

Week 6: Training Up Your Children Part 1 - God's Management Style

WEEK 6: DAY 1

Introduction

As we enter the subject of training up children, we must keep in mind that discipline and training are most effective when there is a healthy relationship between parent and child. If this relationship is strained, or weak, the parent's role as teacher and trainer is hindered. In fact, without a positive relationship the exercise of authority actually creates hostility. Our modern penal system, primarily based on punishment, is a good example of this principle. Punishment alone does not produce reformed individuals; statistics reveal that most, after release, will commit a crime and return to prison.

Although discipline is a part of training, effective parenting depends more on love. The most powerful motivator for encouraging children to make right decisions is love. And remember, teens are children, too. Even though they are older and fighting for independence, they are equally in need of consistent parental love. When we do not use loving communication with our children, we are actually reducing their desire, or ability, to make good choices. The Bible has much to say about love, because God wants us to understand the importance of loving one another. He defines love very specifically, as we learned when studying 1 Corinthians 13. In those verses, God gave us guidelines so that we can evaluate ourselves, correct any mistakes, and properly communicate love to our children.

A discussion on love is not complete without mentioning the bond between husband and wife. This is a relationship where loving communication is absolutely necessary, it is the foundation and the source of a successful partnership. And this partnership is the starting point for administering discipline in the home. If agreement does not exist between husband and wife, it will confuse children and defeat discipline. Parents need to consistently use loving communication with each other, and also during the process of disciplining their children.

As you begin this next study, notice that it comes *after* the chapter on love. Training is essential, a mandate from God to parents, but remember that it is most effective when a child is first secure in your love. Loving communication and training work together, and build upon each other. Love without *training* produces a self-centered child with weak character, while discipline without *love* will provoke and embitter, foster rebellion, and may emotionally cripple them.

Training is Twofold

1. DISCIPLING A CHILD

The first essential of training up a child is *discipleship*, or teaching biblical morals and values. As we disciple our children, we instill God's Word into their hearts both by example and instruction. It is the parents' responsibility to teach a child how to identify right and wrong behavior, how to pray, how to study God's Word, and how to have an abiding relationship with God. A child is *not* born with biblical "morals and values," they have to be *learned*. Did you know that God not only *commands*, but considers it a *privilege* for parents to disciple their children? (Gen. 18:19; Deut. 6:7; 11:19; Pr. 22:6; Eph. 6:4)

Genesis 18:19 *"For I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the LORD, to do righteousness and justice, that the LORD may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him."*

Deuteronomy 6:7 *"You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up."*

Proverbs 22:6 *"Train up a child in the way he should go, And when he is old he will not depart from it."*

DIG DEEPER: FURTHER STUDY

Please read through the following scripture a few times. Take some time to write down what the Lord is saying to you. This is an exercise for both parents; even though it is specifically addressed to fathers, every wife is equally important in her God-given role as helpmate. As mentioned before, parents function as a team and both are responsible for discipling and disciplining their children.

Ephesians 6:4 *"And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord."*

FACT FILE

Bring them up - *ektrepheo (Greek), to nourish, rear, feed. To nurture, rear, to bring up to maturity such as children, in the sense of to train or educate.*¹

FACT FILE

Training - *paideia (Greek), means chastening, because all effectual instruction for the sinful children of men includes and implies discipline, correction...as the Lord approves.*²

1 Zodhiates, 557.

2 Zodhiates, 1088.

FACT FILE

Admonition - *nouthesia* (Greek), warning, exhortation, any word of encouragement or reproof, which leads to correct behavior.³ It is the idea of having a corrective influence on someone by imparting understanding.

We will be referring to Ephesians 6:4 throughout the study of training up a child. As you can see, God has given clear and specific instruction. Remember, our children are His children, and His desire is that they are given every opportunity to become spiritually *mature* adults. It is our responsibility to learn His plan, and then adhere to it. The verb tense of “*bring them up*” indicates continuous action, to do and continue doing without stopping, and is also a *command*. We are to do this faithfully until a child is no longer our responsibility.

At this point, there is a misconception that must be addressed. God did *not* give the church primary responsibility for this task. I would dare say from my many years in family ministry, that more than 90% of children from Christian families are *not* being disciplined at home. *Parents* have relinquished this responsibility to the church because most fathers never received any training in how to disciple their children, or have misplaced *priorities*. Praise God for fathers and mothers who are exhorting other parents to take responsibility for the spiritual training of their children - discipleship within their homes. The church is commissioned by God to support, come alongside, and encourage parents and families (Eph. 4:11-16), not to take away the responsibility of discipling the children.

2. BUILDING A CHILD'S CHARACTER

The second essential of training up a child is instilling the character traits of a mature adult, which are personal responsibility and self-control. No one is born with these traits, nor do we naturally acquire them. These qualities result from training. God's Word clearly teaches that this, as well as spiritual discipleship, is the role of the parent.

3 Zodhiates, 1017.

FACT FILE

Disciple - (verb) Instilling God’s Word and morals and values into our children’s hearts through example and instruction, teaching them to pray, and how to have a relationship with God (spiritual training).

FACT FILE

Discipline - Instilling the character traits of a mature adult, which are personal responsibility and self-control, into our children (training behavior).

 **SELF-EXAMINATION**

Are you discipling your children in the Lord at home? Yes No

Explain:

If not, are you willing to learn and start? Yes No

Write out your prayer asking God for the faith and wisdom to apply the things you are about to learn.

We will be discussing these two subjects, *discipleship* and *disciplining*, in the coming chapters. But first, the issue of God’s Management Style must be understood. As we construct our spiritual homes, if it is out of order, it will **not** create the strong, protective environment that we need to raise our children in.

Using God’s Management Style

God has *not* given parents an impossible task, because He has given us His Word and His Spirit. In His Word, God gives us specific instructions regarding raising children and, with the Holy Spirit inside us, we have the power to do *all* things according to His will (Eph. 1:11, 19).

DIG DEEPER: FURTHER STUDY

Read the following verses and write out in your own words what they mean and how they can relate to our task in parenting.

Ephesians 1:11 *“In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will.”*

Ephesians 1:19 *“and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power*

God has also outlined a management style in His Word, which we must follow if we desire His blessing on our endeavors. *Our* responsibility is simply to search His Word and obey what He tells us to do, in His power and might.

FOR SINGLE PARENTS

Again, I want to encourage any single parents at this point. All these instructions may not apply specifically to your situation, but you may be called upon to give advice to other parents and, to respond in a biblical fashion, you will need to know what God says about this subject. Additionally, you may marry again. So please, as you read this chapter, take it in as wisdom and understanding that God wants to teach you, to prepare you for what may be in the future. Besides God wants every believer to know the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27). If you do not know, how can you counsel your own children correctly in this area? Turn to **Appendix F, Essentials for Single Parents**, where you will find helpful insight and encouragement for parents raising their children alone!

A BLENDED FAMILY

If you are in a blended-family marriage, please note that none of these instructions change; they apply to you the same as the traditional family. Nowhere in His Word did God say if you are a blended family, you are excused from this management style. God does not have a plan A, B, C, He has only one plan that we are all to follow. See **Appendix S** for more help and encouragement for Blended Families.

The Logic of a Management Style

If you have worked in a group setting, large or small, you know that there was a management style in place. Without this structure, there is no leadership, and disorder, division and chaos will bring devastating consequences. We can all agree that a home is a group, so it is important that our homes operate according to a management style - God's management style. Many families that I have counseled have suffered major problems due to the fact that their homes were out of order. The division present within the home is reflected outside the home as well. When Christian families are disobedient to God, even out of ignorance, they malign the Word of God and ultimately God Himself.

As a Christian couple, you must both agree to embrace what God's Word says. If you adopt any other standard for family management, you are not under His blessings. When we are disobedient to God's management style, there are consequences. God has pre-warned us for our protection and, as with any disobedience, He will administer discipline so that we repent and come into line with His Word (Heb. 12:3-11).

DIG DEEPER: FURTHER STUDY

Read the following Scripture and write out what God promises to do to ALL his children.

Hebrews 12:3–11 *“For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls. You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin. And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: “My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; For whom the LORD loves He chastens, And scourges every son whom He receives.” If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons. Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness. Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.”*

Consequences can come in many forms: feeling separated from the Lord, lacking the strength to live for Him, no peace or contentment, confusion, turmoil, depression, and contention just to name a few. But the good news is when we line up with God's Word and repent, He will restore us and *keep us* on track. It is these negative consequences *God* uses to get our attention.

DIG DEEPER: FURTHER STUDY

Read the Scripture below and write down what the negative consequences are when we do things our own way.

Romans 2:8–9 *“but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness—indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek.”*

FACT FILE

Self-seeking - means doing things in our own way, using ours, or this world's wisdom in making choices.

