

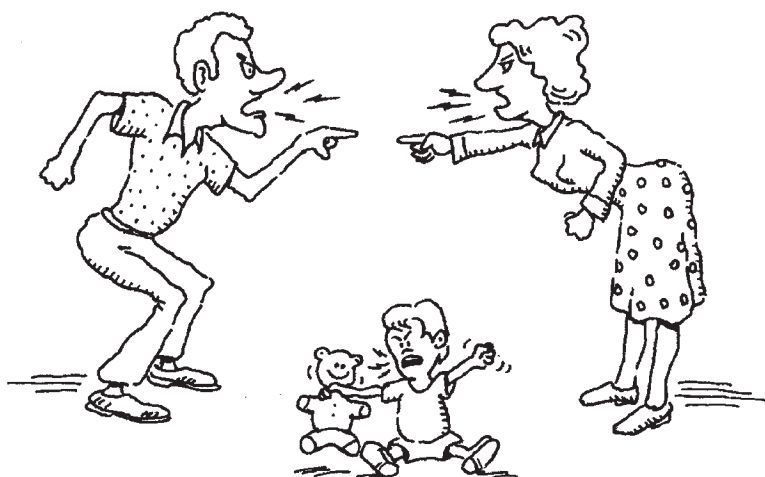
LESSON 5 Family Problems

A Sunday school teacher was trying to help her eight-year-old students understand what heaven was like. She concluded her discussion by saying, “I like to compare heaven to my home—a place filled with love, where I can find peace and acceptance. Yes, heaven is like being at home.”

One little boy looked at her with big, serious eyes. “If heaven is like my home,” he responded, “then I don’t want to go there!”

The family was God’s idea from the beginning of Creation. Order in society and order in the church are based on order in the family. God has given specific rules for the responsibilities of the husband, the wife, and the children. When these rules are obeyed, the family unit is strong, and each member is fulfilled and happy. When any of them are ignored, the family is in trouble, and may even fall apart.

In many parts of the world today, the family is indeed in trouble. In some countries, more than 50% of marriages end in divorce. In others, the position of the wife is little more than that of a servant. Children who grow up in an unhappy family are likely to establish the same kind of family unit when they marry. What are some of the difficulties that disrupt family unity, and what does the Bible say about them? That is our topic for Lesson 5. If heaven were like your home, would you want to go there? We encourage you to make personal applications where appropriate as you study this lesson.



lesson outline

Problems of the Husband and Wife

Problems of Children

Biblical Solutions for Family Problems

lesson objectives

When you finish this lesson you should be able to:

- State two principles which will help to correct problems caused by spiritual differences between a husband and wife.
- Identify the attitude that will help a married couple successfully resolve differing sexual needs.
- Select statements which are in agreement with biblical teaching concerning how a Christian should react in a case of adultery.
- State the general rules for divorce which apply to Christians.
- Match to problem situations the correct solution for each problem.
- Choose a statement which correctly summarizes the attitude parents should have in training their children.
- Summarize in a chart the position and responsibilities of each member of the family.

learning activities

1. Work through the lesson development as instructed in the learning activities for Lesson 1. Be sure to read all Scripture texts given, and answer each study question before looking at the answer we have given.
2. Look up the glossary definitions of any key words you do not know.
3. Take the self-test and check your answers.

keywords

adolescence	humiliate	structure
belittle	indulgent	submissive
consistency	infidelity	victims
discord	prohibited	yoked
disrupt	restricted	
exasperate	spouse	

lesson development

PROBLEMS OF THE HUSBAND AND WIFE

It would be impossible in this short space to discuss and find solutions for every problem faced within the family. In our discussion of social relationships we covered many problem areas which could also be applied to the family situation. We will endeavor in this lesson to discuss those problems which are unique to the family, and find biblical principles which would give guidance in each instance. First we will look at some of the more serious problems that can occur between a husband and wife.

Spiritual Differences

Objective 1. *State two principles which will help to correct problems caused by spiritual differences between a husband and wife.*

Problems occur in some marriages because one of the marriage partners is a Christian and the other is not. Many times people enter into marriage with an unbeliever thinking that after they are married, they will be able to lead their spouse to the Lord. Or perhaps a husband or wife will become a Christian after marriage, and the other partner does not. The problems that arise from such a situation are enormous: the Christian partner has a desire for the things of God, church attendance, and developing Christian maturity, while the unsaved partner is attracted by worldly pleasures and involvements. There may be discord as to the rearing of children, and the children may be less likely to accept Christ as their own personal Savior because of the non-Christian example of the unbelieving parent. Sometimes the unbeliever even draws the Christian partner away from faith in God and into sin.

