, those parents become administrators of those young lives. It is their responsibility to dedicate those lives to the Lord and His service. “*Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; and his greatness is unsearchable. One generation shall praise thy works to another, and shall declare thy mighty acts.*” **Ps 145:3 - 4** The passing of the hope of the Gospel from one generation to another is one of the most profound purposes of the family unit. The mother and grandmother of Timothy understood their principle obligation to their children. “*When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also.*” **2 Tim 1:5** As parents, our greatest desire should be to instill in our children the fear of the Lord by our example and by our administration of their life. When it’s all said and done, our children will have to make their own decision concerning the will of God for their lives, but it is our obligation to guide them in their youth towards the correct decision.

If we are going to teach our children to love the Lord and prepare them to seek the will of God, they are going to need discipline. “*Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him.*” **Prov 22:15** Every child has the same nature. It is the fallen nature that we received from our father

Adam. When our children misbehave, lie, disobey, get mad or injure someone else, it shouldn't surprise us. They are simply doing what comes natural. What we must teach them is that there are negative and painful consequences for behaving according to the desires of the old creation. Sooner or later, our children will find this truth out by experience, but it is so much better to learn it as a child in a loving and controlled environment.

Many societies today consider corporal punishment as something barbaric, out-dated and harmful. As Christians, the Bible is our standard of what is good and what is bad. There are many good and useful non-corporal ways of disciplining children that we can and should apply, but the Bible clearly teaches that corporal punishment is necessary and should be used on a child who refuses to be corrected by any other way. I want to make something very clear. The Bible never teaches that it is all right to physically abuse your children. It is never a good or positive thing to harm or injure your children. *“And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.” Eph 6:4* *“Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged.” Col 3:21* *“For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.” James 1:20* Physical abuse is an act of anger and violence on the part of the parents and has nothing to do with loving correction and discipline. Nevertheless, it is a compassionate thing to teach our children that it is not worthwhile to live according to the desires and impulses of the flesh. If we will apply a little controlled pain on their bottoms now when they are children, we can help them to avoid real pain in their adult lives. This truth is illustrated by the following example: When my family and I lived in

Paraguay, we lived for a while in a house that was near a street used by big farm trucks during the harvest of sugar cane. All day long those big trucks would go speeding by in a very reckless manner, dodging pot holes and ruts in the dirt road. My oldest daughter was five years old at the time and, like most kids, liked to play outside the fence and near the street. I told her that it was too dangerous for her to play outside the fence and that she was not to leave the yard again. She disobeyed me two or three more times. The next time I found her playing outside the fence I spanked her on the bottom. Of course, the spanking was painful, though not injurious, and she cried her little heart out, but she never played outside the fence again. The spanking was painful, but it very likely saved her from a far greater pain and possible fatal injury.

Spanking is not just for situations where imminent physical danger is the issue. Corporal punishment is a necessary tool in teaching our children obedience in every situation. It is essential that our children learn to obey their parents. *“Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;) That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.”*

Eph 6:1-3 A child that has learned to obey his earthly parents can learn to obey much more easily the will of his Heavenly Father. If he can learn that it is better to obey even when he doesn't fully understand why, and that it is not worth it to disobey even when it would seem like the thing to do, it will be much easier for him to accept the will of God for his life as an adult.

“Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying.” Prov 19:18 *“Withhold not correction from the child: for if thou beatest him with*

the rod, he shall not die.” Prov 23:13 “He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes.” Prov 13:24 These verses declare that those parents that truly love their children will discipline them beginning from a very early age. Loving parents understand the need and importance of corporal punishment. Parents who do not discipline their children will do them far greater and more permanent damage than those parents who faithfully, lovingly and consistently discipline their children. God Himself deals with His children according to these truths. *“For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.” Heb 12:6-8* The Lord is All-Wise and He has declared that discipline and correction of the children is good and flows from true love.

An undisciplined child is a great tragedy. He is destructive to himself, his parents and everyone else with which he comes in contact. *(I Samuel 3:13, I Kings 1:5, 6, Proverbs 10:1 & 17:25)* *“Correct thy son, and he shall give thee rest; yea, he shall give delight unto thy soul.” Prov 29:17* This is the standard for Christian parents in raising their children. No other standard or philosophy, no matter how logical it sounds, can accomplish the success we desire in raising our children to be young men and women who are not only good, stable and well adjusted, but who are dedicated to following and serving the Lord.

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