The Institution of Family

As we discussed previously, the family is an institution created by *God* and, as such, is subject to His design. In order for a family to operate correctly, God has ordained that there must be leadership and authority within it. Let us now look to the structure He established for this vitally important institution.

According to the account in Genesis, God, seeing that it was *not* good for the man to be alone, gave him a helper, or a helpmate, *“And the LORD God said, ‘It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a **helper comparable to him**’”* (Gen. 2:18). Notice the word He used here is *helper*, not *leader*. God formed the man out of the dust of the ground (Genesis 2:7), but He also formed or, literally, *built* the woman out of the rib of the man (Genesis 2:21-22). God was demonstrating the role that the husband and wife would have in one another's lives. They would be mutually dependent upon one another. The man needed companionship. The man needed help! God provided that help through the woman. A woman would *make up* for what was lacking in the man, and vice versa. The woman's life came from the man, and man's life would proceed from the woman.

SELF-EXAMINATION

- Wives, do you want to be a helper/helpmate to your husband?
 Yes No (Tell him now.)
- Husbands are you willing to admit to yourself and your wife that you need her?
 Yes No (Tell her now.)
- Are you both open to learn how to work together under God’s management style?
 Yes No

On that day there was no power struggle, no conflict, no misunderstanding between them and no battle of the sexes! They were naked and not ashamed. They were oblivious to evil and absolutely innocent.

God made the man responsible for *tending* the things He created. Genesis 2:15 says, “*Then the LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it.*”

Further, we read, “*Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become **one** flesh*” (Gen. 2:24). God instructs that we are to see the relationship between husband and wife as *one*, unified. Both need to be in agreement, thinking as one, or “unified” in following what the Bible says.

SIN ERODES GOD’S MANAGEMENT STYLE

Unfortunately, as we turn the page of our Bible to chapter three of Genesis, we learn that domestic tranquility was short-lived.

In Genesis 3:1, the serpent enters the scene with no introduction or explanation. We learn that, in contrast to man’s innocence, the serpent was shrewd and *cunning*. Satan disguised himself as a shining serpent in order to converse with and ultimately *deceive* the woman.

Take note: where was Adam when this was happening? Why didn’t he step up and *lead* here? Adam’s *lack* of leadership and interceding makes him equal in blame.

- **Husbands do you want to do what Adam did in your family?** Yes No

In verses 1-8, the downfall of man unfolds:

Satan planted *doubt* in Eve’s mind.

“Indeed, has God said...” V. 1

Satan lied to the woman.

"You surely shall not die." V. 4

Satan enticed Eve with an evil desire.

"For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." V. 5

Satan deceived the woman and she sinned.

"...the woman saw...she took and ate..." V. 6

FACT FILE

Deceived - To cause to accept as true or valid what is false or invalid, to believe a lie, to be lead astray, or ensnared.

When she took and ate, she was deceived, believing the lies of the enemy.

Satan used the woman's influence toward her husband to encourage him to sin.

"...she also gave to her husband, and he ate." V. 6

God's order had been *violated*. The couple's relationship to God and to one another was marred. Stripped of their righteousness and innocence, they would suffer the *consequences* of their rebellion. The curses resulting from the fall are recorded in Genesis 3:16-19.

*"To the woman He said, 'I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; in pain you shall bring forth children; your **desire** shall be for your husband, and he shall **rule** over you.' "*
V. 16

The word *desire* in Genesis 3:16, also in Genesis 4:7, means *a desire to dominate*. The man has been given authority over his wife, yet she would thereafter struggle to submit and, in fact, have a carnal *desire* to not yield to her husband's leadership.

Adam did not obey God's instructions when he failed to lead and protect his wife, but rather did as she requested, and he also was cursed (vs. 17-19).

God said to Adam, *"Because you have heeded the voice of your wife." V. 17*

By failing to guard his wife from Satan's spiritual attack, and to lead, and then following her into sin, Adam *neglected* to carry out the *responsibility* that God had given him to oversee his family. He would forever be held responsible for sin entering the world. The *curse* of sin continues to take its toll. In countless homes,

husbands struggle with insecurity in their leadership role, and just as many wives are resisting their husbands attempts to lead. Typically, men today follow the example of Adam by failing to exert their authority in the home, and women, like Eve, feel they do not need protection and demonstrate a desire to rule.

Romans 5:12 “Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin...”

Concerning this subject, one author says,

“God gave headship to man before sin entered. Paul argues this fact from the order of creation (man was created first) and the purpose of creation (woman was made for the man) (1 Cor. 11:8, 9). Also, although it was Eve who sinned first, it is by Adam, the head, that sin is said to have entered the world. He had the position of head and was thus responsible.”⁴

- Husbands, are you willing to learn to protect and lead according to God’s Word?
 Yes No
- Wives, are you willing to hear and yield to God’s instruction in how to manage the home?
 Yes No

God never intended for a woman to be the authority figure in the home; instead, to be her husband’s helpmate. The man, on the other hand, needs the help and support of his wife in order to fulfill his role as head of the family under the lordship of Jesus Christ. This is God’s wonderful plan, the *management style* that we, as Christians, are to follow in order to be blessed.

WEEK 6: DAY 2

Looking to God’s Word

Remember, it is *God’s* will and purpose we seek and obey, *not* our own, or what we find in worldly philosophy. We discussed the following verse in week one.

DIG DEEPER: FURTHER STUDY

Read and write down how this may apply to following, or not following, God’s management style for your home.

⁴ William MacDonald, *Believer’s Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments*, ed. Arthur Farstad (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1995), 35.

Colossians 2:8 *“Beware lest anyone **cheat** you through **philosophy** and empty deceit, according to the **tradition of men**, according to the basic **principles of the world**, and not according to Christ.”*

Paul was concerned that the Colossians would be *cheated* by following unbiblical philosophies. When it comes to marriage, parenting, and how the home should operate, there are plenty of worldly philosophies, traditions of men, and principles of the world that are NOT according to Christ. The word “beware” or I should say, “be aware,” encourages us to watch for what is happening around us. In this case, it warns us to use Godly discernment for separating truth and error. We must have *discerning minds* that can identify and lay hold of the *truth* in order to fight off any lie. (You see, many families have been cheated by believing lies, and therefore have forfeited the blessings and peace that comes from functioning according to the principles of God’s Word.) The conclusion is that the worldly philosophies, traditions of men and principles of the world rob us from what Christ wants to do in our families.

FACT FILE

Cheat (take you captive NASB) means to plunder or rob as when plunder is taken in war. In this case it is to rob believers of the complete riches that they have in Christ as revealed in the Word, plus His power and intervention.

The question you need to ask yourself is, “Have I been cheated by believing something that is not based on God’s Word?” Many times we do not examine ourselves, but just go with the flow. We who are spiritual are to “judge all things” (1 Cor. 2:15), and operate according to the wisdom of God, not the wisdom of man, or of this age (1 Cor. 2:5, 6, 13). As we move through God’s management style, “be aware” of the leadership structure within your home. We must willingly abandon the influence of all traditions, cultural norms, ethnic traits, or past personal experience if they are *contrary* to God’s ways. I realize that this may be very hard because it requires breaking some generational sins and/or bad habits, and totally changing the way that you operate and think. But we serve a God of great compassion and He will empower you to change, so that you may “*be renewed in the spirit of your mind*” (Eph. 4:23).

We need to “be aware” of letting our thinking and behavior fall under the influence of the following philosophies.

CULTURE/ETHNIC

Many people I have counseled say, “Well, in my culture (meaning ethnic background), this is the way we do it.” Or “As a _____ (you fill in your ethnic background) the woman has no say so in the home, or the woman does all the training of the children.” I respond with, “Well, are you a Christian?” “Yes.” “Well then, for this issue you must put your cultural beliefs aside, because they are in direct conflict with the Word of God.” Many times, cultural beliefs are just preferences with no moral implications and it is totally fine to practice them, however, when a cultural belief is contrary to the Bible, it becomes a moral conflict, which is *sin*. We must “ALWAYS” check our beliefs about marriage and family with God’s Word.

CULTURE

Our culture, or the “philosophies and principles of this world”, is all around us. The wisdom of the world comes via the media (books, TV, movies, magazines, and internet, just to name a few), or often through education and peer pressure. Any of these can influence us to view marriage and family through the lens of the world. Beliefs and philosophies get so ingrained that we actually believe that “this is the truth, this is the way I am supposed to operate my family,” until we compare it to the Word of God.

RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS

I would like to mention that there are many religious teachings about marriage and parenting that have become traditions. Something like, “In our religion we have always done it this way.” My prayer is that everyone would be like the Christians in Berea, who after hearing the teaching of Paul, “searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so” (Acts 17:11). Do not blindly take anyone else’s word on truth, not even mine, but open the Word and verify that it is true.