The best solution for this, or any problem, of course, is to avoid it. Marriage is forbidden with unbelievers according to 2 Corinthians 6:14-18:

Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what

fellowship can light have with darkness? What harmony is there between Christ and Belial [Satan]? What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God.

Application

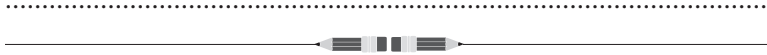
- 1 Which of the following answers would you consider best for the questions we have just read?
- a) There can be some measure of agreement in each of these examples.
 - b) There can be no agreement between any of these things because they have opposing values.
 - c) As long as each respects the standards of the other, they can work together.
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Of course, the answer to all of these questions is that right and wrong, light and darkness, Christ and Satan cannot agree or be partners. A believer and an unbeliever have nothing in common other than the basic human requirements. The young person who wants marriage so much that he or she is willing to ignore this important biblical teaching is opening the door to a life of heartache and problems. God's way is the best way, and He will provide for all of our needs if we will obey Him. We will talk about this further in our next lesson, which deals with the problems of the unmarried person.

For a Christian who is already married to an unbeliever, possibly married before becoming a Christian, the apostle Paul has given some special instructions in 1 Corinthians 7:12-16. If you will read this Scripture, you will find that he encourages the Christian to go on with the marriage as long as the ungodly partner is willing for it to continue. The Christian must not be the one to leave. Again, God is able to supply what is needed of grace and love, and who knows, the unbeliever may eventually be saved. "But if the unbeliever leaves, let him do so. A believing man or woman is not bound in such circumstances; God has called us to live in peace" (1 Corinthians 7:15).

Application

2 Why do you suppose the Christian is instructed to remain with the unbeliever in a case such as the one just described? (See Matthew 19:4-6.)



In many homes it is the mother who must assume the responsibility of spiritual leader. This is not the ideal situation, for God has established the husband as the head of the home, including spiritual leadership. Children often look to their father's example, and a father cannot expect his family to rise above his own spiritual level.

Spiritual problems in the home can only be solved by obedience to scriptural principles. In the final section of this lesson we will discuss Christian principles for the family. If you are having problems in this area of family life, you can change them by applying these principles to your own life.

Application

3 We have just discussed two basic principles which will help to correct or prevent spiritual differences between a husband and wife. State them in your own words.

- a**
-
- b**
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Differing Sexual Needs

Objective 2. *Identify the attitude that will help a married couple successfully resolve differing sexual needs.*

Sometimes in a marriage one partner's need for sexual relations is greater than the other partner's needs. Denial of sexual

relations is contrary to Scripture except by mutual agreement (see 1 Corinthians 7:5) and then only for a short period of time. A husband and wife who want to please each other will be submissive one to the other according to biblical teaching (see 1 Corinthians 7:3-4). At the same time, each will be sensitive to real needs of the other person for other expressions of love and affection that do not have sexual relations as their goal.

Sexuality in marriage will be discussed more fully in Lesson 7. The married couple who will follow biblical teaching in this respect will find that sexual fulfillment in marriage helps to bring about unity in other problem areas.

Application

- 4 Which of these attitudes will best help a married couple to resolve the problem of differing sexual needs?
- a) A wife who is always submissive.
 - b) A desire to please each other.
 - c) More limited sexual relations by mutual agreement.
-

Unfaithfulness

Objective 3. *Select statements which are in agreement with biblical teaching concerning how a Christian should react in a case of adultery.*

Probably the problem that most threatens a marriage is unfaithfulness (sexual infidelity or adultery). This, too, is discussed in Lesson 7. Adultery is strictly forbidden in both the Old and New Testaments, as we saw in Lesson 2. In this lesson, we want to look at it from the point of view of the innocent or offended partner. How should you react if your partner has committed adultery? Should you immediately seek a divorce? Should you continue in the marriage relationship if the offense is repeated over and over again? There are three aspects of this problem that we want to consider:

1. If your marriage partner continually commits acts of adultery, are you under obligation to continue in the marriage anyway? According to the words of Jesus in Matthew 19:9, divorce is

permitted only in cases of adultery: “I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, and marries another woman commits adultery.” Thus, a husband or wife is under no obligation to remain in a marriage with an unfaithful partner.