TRADITIONS OF MEN

Traditions are those beliefs and behaviors that are passed down from one person to another, one generation to another. This happens all the time with marriage and parenting styles. Too often, parents give their grown children bad parenting advice, such as, “When we raised you, we did it this way so you should, too!” As Christians, we all have to make tough decisions when it comes to following Christ; when the Word of God is your standard, you must *always* honor God and His Word above all others, including your parents. Again, not all traditions have moral implications, but when they do, they must be rejected.

Jesus’ Perspective on Traditions

Dealing with the confusion of separating tradition from truth is not new. Jesus had to deal with certain religious leaders who preferred to live their lives according to the traditions which dominated the religious culture in which they were raised. We see now, by reading the scripture, that by stubbornly refusing to give up those ideas taught to them by men, they eventually rejected the Savior who came to save them.

Here is what Jesus said,

Mark 7:9, 13 *“All too well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition...making the word of God of **no effect** through your tradition which you have handed down. And many such things you do.”*

Jesus was telling men that God had given instructions (commandments) to live by, but they were following man-made rules, or principles, not truth. By doing this, they were making the Word of God of *no effect*. In this context, the Pharisees were saying that they could not take care of their parents financially because the money was “corban,” a sacrificial gift to God. In reality, they were saving the money for their own purposes. They had devised a way of legally avoiding the fifth commandment to honor father and mother. The reason I bring this up is because we have a tendency to spiritualize, or put our own twist on the Scriptures to suit our own purposes. Jesus told them, *“in vain they worship Me teaching as doctrines the commandments of men”* (Mark 7:7). No word or deed goes unnoticed by the Lord.

Biblical Traditions

There are traditions to which we should hold tightly. Paul told the church at Thessalonica, *“Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle”* (2 Thess. 2:15). Paul was saying stand firm and hold onto the *biblical truths* that had been given to them by the apostles through their preaching and letters. We must all hold tightly to the *truth*.

Jesus' Perspective on Family

Jesus also gives an exhortation on whether to follow a family member's principles or His, He says, *“If anyone comes to Me and does not **hate** his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple”* (Luke 14:26).

Jesus is *not* saying that to love Him we must *hate* our families, spouse, or our children. Rather, if it comes to a choice of doing something God's way or our *parents' way*, or the *world's*, or our own way, we *must* choose God's way. Basically, the word translated in this verse as “hate” would be better translated “love less”; meaning that our love for God, His Word, and what He desires is so great that neither my desires nor my families' will keep me from obeying what He wants. That is the commitment of a true disciple. In Christ's day, Jews who became followers of Christ were shunned as those who had abandoned the faith, or Judaism. Many times a family would cast them out.

We cannot let any other relationship cause us to compromise the truth in Christ, no matter how it may look to others. And as Christians, we will sometimes be considered strange when we follow biblical principles that are contrary to the world's viewpoint.

1 Peter 4:4 *“In regard to these, they think it strange that you do not run with them in the same flood of dissipation, speaking evil of you.”*

We should look strange, because we are strangers, aliens to the world, and God’s Word now dictates and governs how we do all things.

Ephesians 2:12 *“that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.”*

DIG DEEPER: FURTHER STUDY

Read the following verse and write down, in your own words, *who* God says you are and what *He* has called you to *do*.

1 Peter 2:9 *“But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.”*

I covered these controversial issues now because, as we discuss this next section, we need to put all other ideas aside and fully *embrace* what we find in God’s Word.

Biblical Leadership in the Home

Remember, God created the institution of family and has established a line of authority, clearly appointing husbands, or fathers, to lead. In understanding this, our goal must be to fulfill God’s will and purpose, and to glorify Him.

Read the following verses, and fill in the chart below.

1 Corinthians 11:3 *“But I want you to know that the **head** of every man is Christ, the **head** of woman is man, and the **head** of Christ is God.”*

Colossians 3:18-21 *“Wives, submit to your own husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives and do not be bitter toward them. Children, **obey** your parents in all things,*

for this is well pleasing to the Lord. Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged."

_____ is the head of Christ

_____ is the head of the man

_____ is the head of the woman

Children are to submit to _____

It seems that these Scriptures would clear any debate over meaning, but there is division among certain circles of thought. The debate is raised over whether or not the man is the head over the wife. Is the husband really to be the leader of the home? This question must be answered by both the husband and wife; they must agree on *God's* perspective, and then *embrace* the roles God has designed for each of them. As we discussed above, the natural desire of the women will be to rule as it is part of the curse (Gen. 3:16). God did not put that in the Bible by accident, but for us to understand that a struggle will occur, and must become subject to His will.

The word head, *kephale* (Greek), is translated different ways in the New Testament. One Greek scholar explains the use of the word *head*, in the metaphorical sense, as it appears in the verse above.

FACT FILE

Head: means the chief or lead person to whom others are subordinate.

If you look up each of the passages below, you will understand the importance of the headship principle. For our purposes, it describes the relationship between husband and wife.

Metaphorically of persons, i.e., the head, chief, one to whom others are subordinate, e.g., the husband in relation to his wife (1 Cor. 11:3; Eph. 5:23) insofar as they are one body (Matt. 19:6; Mark 10:8), and one body can have only one head to direct it; of Christ in relation to His Church which is His body, and its members are His members (cf. 1 Cor. 12:27; Eph. 1:22; 4:15; 5:23; Col. 1:18; 2:10, 19); of God in relation to Christ (1 Cor. 11:3). In Col. 2:10 & Eph. 1:22, God the Father is designated as the head of Christ.⁵

Let me help you understand the train of thought that is being communicated. In 1 Corinthians 11:3 it says,

5 Zodhiates, 860.

“the head of Christ is God.” I have never heard anyone debate that. Why? Because it is very clear from the gospel of John that Jesus fully submitted to the Father’s will (Jn. 5:30). His food was to do the Father’s will (4:34), planned before time began so that we would be saved (Eph 1:4). Jesus *willingly* submitted to the headship of the Father, all the way to the cross.

Jesus Christ was functioning in the *role* of son and redeemer, even though He was *equal* with God in every way. The issue is not who is better or more qualified, Jesus was just *fulfilling the role* that was given to Him. In the same way, the husband/father or the wife/mother has been given a *role* by God in which to function. It is not who is better or more qualified, we are all equal in God’s sight, it is who God *designed* you to be: a man is a husband/father, a women is a wife/mother.

Next, I have also never had anyone debate whether Christ is the head of the Church. Ephesians 1:22 states that *“He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church.”* God the Father gave Christ authority to function as the head of the church. What is our role, or how are we to relate to Christ as the head? We are to have an attitude of *willingly* submitting to the Father’s plan of Christ being *head* of the church, and we are to recognize that Christ has all authority (*“all things under His feet”*), and we are to *willingly* submit to Christ. Obedient Christians acknowledge this and act accordingly.

I also have never heard a Christian debate that *“the head of every man is Christ”* (1 Cor. 11:3). Every Christian understands that mankind, and in this case the husband, is to submit to Christ. Again, as Christians we *willingly submit* to Christ because He is the head.

With that background in mind, when we read, *“the head of women is man”* (1 Cor. 11:3), and *“For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body”* (Eph. 5:23), what conclusions should we come to?

1. Just as Christ *is* the head of the church, so *is* the husband the head of the wife. Husband, this **is** your calling, role, and/or how you are to function.
2. Just as the church is to submit itself to the headship of Christ, so the wife is to submit herself to the headship of her husband. Wife, this is your calling, role, and/or how you are to function.
3. Just as Christ has the responsibility of leading the church because of His *headship*, so the husband has the responsibility of leading his wife and his family because of his *headship*.
4. Just as God the Father had a *plan* in making Christ the head of the Church, so He has a *plan* in making the husband the head of the wife and family.

Isn't this outdated?

I have heard it said, "Hey, we are in the 21st century and things have changed, so we need to update the Bible to fit our times." The Bible has proven itself to be the source of truth in every *century* and *culture*, including ours. *It never becomes out dated.*

Just to illustrate that headship does not change over time, I would like to use Abraham and Sarah as an example, from 1 Peter. When Peter wrote this letter, it was about AD 64, and here we are about 2,000 years later. In chapter 3:1-7, he covers the subject of husbands and wives. Peter encourages wives to be submissive to their husbands (3:1-4), and then uses the story of Abraham and Sarah to illustrate his point. Peter said, *"For in this manner, in former times, the holy women who trusted in God also adorned themselves, being submissive to their own husbands, as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, whose daughters you are if you do good and are not afraid with any terror"* (1 Pt. 3:5–6).

Something noteworthy is that Abraham and Sarah lived about 2,000 years before this was written, and Adam and Eve lived 2,000 years before that. So, following the timeline from creation: God designed the husband to lead and Eve to help, 2,000 years after that Abraham and Sarah are following the same pattern, then 2,000 years later Peter is directing the New Testament believers to follow the same pattern. We gather from this that time (4,000 years) did not change how God designed marriage to work at creation. If God was going to change the management style, He would have done it in the New Testament. And, since the Word of God is complete and we are not to add to it or take away from it (Deut. 4:2; 12:32; Prov. 30:6; Rev 22:18), then we need to embrace it.

Deuteronomy 4:2 *"You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you."*

Proverbs 30:6 *"Do not add to His words, Lest He rebuke you, and you be found a liar."*

DIG DEEPER: FURTHER STUDY

Warning: Read the following Scripture and write out what many people will be doing prior to Jesus' return.

2 Timothy 4:3–4 *"For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables."*

We must not forget that all are born with a sin nature that wants to follow Satan, the world, or the flesh. Therefore, if not watchful, we can wind up polluting God’s Management Style with philosophies that are contrary to Scripture. That is why we must weigh every thought and action against His precious Word; ignorance will not stop the negative consequences from happening.

Note on a Successful Woman

If you remember the TV series *Full House*, DJ was played by Candace Cameron (now Bure) whose brother, Kirk Cameron, starred in *Growing Pains*. She is still acting and is also successful as a wife and mother. Candace met her husband, Val Bure (a Russian hockey player) at a charity hockey game, and not long after they were married and had children. After being married 10 years, here is what she had to say about marriage and God’s Management Style.

Like any marriage we’ve had our happy days and our growing pains (no pun intended), but it wasn’t until nearly a decade into our marriage that I really began to understand the impact that my role as a wife could have in this union. With some changes of my own, I was excited to discover that an already good relationship could be transformed into a great one. The first step I took was understanding that although marriage is an equal partnership where husband and wife are equally important, we aren’t *designed* to share the same *roles* [emphasis added]. Holding the Bible, I read, “For the man is not of the woman: but the woman of the man. Neither was the man created for the woman: but the woman for the man” (1 Cor. 11:8–9 KJV). Today’s society had me believe that there should be no differences between a man and a woman. Society had it wrong. Val and I were created equally but differently, and so we have differing responsibilities in our marriage—mine being his helpmate. God created Adam, and when he saw that Adam was alone, he created Eve to be his helper. Was this an important lesson in reshaping me? Very much so...If we can learn to yield to the authority God has placed in our lives, in turn we learn that our flesh must yield to our Spirit.⁶

SELF-EXAMINATION

Write down what has the Lord been revealing to you about your disposition as a husband/father or wife/mother.

⁶ Bure, Candace Cameron; Darlene Schacht (2010-12-20). *Reshaping It All* (pp. 108-109). B&H Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

WEEK 6: DAY 3

The Power of a Father

Fathers, I want to say this to you before I move ahead. It is so important that you truly understand the power that God has given you. It is *supernatural*. God has given you *influential* power over your children that are absolutely beyond anyone else's influence.

For years, studies have proven the power of a father in the life of his kids. Many of these studies looked closely at the family dynamics in the lives of men like Sigmund Freud, Karl Marx, Adolph Hitler and many other hardened criminals. The one thing they all had in common was either *no* father or a very *bad relationship* with their father. On the other hand, when we study some of the most powerful people in the world, who have blessed our society, we see that most of them had healthy relationships with their fathers.

God has put it in the hearts of children to look instinctively to their daddies for affirmation, encouragement and value. But for some reason, as we grow up and raise our own kids, we forget how influential our dads were to us, not realizing how damaging our lack of proper leadership or our words and actions can be.

I have a huge sword in my office, a King Solomon sword; it is beautiful. I use it as an illustration when I am counseling. I say, "Dad, every time you get angry and yell at your child, it's just like using that sword to slice up the heart of your child."

When you act harshly toward your child, you are abusing that influential power God has given you. Your children know you are supposed to lead; they want you to lead in all areas of your home, especially in the area of training them. That is why it is so important that you lead as Christ did.

Step-Families

As I mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, a blended family does not qualify for a change in management style. As a step-in dad, you must still lead, and as a step in mom, you are still to do as the Bible instructs. Neither of you should demand that the children call you dad or mom, nor embrace you like a biological father or mother. But children must understand that biological parenting is not the issue; you are going to do what the *Bible says*, which includes participating in the training of all the children.

I would venture to say that this issue has played a major role in as many as 80% of the divorces among blended families. These couples felt that their particular circumstances exempted them from these biblical principles and failed to embrace them. In reality, the Word of God instructs us that all children belong to *Him*. They are merely loaned to us by God to love and train. *God's plan* does not change when the children live in a blended family.

See **Appendix S** for additional issues to consider.

Husband/Father is not a Dictator

Headship is *not* dictatorship or lordship, but loving leadership, with Jesus Christ as the *example*. When our house functions in any other way, we are in direct disobedience to God. More specifically, the husband, or father, is to lead, as God instructs, not as a dictator with a heavy hand. God’s Word describes leadership in this way:

2 Timothy 2:24-26 *“And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will.”*

DIG DEEPER: FURTHER STUDY

After reading the above verse, what are some key characteristics that mark a servant of the Lord, and secondly what are the hopeful end results?

In reality, we are *all* servants of the Lord and the exhortation is to be *gentle* to all. Please notice that gentleness also needs to be expressed to those who are in *opposition* to us.

FACT FILE

Gentle: “denotes seemly, fitting; hence, equitable, fair, moderate, forbearing, not insisting on the letter of the law; it expresses that considerateness that looks humanely and reasonably at the facts of a case.”⁷

When someone insists on the letter of the law, “you will do it my way,” they miss the whole point of Godly leadership, which ultimately leads people to *truth* and reconciliation. Dictatorship leads to quarrels and separation. Paul, a great leader, teacher and apostle of Christ is described in 1 Thessalonians 2:7 as being *“gentle among you, just as a nursing mother cherishes her own children.”* His behavior toward the

⁷ W.E. Vine and F.F. Bruce, vol. 2, *Vine’s Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* (Old Tappan NJ: Revell, 1981), 144-45.

Thessalonian church was similar to that of a concerned, loving mother. When we dads meet opposition, this *is* the disposition we need to use. I am not saying to ever compromise the truth or Word of God, but to be willing to adapt or adjust so to get a cooperating agreement from your spouse.

Christ showed that He was a servant-minister; as fathers and husbands, we must have that same understanding. It goes right back to our strong foundation. As we rely upon God's strength, He gives us the ability to serve as Christ did - gentle to all, patient and humble.

"In humility" means without pride, or arrogance. I know that many men resort to the dictator's style by saying, "I'm the **man**, do what I say. I'm supposed to lead." But that is *not* the way God wants us to lead; that is the way of the flesh.

On the other hand, a husband, or father, leading as Christ did is *not* passive, or uninvolved. He does not *relinquish* his God given-responsibility, or authority, to his wife in the area of training, as many men today are doing, saying to their wives, "I work; you take care of the kids." Meanwhile, their wives are thinking, "I wish this guy would step up to the plate! I've been hoping and praying that would happen."

To show how our culture has changed the husband's role, we just need to look at a dictionary. I have an old dictionary, which I refer to periodically, a big leather-bound *Webster International Dictionary* published in 1944. The word *husband* in that dictionary is defined as follows: "one who manages or directs his household, a married man, leadership and/or authority within a house, to manage prudently¹." A 1996 version of the same dictionary, however, says: "a male head of household."⁸ Period, that is it! The 2012 version says "The state of being united to a person of the opposite sex as husband and wife in a consensual and contractual relationship recognized by law, 2) the state of being united to a person of the same sex in a relationship like that of a traditional marriage."

What are the major points that have changed?

The word *management* in the 1944 version is defined as: "to conduct or direct, to handle successfully or cope with, to conduct, guide, administer, to render and keep one submissive, to guide by careful and delicate treatment, to treat with care, to *husband*." Isn't that amazing? You will not find that in today's dictionary!

8 *Webster's II New Riverside Dictionary Revised Edition, Office Edition*; Houghton Mifflin Company, 1996

My Wife, My Helpmate

God has given me a wife to complete me. Since God says she is the one who completes me, I must look to her for input, especially on the emotional condition of the hearts of my kids, which many times I do not see. Truthfully, as a man and the way God has wired me, I am not tuned into my kid's emotional needs. I think most men can relate to this.