2. If a marriage is ended because of unfaithfulness, can the offended partner remarry? Bible scholars do not agree on the interpretation of Scripture in this regard. According to some, the words of Jesus in Matthew 19:9 permit remarriage in such instances. Their interpretation is that once a person has committed adultery, he has dissolved the union that made him “one flesh” with his marriage partner. Thus, the partner is no longer bound by that union. If this is the case, then the offended partner would be free to marry another person who was not in some way restricted from marriage.

Another interpretation is that divorce is permitted in case of adultery, but not remarriage. We will discuss this further under the subject of *divorce*.

3. Many things might contribute to an act of adultery. A marriage partner might refuse to engage in sexual relations with the other partner, thus causing him or her to look elsewhere to meet this need. Or there may be a moment of great temptation when a spiritually unprepared partner would yield to temptation. Certainly God does not excuse either action, and they are both sinful. But suppose the unfaithful partner repented, was truly sorry for his or her sin, and asked forgiveness. Should the offended partner forgive, and renew the oneness of their relationship?

This is possibly one of the most difficult offenses to forgive that a person would ever face in this life. The hurt of a broken trust goes deep into the heart, making it very difficult to trust again. But the principle of forgiveness is one of the most powerful teachings in all of Scripture. Christ not only taught forgiveness (Matthew 6:14) but He forgave (Luke 7:47-50). God hates sin, but He loves the sinner so much that He allowed His own beloved Son to be wounded, insulted, and hanged on a wooden cross so that our sin could be forgiven. Christ forgave the woman taken in adultery (John 8:3-11).

What greater love could be shown to a marriage partner than to grant him or her the same measure of forgiveness that Christ demonstrated to us? If a marriage can be saved and a Christian home preserved, and if the husband and wife can renew their vows to each other and to the Lord, God will bless the one who is able to forgive. In such a case, neither partner should discuss the matter again, with each other or with anyone else. It should be forgiven and *forgotten*, except as a reminder of the power of the devil to draw us into sin.

Application

- 5 Which of these statements represent biblical principles concerning how a Christian should react if his or her spouse committed adultery?
- a) A Christian must remain with his marriage partner in all circumstances.
 - b) If a marriage partner commits adultery, the other partner is obligated to leave and marry another Christian.
 - c) A marriage partner is free to leave if the other partner has committed the sin of adultery.
 - d) The sin of adultery can be forgiven and the marriage vows renewed.
- 6 Some Bible scholars interpret the words of Jesus in Matthew 19:9 as permission for
- a) the partner who commits adultery to divorce and remarry.
 - b) the innocent partner to divorce and remarry.
 - c) both partners to remarry.
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Divorce

Objective 4. *State the general rules for divorce which apply to Christians.*

God's opinion concerning divorce is clearly stated in Malachi 2:13-16 (TEV): "I hate divorce," says the Lord God of Israel. "I hate it when one of you does such a cruel thing to his wife. Make sure that you do not break your promise to be faithful to your wife" (v. 16).

In this Scripture, God explains that one reason he expects a husband and wife to be faithful to each other is so that their

children will also come to be God's people. Children of a Christian marriage enjoy many wonderful blessings such as stability, high morals, love, parental involvement, prayer and biblical training. Great problems arise for children who are the victims of divorce. I know a pastor who for two years taught 40 delinquent boys who had been placed in a special home by the legal authorities because they had been involved in various crimes. The pastor told me that the one experience all of these boys had in common was that their parents were divorced. Of course, not all children of divorced parents turn to crime, but most of them suffer in one way or another.

The general rules for divorce are these:

1. Divorce is prohibited (forbidden) for a Christian (1 Corinthians 7:10-11).
2. Marriage is prohibited with divorced persons (Luke 16:18; Matthew 5:32; 19:9; and 1 Corinthians 7:11).
3. Divorced persons are not to remarry (1 Corinthians 7:10-11).