When my children were young, if I would come home and the chores were not done, I would be thinking one thing and one thing only, they need to be done now! Why did my wife not reinforce this? I was ready to call down the discipline. I saw things in black and white, and as a man, I wanted to fix it. Most men are wired like this because we are designed to be leaders. Gradually, I *learned* to do a little investigating, getting my wife's input, which clued me into some new information like, "Honey, he was up until 2:00 am because he's had finals this week. I told him he could do his chores tomorrow."

I am the leader of the family but my wife is a *gift* from God, she is my helpmate. It is my male nature to see this situation from a different perspective. Rule - lawn was to be mowed by 6 pm every Thursday. Consequence - if not, child would receive discipline, and it is mowed the following day. It is logical and clear. But my wife has helped me to be more *sensitive*, and to *consider* situations differently.

Note: It should be the exception, NOT the rule, for a wife to change the discipline plan laid out for the children. She is to submit to her husband's leadership, and discipline plan, but husbands also need to seek help from a wife's sensitive and nurturing nature to *help them* become better fathers and disciples for Christ.

Because of my wife's input, I understood the stress my son was under and why she made the decision she did. I would also like to mention that this did not mean that every time the children wanted out of doing a chore, or wanted to change a rule, that they could go to their mother and she had the OK to make changes on a whim. We need to work together, as a *team*, to *prevent* any type of manipulation or undermining of what we have established.

As men, we need to *embrace* how God made our wives—they complement us because they often see things that we miss. We would be foolish to say, "I'm the man, and it's going to happen *this way*." Yet some men do exactly that, which is not following what God says. Your wife *completes* you, as your helpmate. You must endeavor to work with her, to work in *unison*.

There were, of course, times when we did not agree and my wife had to choose to submit. By doing so, she *trusted God*. Even when I was wrong, God blessed us, not for any other reason than we desired to do things His way. When these situations happened, did she do it happily? Well, not always. But did she pout and frown, ignore me and do all the other things some women do? Praise God, no! She had *learned* to trust the Lord with my authority and, by doing so, she was blessed. When we had set a rule and the discipline,

if she wanted to change it, she knew to first try and speak to me. Was I always right when I made a decision? No! I had been wrong many times, as the Lord has shown me. But, praise the Lord, we learn from our mistakes, too!

Women are commonly more *driven* by their emotions, and may *react* to situations based on their *feelings*. If they allow these feelings to rule in the area of training, many will not follow through *consistently* with enforcing rules, or issuing discipline. Men need to understand that most women have to fight harder than we do against the urge to “let it go”, or not administer discipline.

This is where men need to gently say, “Honey, I understand they had a hard day, but discipline is what needs to happen at this time.” Training is about working together, and it is also showing love to our children.

Note: There are a small percentage of men who seem to be driven by their emotions. The interesting reality they usually marry a women who is not (God’s sense of humor.)

DIG DEEPER: FURTHER STUDY

Read the following verse and write down what God says He will do for those He loves?

Hebrews 12:5–6 *“And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: “My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; For whom the LORD loves He chastens, And scourges every son whom He receives.”*

 **ACTION PLAN**

Husbands, take a moment and write out some of your wife’s gifts, or strengths. (For example: “She is more discerning of the children’s feelings.” or “She helps me see the children’s point of view.”) Then, thank her for the gifts God has given her and let her know that you want her input.

Next, discuss and agree to work through issues, write them down. To begin to work together as a team using God's Management Style, take a moment and pray together asking God for His help.

Resistance Brings Consequences

Romans 13:1-2 *"Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves."*

When Paul wrote this, the Roman government was ruling *over* the Jews with a heavy hand. The Jews wanted to be released from Roman *authority* because of the oppression and unfair treatment. That is the context of this passage.

It is also noteworthy that Paul was addressing Christians being persecuted for their faith, and the natural tendency was to *resist* the authorities. For this reason, Paul takes quite a bit of time explaining God's perspective on authority. The only time to resist is when authorities ask us to sin, or not share the gospel (Acts 4:18-20).

Here are some biblical principles we can draw from these passages:

Notice that the Scripture says, *"there is no authority except from God"* (v 1). That is pretty inclusive, no authority. In this case we have government over all citizens (Titus 3:1; 1 Pet. 2:13-17), but God also speaks of the church and pastors' authority over all believers (Heb. 13:7, 17); the headship of husband over wife (1 Cor. 11:3, 8-9; Eph. 5:22); the rule of parents over children (Ex. 20:12; Prov. 6:20-22; 23:22; Luke 2:51; Eph. 6:1); and the position of masters over all employees (Eph. 6:5-8; Col 3:22; 1 Pet. 2:18). I think you get the point.

Notice, *"the authorities that exist are appointed by God"* (v 1). This same word for appointed is used in Acts 13:48, *"as many as were appointed to eternal life."* In other words, God so orchestrates things, so that He controls who is in authority. That means good government officials and bad, good pastor and bad, good husbands and bad, good parents and bad, good employers and bad. We may not understand this, but that is what the Word of God says. Why do you think there were, and are, so many martyrs? Christians have been killed under the hand of the government (as well as many other authorities) because they would not deny their faith, even when threatened with death. The martyrs lived and died by the principle that "God appoints *all* authority."

Scripture also notes that those who “*resist authority, resist the ordinance of God*” (v 2), which is rebelling directly against the Lord. By resisting this order, you bring divine judgment on yourself. God spoke these spiritual laws into existence; they are very similar to physical laws as we discussed earlier, like gravity. Gravity is a good thing; it keeps us down here on the earth with our feet firmly on the ground. That is what God’s truth does, keeps us firmly planted in His will so that we can receive His blessings for obedience.

Husbands, according to what has just been said, God has appointed you to lead, you are in authority, God calls you to this position. When the husband says, “I know I am supposed to lead but ____” you fill in the blank, you are *resisting* what God has ordained you to do, breaking a spiritual law, and bringing judgment upon yourself. This judgment can come in many forms: lack of power to live the Christian life, trouble understanding God due to your disobedience, diminishing intimacy with the Lord resulting in loss of peace, joy, confidence and/or contentment, and much more.

I have heard many *excuses* for not leading: “my wife is a better leader,” “she is more educated,” “she is better with the kids,” “she has more patience,” or “I am not a real leader,” or “I just don’t know how,” just to name a few. But more than likely you are leading something at your job, and I bet you are pretty good at it.

When a wife says, “I know God says I need to submit to the authority of my husband, but _____,” you fill in the blank. You may not have physical pain immediately as a consequence, but you will eventually experience pain. The consequences are painful in the same way a man will suffer, as mentioned above.

When we choose to walk in the light, we have peace, joy, and contentment. When we don’t, these gifts from God will begin to fade. Depression, un-fulfillment, and unhappiness will soon follow, along with the many possible physical ailments.

When I started counseling one particular couple, the wife looked like she had five hundred pounds on her back. She was all hunched over and looked very depressed. She sat down and poured out her heart - how her house was a mess; she and her eighteen-year-old daughter were not speaking to each other; she and her fifteen-year-old son argued all the time; she was depressed, on medication, and seeing a psychiatrist. She went on and on. I looked at her husband, and said, “So, where are you in all this?” “She’s right. Our kids argue with her all the time.” I said, “What do you do about that?” “Well, when she wants me to help, I help her. When she comes and gets me, I go in there and yell and say, ‘Alright, that’s enough.’”

Then, this mom told me she knows that’s not the right thing to do and explained why she was leading in the area of discipline rather than her husband, “My background is in psychology. I’ve been trained in this area.” She said, “I can better deal with the children than my husband. I can communicate with them and talk things out.”

I said to her, “So you are depressed, you feel like giving up and you’re tired of the way you feel, right? Do you know why you are in this physical state? For sure one of the main reasons is because your home is out of order. You feel that way because you are *supposed* to. It’s a *consequence* of disobedience to God’s way. You’re leading in the area of discipline, and your husband is supporting you. That’s backwards. That’s not the way it’s supposed to be done.”

From creation forward, the authority structure God has ordained for man is: God, man, woman, children. It does not have anything to do with inferiority. It simply means that the husband, not the wife, is head of the home, which includes the training of children. Think of it this way: dad—president, mom—vice-president. Does it hurt to think that way or to hear that? If it hurts, you need to take it up with the Lord. You need to ask God to help you trust Him in this area. Husbands need to protect their wives, and take the lead at home.

What If Parents Disagree?

Dads, remember you have to be stepping up to the plate in your leadership within the home; you are to “*bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord*” (Eph. 6:4). I will be showing you how to set the rules and disciplines to train your children, but you have to be *motivated* to do this in unity with your wife in order to keep peace, at least as much as depends on you (Rom. 12:18). So, what if you and your wife disagree concerning an issue with the children?

“*Wives, submit to your own husbands, as is fitting in the Lord*” (Col. 3:18). In other words, a wife is to submit to her husband’s leadership, *unless* his request is in direct conflict with *scriptural commands*. For example, if your husband, who is not saved, tells you, “Don’t talk to our children about the Lord,” that is directly against scriptural mandates to teach our children (Deut. 6:7).

But let’s say you have an unsaved husband who does not go to church, and you have a fifteen-year-old son who says, “Dad, I don’t want to go to church anymore.” So Dad says, “Well, don’t.”

Should you as the wife try to discipline your son, or become angry with him because he is choosing Dad’s side instead of yours? Do you hold back affection, or debate with your husband? No, none of these things are good. Just trust in the Lord, yield to the authority of your husband and pray. I know it is hard to do, but God’s Word is clear. There is no exception. There are consequences when a wife tries to undermine that authority. You must always keep in mind that when you are a Christian, God “*works all things according to the counsel of His will.*” (Eph. 1:11).

What if you are the step-dad in a blended family, and there are rules being set in the home that your wife does not want for her biological children? The moment the wife says, “I don’t like that rule; I don’t think my son should have to do that”, she’s then taking things out of God’s hands and saying she can do this on her own, in her own strength. Later on, I will show you the importance of writing rules down together, but

again, if the wife does not agree with a particular discipline then she must trust that the Lord will work it out. Obviously it will take patience and time to work through these issues.

Disagreements' regarding the training of the children is one of the main reasons so many blended families end in divorce. The attitude "I discipline my kids and you discipline yours," opens the door to a non-biblical management style. Actually, there are no biblical grounds for that whatsoever. When you together design your training process, it is for *all* the kids living in your home. Remember, *all* children are a *gift* to us from the Lord. (Ps. 127:3)

Let me give you an example: moms, when your non-biological child challenges your authority as a wife and step-in mother, tell them, "This is what Dad wants." When they respond with, "You're not my mom!" you reply: "That's right, I'm not your mother; you already have a mother. I'm not trying to tell you I'm your mother, but when I married your dad, I embraced the authority structure in God's Word. And God's Word says that he must lead. So I'm supporting him. If you don't like the rules and discipline, you can take it up with him. In the meantime, you need to accept the rules and discipline."

WEEK 6: DAY 4

Doubting Your Husband?

1 Peter 3:1-2 *"Wives, likewise, be submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the Word [even those who do not proclaim to be Christians, or say they are Christians but do not act as such], they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives, when they observe your chaste conduct accompanied by fear" [emphasis added].*

FACT FILE

Submissive; *hopotasso* (Greek), means a voluntary attitude of giving in, cooperating, assuming responsibility, and carrying a burden.⁹ "The New Testament usage of this word, meaning "to submit," "be subject to," or "rank under," is common (cf. 1 Peter 2:18; 3:5; 5:5; Luke 2:51; 10:17, 20; Rom. 8:7; 10:3; 13:1, 5; 1 Cor. 14:32, 34; 15:27; 16:16; Eph. 1:22; 5:21, 24; Phil. 3:21; Titus 2:9; 3:1; Heb. 2:5, 8; 12:9; James 4:7)."¹⁰

This verse speaks to a wife with a problem. She has a husband who is not obeying God's instructions – he may be ignorant, rebellious, or an unbeliever. There are no specifics about the area of disobedience, but

⁹ <http://www.blueletterbible.org/cgi-bin/words.pl?book=1Pe&chapter=3&verse=1&strongs=5293&page=>

¹⁰ John F. MacArthur, Jr., *1 Peter*, MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2004), 177-78.

the instruction to the wife is quite specific – continue to be submissive. The real focus of this verse is the potential to win a husband into fellowship with the Lord (“may be won”). The most powerful thing that a wife can do according to God’s Word is let her conduct (not words v. 1) do the winning over of her husband. God tells a wife to put her trust in Him (God) and surrender to God’s will, as a wife, and He will do the work.

I have counseled many couples who have an unbelieving spouse, and or ones that are disobedient to the Word, and it is not easy for them. God promises blessing, but does not promise an easy road. We sometimes fail to embrace the verses that speak of self-denial, the cross, and denying one’s life in order to follow Jesus (Matt 16:24-25).

When husbands make foolish choices, or bad decisions, where the wife disagrees and knows that God does, too (*even if some do not obey the word v. 1*), the *natural* tendency is to debate and argue until she wins him to her perspective. I say *natural* because, after the curse, wives have been plagued with a desire to rule. The Bible says to win husband over “*without a word*” (v.1). It is one thing to say, “Honey here is another way to look at it, but I will follow your leadership and your decision,” but totally different to debate and/or manipulate with bitter anger, defensive threats, and non-affirming behavior like sarcasm, criticism, pouting, and rejection, just to name a few. A Christian wife is to be praying for her husband to be a godly leader, or if he is unbelieving, for him to be saved.

Wives, do you realize it is God’s goal that your husband “*may be won*”? In the context of 1 Peter 3:1-6, God is telling wives how *He* designed the relationship to operate, so that the husband “*may*” be won. Notice, this is not a promise, but a *pathway* on which God can work through you to bring your husband to Himself. Also, notice there is no time limit on following His plan. By remaining faithful to God’s will for you, *Marriage is a Ministry*,¹¹ you are ministering to your husband and glorifying God through obedience. This process can *transform* both you and your husband by Him.

During my years as a counselor, I have seen countless marriages on the verge of divorce, papers already filed, which totally turn around when husband and wife follow *God’s* plan. Husbands get saved, those already believers are inspired to learn and grow spiritually, and I see restoration for the entire family. God is so good!

Wives be encouraged; God’s plan is that husbands “*may be won by the conduct of their wives, when they observe your chaste conduct*” (1 Pet 3:1c-2a). To *observe* means to look upon, to behold and contemplate.¹² Reviewing what we have learned, God created woman to be the helpmate, and a husband will know (by observing, contemplating, and looking upon his wife’s conduct), whether she is supporting him. *Chaste conduct* means abstaining from all behaviors toward your husband that are contrary to God’s will.

11 *Marriage is a Ministry* is another series that can be found on our website and is available at no cost.

12 Zohiates, 646.

One writer says that a wife may have “things in her conduct and temper which would mar the beauty of her piety, and prevent any happy influence on the mind of her husband.”¹³ In other words, a wife has *great influence* upon her husband, either leading him toward God, or away.

So, how does a wife accomplish this obedience? It starts in the *heart*; 1 Pt.3:3 speaks of a woman’s natural concern for her hair, jewelry, and apparel (today we would add make-up), which is OK in the proper perspective. (The late J. Vernon McGee, noted pastor, said, “If the barn needs painting, paint it.”), But God, in verse 4, defines real beauty and feminine character as, “*rather let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God.*” God wants us to renew our minds (Eph. 4:23), and strengthen the inner person (Eph. 3:16), for out of our hearts spring the issues of life (Prov. 4:23,) and our actions (Matt. 15:18-19).

- **As a wife, what do you think “very precious in the sight of God” means in 1 Peter 3:4?**

Please note that the one who ultimately watches is God. When a wife behaves properly, it is “*very precious*” in God’s sight (1 Pet 3:4). God wants a woman to know that if her *heart* is *gentle* (meekness, mildness with forbearance), and she has a *quiet spirit* (tranquil, undisturbed), and is willing to submit, that this is of great value to Him. The reason this is precious in His sight can be found in verse 5, “*For in this manner, in former times, the holy women who trusted in God also adorned themselves, being submissive to their own husbands.*”

God created woman for a specific relationship to man and when she takes the role of wife, or helpmate, obedience means submitting to the management system *He* has designed. To do this, a wife must willingly yield to the authority of a husband (unless it is sinful, as explained above).

The Downward Spiral to Disorder

A question for Dads: How do you act, or *react*, at home? For the first few years of my son Nicholas’ life, he got me angrier than any human being on earth! I would overreact, yell, spank in anger, and generally do the opposite of love when he made mistakes. How do you think my wife reacted to my overreacting? “*Let just say she was not happy.*” As a nurturer, she wanted to protect her little *chick* from his foolish father. Because I was out of control, she began defending him and correcting me in his presence. I was thinking, “*don’t you undermine me, wife.*” This conflict was the natural result of our handling of things in an unbiblical manner. Dissention set in, and our marriage relationship was affected. Unfortunately, this same scenario is all too common. I’m thankful that the Lord used the downward spiral in my home as a wake-up call for me.