Earlier in this lesson, we discussed the one possible reason why divorce and remarriage would be permitted for a Christian.



DIVORCE

CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE

But even in such a case there is a price to pay in suffering, damage to children, and Christian example.

In those cases where divorce has already occurred and there is no possibility of renewing the marriage vows because one of the partners has remarried, the Christian community can be a

source of comfort and help to the one who has been divorced. God does not turn His back on anyone who cries out to Him for help, and He will give the strength to remake a life and deal with the problems that divorce brings. In Lesson 6 we will look at this from the perspective of the divorced single person.

I know a couple who had both been divorced many years before they met and married each other. Some time after their marriage they became Christians. The husband was overcome with guilt because he thought since he had divorced and remarried, he was living in adultery in his second marriage. The apostle Paul has given instructions concerning this type of situation, also.

Application

7 Read 1 Corinthians 7:17-24. How can this Scripture be applied to the situation just described?

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8 Without looking back at the previous material, state the general rules for divorce which apply to a Christian.

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Other Martial Problems

Objective 5. Match to problem situations the correct solution for each problem.

We will briefly mention here several other problems which can create unhappiness and discord in a home.

1. *Lack of mutual respect and trust.* I know a husband who seems to delight in humiliating his wife in the presence of others. I know a wife who seems to seek every opportunity to belittle her husband in the presence of others by disagreeing with or correcting whatever he says. Perhaps they are using this method to repay some behavior of their spouse such as lack of showing love, or lack of submission, but this certainly is not the Christian

approach to solving problems in relationships. The Bible pattern is that the husband should love his wife in the same measure that Christ loves the church (Ephesians 5:25-28) and that the wife should honor and respect her husband (Ephesians 5:33).

Neither partner should give the other any reasons to feel jealousy. The Christian couple who has this problem should discuss it together openly and agree to avoid any situations which could cause jealous feelings to occur. The person who is constantly jealous without just cause should ask the Lord to help him overcome such feelings and develop trust in his spouse.

Application

- 9 Jealousy occurs when there is a lack of
- a) respect.
 - b) submission.
 - c) commitment.
 - d) trust
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2. *Lack of communication.* “My husband never talks to me.” This is a common complaint of wives who perhaps spend their entire day caring for small children and who look forward to communication with their husbands in the evening. There must be good communication in order to have a good marriage. A husband and wife should be able to share with their partner, more than with anyone else, their joys and sorrows, hopes and dreams, as well as their small every-day problems.

3. *Overcommitment.* One well-known Christian psychologist has called this the No. 1 problem in many Christian homes, including those of pastors and people in other full-time ministries. It is easy to become involved in so many activities outside the home that there is no time left for a home life. Home becomes a place to eat, bathe, and sleep. The family is neglected while the father is busy earning money, or ministering to the spiritual needs of others. He gives his best to his work, and leaves little or nothing of himself for his wife and children. God expects us to use the wisdom He has given us to establish the right priorities in our

lives. If the husband is going to be the spiritual leader of the home, he must spend time with his family in fellowship and training.

Application

10 Read 1 Timothy 3:1-12. What instruction does Paul give regarding church leaders which would indicate that they must give careful priority to their own families?

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4. *Financial problems.* A husband and wife must work together to establish a family budget which will meet their needs and keep them from the burden of debts that are difficult to pay. The best foundation is to tithe faithfully the first ten percent of the family income to the Lord, according to scriptural teaching (Malachi 3:8; Matthew 23:23). I firmly believe that many families suffer unnecessary financial problems, sickness, and unexpected expenses because they are not cheerful givers of God's portion of their income. God's Word emphasizes over and over again the principle of giving. We cannot outgive God. He has promised to meet our needs as we are faithful to Him (Luke 6:38).

IT ALL BELONGS TO GOD



GOD'S
TITHE

THE FAMILY'S
SHARE

The apostle Paul said that he had learned to be content whether he had plenty, or whether he had little (Philippians

4:11). Happiness is certainly not dependent upon riches. God does not want us to worry about accumulating wealth, but He wants us to trust Him to provide for our daily needs.

5. *Differences over the training of children.* Many problems arise because parents cannot agree on the training and discipline of their children. This can be avoided by obedience to the principles of child rearing given in the Bible. We will discuss some of these principles later in this lesson. Parents should always show unity in decisions concerning children, and they should discuss any differences privately, so that their children will not take advantage of their divided opinions and create more discord between the parents.