13 Albert Barnes, *Notes on the New Testament: James to Jude*, ed. Robert Frew (London: Blackie & Son, 1884-885), 157.

There is an illustration of a high priest in the Old Testament, Eli that had two sons and they “*were corrupt, they did not know the Lord*” (1 Sam 2:12) but they served as priests within God’s house. Eli heard everything his sons were doing, how they lay with women (1 Sam 2:22) and he finally said to them, “*No, my sons! For it is not a good report I hear. You make the Lord’s people transgress*” (1 Sam 2:24) but then did *nothing* about it, he did not stop them. God had warned him many times and He finally said through the prophet Samuel,

1 Samuel 3:13 *“For I have told him that I will judge his house forever for the iniquity which he knows, because his sons made themselves vile, and he did not restrain them.”*

This did not just happen overnight, it was a downward spiral. The very next chapter both him and his sons died as part of God’s judgment. Dad’s we need to act when our kids are disobedient but in a gentle and loving way. Eli showed poor leadership concerning his family, which gave a bad testimony, and set his family on a course of destruction.

The following verse explains what happens when there is foolish son and a wife who is not a team player.

Proverbs 19:13 *“A foolish son is the ruin of his father, and the contentions of a wife are a continual dripping.”*

In this verse, a “*foolish son*” is one who will not *yield* to the authority and discipline of a father. That was not the case of my son; it was my sin to *react* in anger when he broke a rule. However, the second principle of this verse points out that being *contentious* is the wrong way for a wife to respond to her husband. It should be noted that a wife who argues constantly with her husband, over child-rearing or any other issue, is in disobedience (obviously, if violence is present, the issues change.)

One noted Christian author wrote about these Scriptures more than 100 years ago, showing that the issues have not changed.

“How unhappy the home where both a foolish son and a contentious wife are found! They are very likely to be found together; for where the wife disputes her husband’s authority, siding with the children in opposition to his proper discipline, the effect on the home will be anything but good. It is a very common thing to see parents disputing and wrangling before their household. The deadly result is that the sons and daughters learn to despise the father’s authority and to defy the mother’s correction when she does attempt it. These children grow up with a lawless, disobedient spirit, bent on having their own way and persisting in their refusal to submit to proper discipline.”¹⁴ -H.A. Ironside, 1908

14 H. A. Ironside, *Notes on the Book of Proverbs* (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Bros, 1908), 246-47.

- Is there a similar scenario in your home? Yes No

ACTION PLAN

If you responded *yes*, write down what the problems are and confess this to God, asking Him to forgive you. Then go to your family members and ask them to forgive you. As you walk in humility and obedience, God will both bless you and empower you to follow His ways in your home.

Unless God is *allowed* to intervene and establish His order in the home, the *downward* spiral continues, eroding the foundation of the marriage relationship. Over a period of time, there is a loss of respect and trust, which adversely affects intimacy in the marriage. Most men will only hold out for so long when this happens, yielding in most areas to preserve some kind of sexual relationship. *“Alright, you can have authority over the children. Let me know if you need my help.”* Dad steps back, and mom steps up to the plate, becoming the *main* disciplinarian and *authority* over the children, believing that she can do a better job than her husband. Dad only gets involved when things really get out of hand, or if mom asks for his input. This is “NOT” God’s plan for you.

This system may work for a while in homes with complacent children. However, *if* you have a strong-willed child, or when adolescence hits, watch out! This system will crumble! When mothers abandon their God-ordained role of nurturer and cherisher and *become* leader, disciplinarian and coach rather than cheerleader, their children will eventually *resent* them, their husbands will *criticize* them and they will bear the guilt of being out of God’s will.

Our main objective in life should be fulfilling *God’s* will and purpose, and that includes *glorifying* Him within the walls of home. Along with King David, our attitude and purpose should be:

Psalm 101:2 *“...I will walk within my house in the integrity of my heart.” (NAU)*

When *we design* substandard methods for managing our families, we are living in disobedience and dishonoring God within our homes. Some of you may have many years of unbiblical habits in your marriage. Change is always hard at first, but the rewards for obedience far exceed the work and sacrifices.

You begin with a willingness to embrace God’s management style. *Dads*, for you this means that you must commit your laziness and fears to God and step forward as the leader. *Moms*, for you this means that you

must put your trust in the Savior, support your husband's decisions and follow through by daily stepping back and allowing him to lead. Your children may be in a state of shock for a while, but you must proceed in obedience to the Lord, and watch Him work!

2 Thessalonians 1:12 *"...that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ."*

SELF-EXAMINATION Management Style Evaluation

As a couple, read and ponder the following questions. Keep in mind that the purpose of this exercise is **not** to find fault in your spouse, but to allow God to speak to **you** about your own weaknesses! Be aware that if you respond with resentment, or pride, you will be hindered from yielding to the conviction of the Holy Spirit.

1. **Dad**, when your children are in your presence, do you discipline them (or do you leave it up to your wife)?
 Yes No Sometimes

2. **Mom**, do you consult your husband for input on all aspects of discipline with the children?
 Yes No Sometimes

3. **Dad**, do you listen to your wife's input on the emotional state of your children?
 Yes No Sometimes

4. **Mom**, do you keep information from your husband, not informing him on everything regarding the children?
 Yes No Sometimes

For example: "We can't tell daddy about this because he will get really upset."

5. **Dad**, when mom says "no" and the kids come to you, do you always consult with your wife before responding?
 Yes No Sometimes

That is, do you even think to ask your children, "Well, what did your mom say?"

6. **Mom**, do you find yourself arguing with your children, defending yourself and your rules, or disciplinary decisions?
 Yes No Sometimes

mindset, she will need to cultivate the tender side of love, nourishing and caring for her children. As you move through this section, you will notice that Paul took on all these characteristics with the people in Thessalonica, a church he dearly loved.

The Father's Role and Responsibility

Along with knowing that you are called to lead, there are other important biblical concepts for fathers that go hand in hand with leadership.

1. THE RESPONSIBLE FATHER IS A *SERVANT-PRIEST* OVER HIS FAMILY.

Ephesians 5:25-26 *“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word.”*

Paul makes it very clear that as Christ, our high priest, loves us and gave Himself for the church, so the husband is to do for his wife (which also implies his family). The goal is to *sanctify*, which is to make clean, render pure and holy, also known as sanctification. It is through the husband/father's leadership that this is to happen—he leads the way. The objective is to *cleanse*, which is to purify from the pollution of sin and selfishness. Our instruction manual is the *Word of God*. The priests in the Old Testament were stewards of the Word of God, and so it is with the husband/father.

In a sense, we fathers are to pastor our families. He has placed us as priests over our homes. A priest has the authority to perform the sacred duties of a religious institution, such as the family. The sacred rites of the family include spiritual *discipleship* of both wife and children, *overseeing* the discipline of the children, *keeping* fellowship in church a priority, *directing* the finances, and being a godly example. When fathers perform their *function* they are not only serving God, but their wives and children also.

In the Old Testament we read of Job who, acting as *priest* of his home, regularly rose early to make “*burnt offerings*” (animal sacrifices) for his children. Though we no longer offer sacrifices for sin, fathers fulfill this priesthood through *spiritual* leadership in their homes, by *discipling* and *disciplining* their children and praying with their families.

Job 1:4-5 *“Now his sons would go and feast in their houses, each on his appointed day, and would send and invite their three sisters to eat and drink with them. So it was, when the days of feasting had run their course, that Job would send and sanctify them, and he would rise early in the morning and offer burnt offerings according to the number of them all. For Job said, ‘It may be that my sons have sinned and cursed God in their hearts.’ Thus Job did regularly.”*

Please notice that Job did this regularly, which means he practiced this type of leadership. His concern was that his children might have sinned against, or cursed God. In other words, he cared about their relationship with God. What a godly example!

The father is not the sole disciplinarian, or discipler, of the children; however, he is to make sure that this is carried out. Sadly, in most homes today, mothers are the spiritual leaders and the main disciplinarians. We will cover more of this in detail in the next two chapters. Most men have not been taught to see themselves as priests.

Fathers, are you willing to accept this calling from God to be a priest? Yes No

As Christian parents, our primary goal should be raising children into godly, *mature* adults. We should diligently pray for our children as the apostle Paul prayed for the young Thessalonian believers to “...walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.” (1Thess. 2:12). As a priest, the father should *lead* the way in this, making it a *priority*.

SELF-EXAMINATION

After reading the Scriptures below, Dads, please explain how these passages relate to your relationship with God. Second, if obeyed, how would it affect your relationship with your family?

1 Thessalonians 4:1 *“Finally then, brethren, we urge and exhort in the Lord Jesus that you should abound more and more, just as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God.”*

Ephesians 4:1 *“I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called.”*

Write out in your own words how this principle applies to you.