6. *Problems concerning relatives.* When a man marries, he is to leave his father and mother and devote himself to his wife (Matthew 19:5). His responsibility then is to his wife and children, and nothing should be permitted to disrupt the oneness of his marriage relationship. But the Bible does teach that if any member of the family has a serious need, we are not to turn away from the one in need. First Timothy 5:4-8 expands the believer's responsibility to include grandparents, relatives, and any widows in the family. Verse 8 adds: "If anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever."

Application

11 If the parents of a married man make demands on him which conflict with his responsibilities to his wife and children, which usually has the first priority?

- a) The parents.
- b) The wife and children.

12 Match each marital problem listed (right column) with its correct solution (left column). Write the number of each problem in front of the solution you choose for it.

- | | | |
|----------------|---|--|
| a | A careful budget which gives first priority to God's portion. | 1) Overcommitment |
| b | Follow the biblical pattern for loving and honoring each other. | 2) Problems concerning relatives |
| c | Trust each other and be trustworthy. | 3) Financial problems |
| d | Spend more time with the family. | 4) Lack of respect |
| e | Obey Christian principles and show unity. | 5) Differences over training of children |
| f | A man's first priority is his immediate family's needs, then the serious needs of other family members. | 6) Lack of communication |
| g | Share with one another. | 7) Jealousy |

PROBLEMS OF CHILDREN

Objective 6. *Choose a statement which correctly summarizes the attitude parents should have in training their children.*

Disobedience

Disobedience to parents is one of the signs of the last days. The only commandment that includes a promise is this one: "Honor your father and your mother . . . so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you" (Exodus 20:12). Children must learn obedience through careful training and discipline provided by their parents. "Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it" (Proverbs 22:6). Training doesn't just happen—it takes determination and a willingness to keep control of the situation. "A child left to itself disgraces his mother" (Proverbs 29:15). Parents must not permit disobedience in the early years of a child's life if they want to have control in the later years of his adolescence.

Today, many parents' hearts are saddened by the rebelliousness of their teenage children. Added to this are increasing temptations for young people to try drugs or alcoholic beverages, or experiment with sex. The church has felt the impact of these pressures as Christian families suffer because an unmarried daughter has become pregnant, or a son has become addicted to drugs, or a son or daughter rejects the family and leaves home seeking satisfaction in ungodly ways.

If your family is suffering because of such a problem, let me encourage you to strengthen your faith and don't give up, because God cares about you and He loves your wayward child. Take courage from the story of the Prodigal Son in Luke 15:11-32.

The father in this story did not try to prevent the son from leaving home—yet his heart must have been greatly saddened to see him go. I believe he must have prayed for his son night and day, and never stopped expecting God to work for his good in the situation. How many times a day do you suppose he went to the road and looked for his son? The Bible says that finally the son decided to return home, after he had spent all his money and lost everything he had. “But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him” (v. 20).

Christian parents can claim the promise in Proverbs 22:6. There may be times when all you can do is commit a problem child to the Lord, and trust Him to work for good. But always be ready to help your child work out the problem when he turns to you for help. Just as your heavenly Father welcomes back a repentant sinner, no matter what he has done, Christian parents must show love and compassion to their rebellious children when they call out for help.

Lack of Training and Discipline

Many times both parents work outside the home, and they have little energy for the important responsibility of training and discipline of their children. Often they expect the church and school to fulfill these functions which God has given to them. Training a child is hard work. You can't train a child simply

by telling him how he should live. You must work with him to correct every mistake, to show him what is right and wrong, to teach him what God's Word says. It is an activity that must continue until the child is old enough to leave home and assume the responsibilities of an adult.

Lack of Love and Understanding

Every person has a need for love and affection. Children who grow up in a home where there is little demonstration of love find it difficult to express love to others. Parents should take time often to show their children that they are loved.

Parents lack understanding when they demand too much of their children, or when they are permissive and indulgent, always allowing the child to have his own way. These are two extremes which can cause problems. A child who is constantly criticized or ridiculed will develop feelings of inferiority and insecurity which will go with him into adulthood. A positive approach in training children will help to avoid these problems.

Everyone responds well to approval. Correction for wrongdoing should be balanced with praise for doing what is right. The rules of love which we studied in Lesson 2 (from 1 Corinthians 13) should be applied to the parents' attitudes and treatment of their children, as well as to other relationships. Everyone has the right to be treated with dignity and respect, regardless of age.

Application

13 Which of these statements best summarizes how parents should respond to children's problems of disobedience, lack of training, and lack of love?

- a) Parents should not permit disobedience, but should carefully train a child and show him he is loved.
- b) The most important thing a parent can do for a child is punish him when he disobeys.



BIBLICAL SOLUTIONS FOR FAMILY PROBLEMS

Objective 7. *Summarize in a chart the position and responsibilities of each member of the family.*

I would like to summarize, in concluding this lesson, some basic biblical principles concerning the responsibilities of a husband, a wife, parents, and children. Following these principles will help you to work out many problems which occur within the family. They are God's pattern for the successful Christian family.

Responsibilities of the Husband

1. *To give direction.* The biblical pattern is that the husband receives direction from the Lord for the family. Abraham was directed by God to leave his home and go into the land chosen by God (Genesis 12:1). Jacob was directed by the Lord to return to the land of his father (Genesis 31:3). Joseph was directed by God to escape into Egypt to protect his family (Matthew 2:13).

The Holy Spirit led Paul to explain the pattern of authority for the Christian family: "Now I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God" (1 Corinthians 11:3, 8-12). "Children obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right" (Ephesians 6:1).

Just as a head must be sensitive to the whole body before it can communicate direction, the husband must be sensitive to the needs of his wife and children, and the direction from God, in order to be a spiritual leader in the home. A man who lives in complete submission to Christ will know how to direct the affairs of his family in ways pleasing to the Lord. This includes direction in spiritual matters: "But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord" (Joshua 24:15). (See also Acts 16:31.) His Christian wife and children, in submission to the same Lord, will gladly support his authority.

2. *To provide.* The husband is responsible to provide for the material needs of the family and for their protection (1 Timothy 5:8).

3. *To love.* The husband is to love his wife *as Christ loved the church* (Ephesians 5:25, 28). How did Christ love the church?
- a. He gave Himself up for her (Ephesians 5:25; Romans 5:8). This is a husband's sacrificial love that is willing to suffer for his wife's benefit.
 - b. To make her holy (Ephesians 5:26). A husband's love should be uplifting and encouraging to his wife in her spiritual walk with Christ.
 - c. To cleanse her by the washing with water through the Word (Ephesians 5:26). A husband's love should include sharing the Word of God with his wife that they both might be purified and nurtured through it.
 - d. To present her to Himself . . . holy and blameless (Ephesians 5:27). Love that has as its goal the wife's spiritual benefit, will be reflected back to the husband by a spiritual, blameless wife.
 - e. Christ FIRST loved us (1 John 4:19). The husband should be the one to initiate expressions of love.
 - f. As His own body (Ephesians 5:29). The church is known as the body of Christ (Romans 12:5). This expression of love includes all the things a man does for his own body, love that causes him to care for and provide for his wife in every way. This love is proved by his faithfulness to her (Proverbs 5:15, 18, 19; Malachi 2:15-16); by being considerate (1 Peter 3:7; Colossians 3:19); and by showing appreciation (Proverbs 31:28-31).

Application

14 Why do you think it is so important for a husband to love his wife in all of these ways?

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Responsibilities of the Wife

The New Testament does not teach that women are inferior to men. "There is neither . . . male nor female, for ye are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28). That passage mentions slaves, freemen, Jews, and Greeks as well as male and female. It teaches

that Christ accepts all people on an equal level, in spite of their differences. The headship of the husband is a matter of responsibility and orderly structure. Every community must have leadership and God has chosen the husband to be the leader in the family.



PARTNERS TOGETHER

In order to have a leader, there must be followers. The wife is to follow the leadership of her husband by her submission: “Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything” (Ephesians 5:24). The wife’s submission is demonstrated *as to the Lord* (5:22); *respectfully* (5:33); *as is fitting* (Colossians 3:18). Think of it! The same commitment and yieldedness that would be your response to the Lord should also be your response to your husband. A Christian wife will place her husband in high regard—she will honor him, prefer him and his company to that of others, and admire him. And if her husband is not a believer, she will possibly win him by her behavior without *talk* (1 Peter 3:1). This means that a consistent lifestyle according to Christian principles will win an unbelieving husband without the necessity of words.

In Titus 2:3-5 we find some other responsibilities of the wife given. These are things the older women should teach the younger women. But first the older women must be sure their own lives are an example. They must be reverent in the way they live, not slanderers or addicted to wine. Then they can teach the younger wives.

Application

15 Read Titus 2:3-5 and list the seven good things that older women should teach younger women.

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Responsibilities of Parents

1. *The parents are responsible to train their children* (Proverbs 22:6; Ephesians 6:4). Training involves a total approach of *example*, *teaching*, and *discipline* when needed. Children learn by the things they see in their environment, they learn by being taught, and they sometimes learn by being disciplined in a fair manner (Proverbs 29:15, 17).

2. *Discipline of children must be fair.* “Fathers, do not exasperate your children” (Ephesians 6:4). “Fathers, do not embitter your children or they will become discouraged” (Colossians 3:21). Children should not be disciplined for something they did not know was wrong, and they should not be disciplined in anger. There must be consistency. They must know there will be certain consequences for certain actions. This means that a parent must take the time and energy necessary to discipline a child when he deserves it, explain why he is being disciplined, and then perhaps pray with him about it (Hebrews 12:6-9; 2 Timothy 3:16-17).

Discipline of children means life to them. A child cannot bring himself under God’s authority if he has never learned to bring himself under his parents’ authority (see Proverbs 19:18; 23:13-14; 29:17).

3. *Training and discipline must be done in love.* Parents should pattern their attitudes after those of the heavenly Father: “Though he bring grief, he will show compassion, so great is his unflinching love. For he does not willingly bring affliction or grief to the children of men” (Lamentations 3:32-33).

Application

16 Read Hebrews 12:5-11 and circle the letter in front of TRUE statements below which explain why God disciplines His children and why parents should discipline their children.

- a** Because He likes to rebuke His children.
 - b** Because He loves His children.
 - c** Because they are *His* children (He is responsible for them).
 - d** Because He is angry with them and wants to punish them.
 - e** To win their respect.
 - f** For their good, that they may share His holiness.
 - g** To give them pain.
 - h** To produce righteousness and peace.
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We see from this Scripture that the child's response to his parents' discipline has a direct bearing on the child's later life, in his submission to God and His discipline.

Responsibilities of Children

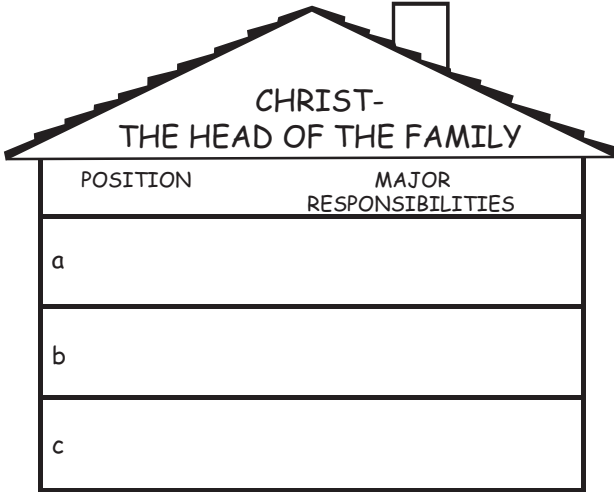
The first requirement for children is to honor and obey their parents (Exodus 20:12; Ephesians 6:1-3). God's blessing is upon children who obey their parents (Jeremiah 35:6-7, 18-19). Children who obey their parents are more likely to train their own children properly.

Honoring your parents does not stop with the end of childhood. A young man should remember the instruction and teaching of his father and mother when he goes out into the world on his own. A young person who profits from the teaching of his parents brings them great joy (Proverbs 23:22-25).

In the Old Testament severe judgment was brought upon disobedient or disrespectful children (see Exodus 21:15; Leviticus 20:9; Deuteronomy 21:18-21; Proverbs 28:24; 30:17).

Application

17 In the following chart write the position of each family member and give the major responsibilities of each in the home.



When these divine instructions concerning the responsibilities of the family members are ignored, it is no wonder that problems arise. God's pattern works, and the family which lives by these principles will know love, happiness, and fulfillment. Is this the kind of family you have? If not, what can you do to make your family what God wants it to be? You can start with yourself—when *you* are fulfilling your God-given responsibilities to your family, it will be easier to get other family members to take the same steps. Making a change may not be easily or quickly done, but the results will make it all worthwhile!

Application

18 As we did in the previous lesson, we encourage you now to apply the principles of this lesson to find solutions to problems you may have in your family. God's Word is an abundant source of help. Read it together as a family, and let it speak to your hearts.

self-test

MULTIPLE CHOICE. Choose the one best answer to each question.

- 1 The position of the husband in relation to his wife can be compared to the position of
 - a) a mother to her children.
 - b) the church to Christ.
 - c) Christ to the church.
- 2 Training a child correctly involves
 - a) punishment and approval.
 - b) teaching, discipline, and love.
 - c) permissiveness.
 - d) criticism.
- 3 Divorce is permitted only in the case of
 - a) adultery.
 - b) marriage to an unbeliever.
 - c) disagreements over children.
 - d) jealousy.
- 4 The greatest victim of a divorce is the
 - a) husband.
 - b) wife.
 - c) offended partner.
 - d) children.
- 5 If a divorced person remarries before being converted, he should after conversion
 - a) return to his former marriage.
 - b) leave his second marriage and live alone.
 - c) remain as he was at the time of conversion.
- 6 What is missing from a marriage where one partner belittles the other?
 - a) Leadership
 - b) Love and respect
 - c) Trust
 - d) Oneness
- 7 Financial problems in a home can be more easily resolved when a couple agrees to
 - a) work longer hours.
 - b) let the wife handle the finances.
 - c) pay their tithe first
 - d) avoid unexpected expenses.

TRUE-FALSE Write **T** in front of the TRUE statements, and **F** in front of those which are FALSE.

- **8** The mother should be the spiritual leader in the home.
- **9** Overcommitment to activities outside the home is a problem when it keeps the family from spending time together.
- **10** The obedient child is more likely to serve God than the disobedient child.
- **11** A Christian married to an unbeliever is free to leave at any time.
- **12** A man's first priority is to his parents.
- **13** Parents should always be ready to help a child who has been rebellious.
- **14** It is the husband's responsibility to give direction to his family and provide for them.
- **15** Headship of the family must be accompanied by love in order to function properly.

answers to study questions

- 10** Each leader must manage his own family and household well, and see that his children obey and respect him (vs. 4, 5, 12).
- 1 b)** There can be no agreement between any of these things because they have opposing values.
- 11 b)** The wife and children. (An exception might be a need of the parents which the wife agrees should be given higher priority.)
- 2** Because they are already one flesh, and that is a lifetime commitment.
- 12 a** 3) Financial problems.
b 4) Lack of respect.
c 7) Jealousy.
d 1) Overcommitment.
e 5) Differences over training of children.
f 2) Problems concerning relatives.
g 6) Lack of communication.
- 3 a** A Christian should only marry someone who is also a Christian.
b The husband should be the spiritual leader in the home.
- 13 a)** Parents should not permit disobedience, but should carefully train a child and show him that he is loved.
- 4 b)** A desire to please each other.
- 14** Your answer. I would answer in this way: The husband has been given headship over the wife. The only way he can fulfill this responsibility properly is with *love*.
- 5 a** False.
b False.
c True.
d True.
- 15** Each should love her husband; love her children; be self-controlled; be pure; be busy at home; be kind; be subject to her husband.
- 6 b)** the innocent partner to divorce and remarry.
b) dfsdf

- 16 a False.
 - b True.
 - c True.
 - d False.
 - e True.
 - f True.
 - g False.
 - h True.
- 7 This couple should remain in the situation they were in at the moment of salvation—that is, they should remain married to one another and accept the oneness God has given them through their repentance and new birth in Christ.
- 17 a The husband—gives direction, provides, loves wife and children, trains children.
- b The wife—is submissive to husband's leadership, cares for the home, loves husband and children, helps to train children.
- c The children—obey and honor their parents.
- 8 A Christian is forbidden to divorce. A Christian cannot marry a divorced person. Divorced persons are not to remarry.
- 18 Your answer.
- 9 d) trust.