2. THE RESPONSIBLE FATHER WORKS TO SUPPORT HIS FAMILY.

1 Thessalonians 2:9 *“For you remember, brethren, our labor and toil; for laboring night and day, that we might not to be a burden to any of you.”*

Paul was letting the church know that he worked hard to make money, to obey God and not be a financial burden to them. He knew that God had set a standard for man to work; in the Garden of Eden, God told Adam that he was to *tend* and *keep* it (Gen. 2:15). Paul’s occupation outside of pastoring was tent making (Acts 18:3), and he worked diligently to support himself. Paul’s concern was not just for his own needs; he said in Acts 20:34, that *“Yes, you yourselves know that these hands have provided for my necessities, and for those who were with me.”* Yes, he wanted to take care of his own needs, but he was also concerned with the welfare of others.

This is a very serious subject when it comes to the family, since Paul also exhorted men that *“if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.”* (1 Tim. 5:8) [emphasis added]. When it says “denied the faith”, it means that he is not living up to what God expects from those who have a relationship with Him. The personal pronouns are directed at the man, and this is a strong statement. One commentator says:

To default on the basic care and support of a family member is the same as denying the faith, for no one can claim love and allegiance to God and at the same time neglect his or her family (see Matthew 5:46–47). To do so makes a person *worse than an unbeliever*, for even unbelieving idol-worshippers understood the responsibility of caring for family needs... Our families provide an arena in which we can demonstrate the quality of our love for God.¹⁵

This is not saying that women cannot work, but please notice where the leadership and responsibility lies. It is with the man.

¹⁵ Bruce B. Barton, David Veerman and Neil S. Wilson, *1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus*, Life Application Bible Commentary (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1993), 101.

DIG DEEPER: FURTHER STUDY

Read the following verses and write down what the biblical principles are concerning work.

Colossians 3:17 *“And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.”*

2 Thessalonians 3:7–10 *“For you yourselves know how you ought to follow us, for we were not disorderly among you; 8 nor did we eat anyone’s bread free of charge, but worked with labor and toil night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, 9 not because we do not have authority, but to make ourselves an example of how you should follow us. 10 For even when we were with you, we commanded you this: If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat.”*

2 Thessalonians 3:12 *“Now those who are such we command and exhort through our Lord Jesus Christ that they work in quietness and eat their own bread.”*

Titus 3:14 *“And let our people also learn to maintain good works, to meet urgent needs, that they may not be unfruitful.”*

God’s Word is not suggesting that fathers work to the point of neglecting their families, but rather to *work responsibly*, that the family not be burdened financially. The responsible father is instructed to maintain a job in order to care for the needs of his family, while not *neglecting* the priorities of a husband and father. The Scripture below also shows the importance of taking care of one’s family.

2 Corinthians 12:14 “...for the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children.”

Write out in your own words how this principle applies to you.

3. THE RESPONSIBLE FATHER IS A WITNESS OF CHRISTIAN FAITH TO HIS FAMILY.

1 Thessalonians 2:10 “You are witnesses, and God also, how devoutly and justly and blamelessly we behaved ourselves among you who believe.”

Paul points to the unblemished testimony that he had, not only before the church in Thessalonica, but also before God. This is not bragging, but simply pointing out that the church could follow his example. The same should be true concerning our leadership as husbands and fathers. God, our families, and other believers should be able to see that our behavior represents Christ. Paul draws out three distinct principles that characterized his behavior and made his faith authentic.

FACT FILE

Devoutly - *Holy, pious, sacred, dedicated to God.* This describes your abiding relationship with Christ. When you are devoted, or dedicated to God, that relationship is the source of a *sacred* life, and the following two behaviors normally follow.

FACT FILE

Justly – *means with integrity and honesty, just, uprightness of character and behavior, daily desiring to live life according to what pleases God.* When you know the Word of God, you are able to judge what is right and wrong. As a husband and father, is it your desire to be obedient, empowered to do what you never could do before. You can have His divine power working in you. (2 Pet. 1:3; Rom. 1:4; 2 Cor. 12:9).

FACT FILE

Blamelessly – *means faultless, able to stand a critics’ scrutiny.* As you move along in obedience to God’s will, you are *transformed* into the image of Christ, and your Godly behavior becomes evident to others.

This does not mean perfection, but direction; even Paul struggled at times (Rom. 7:18; 1 Tim. 1:15). But

these were principles he practiced on a regular basis. Fathers are called by God to be spiritual leaders in the home and role models to their children. A responsible father does not compromise in his speech, nor does he find pleasure in things that might stumble, or offend his children.

 **SELF-EXAMINATION**

Read the following Scriptures and write down how living these truths could affect the relationship with your children.

Colossians 1:10 *“...that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.”*

2 Corinthians 4:2 *“But we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God.”*

Write out in your own words how this principle applies to you.

4. THE RESPONSIBLE FATHER MAKES TIME TO TRAIN/DISCIPLE HIS CHILDREN IN THE FAITH, BY EXHORTING AND COMFORTING THEM.

1 Thessalonians 2:11 *“...as you know how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father does his own children.”*

Paul’s leadership style in the church is compared to a father training his children. In fact, there is the inference that this is how fathers are to treat their children. There also is a strong reference that obedience to God is the goal. This model falls right in line with *Loving Communication*; love is the driving motivation

behind each one of the underlined words. When Paul says, “*as you know*,” he is calling them to remember that he did not *neglect* to train/disciple them; it was an undeniable fact that he inspired them to godliness through proper training.

FACT FILE

Exhort – *parakleo*, (Greek), *to call to one’s side, to aid, to encourage, admonish or exhort someone to do something*. This verb is a present active participle, which means that Paul continued to do this so they could grow in their relationship to God. He had a *positive impact* on their lives, and that is the type of leadership we must have as dads. We are to come alongside our children and help them grow in the things of the Lord. The attitude has to be like Psalm 34:11, which says, “*Come, you children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the LORD.*”

FACT FILE

Encourage, or Comfort – *means to inspire, support; console in time of trouble or worry, soothing encouragement designed to cheer up and to inspire correct behavior*. This type of fatherly *influence* cannot fail to inspire correct behavior in our children. Of course, many times it means we must die to ourselves and put on tender love.

FACT FILE

Charged, Implore, Urging - *martyromenoi* (Greek), implies the “*delivery of truth*” and was likely meant to convey the more directive functions of a father. A good father encourages and provides guidance. Paul did not claim ultimate authority over his spiritual children in the Lord, requiring of them what he willed. Rather, Paul’s function, as their spiritual father, was to train believers to “*live lives worthy of God.*” It was not Paul’s own will, but the Heavenly Father’s, that governed both his actions and the guidance he gave to the church.”¹⁶

What a perfect picture for us as dads to follow. We are to train our children, to *raise them up to maturity through discipleship and proper discipline*. The responsible father does not *neglect* his God-given role, or delegate it to his wife, but assumes authority as the leader, shepherd, and servant in the home.

Write out in your own words how this principle applies to you.

16 D. Michael Martin, vol. 33, 1, 2 *Thessalonians*, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1995), 84.

5. THE RESPONSIBLE FATHER IS A *TEACHER-MANAGER* IN HIS HOME.

Ephesians 6:4 *“And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.”*

We used this Scripture earlier to show the direct relationship between a father managing his home and bringing his children to Godly *maturity*. This passage is meant to show a father two possible effects of his influence - and the vital importance of using that influence in love, to direct a child closer to the Lord. This is not to say that mothers are not to be part of the training. They are to be involved in all aspects of discipline and discipleship, but not the one ultimately responsible.

The husband's/father's leadership role in the home is so vital, Scripture requires any man up for leadership in the church be first and foremost committed to fulfilling his leadership role at home. Leaders are called by God to set an *example* for the people. This does not mean that there is one *standard* for leaders and another *standard* for the people. This is why Paul urged the Corinthians, *“Imitate Me as I imitate Christ.”* (1 Cor. 11:1). The home life of a pastor/ministry leader is like a miniature church where he shepherds his family. Paul gives explicit instructions to Timothy on how God wants *His* church to function, by outlining the qualifications for pastors and deacons (1 Tim. 3:1-13). A pastor must be:

1 Timothy 3:4 *“one who **rules** his own house **well**, having his children in submission with all reverence.”*

FACT FILE

Rule - *To rule, manage, lead, shepherd and guide.* “By implication this means to take care of something, to be diligent, to practice.”¹⁷

As you can see, God is concerned that a pastor/ministry leader first carries out the leadership role of a good husband/father by managing his house well. This is so important that he says in verse 5, *“for if a man does not know how to rule his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?”* If the pastor/leader can lead his family, which is small compared to the church, then he meets the qualification. Scripture is clear that a man who is *not* the spiritual leader in his home is *disqualified* from church leadership. Again, this does not mean perfection but it does mean that he has a firm grasp on Godly leadership in his home. According to God's instructions, one author says,

Paul demanded that the church leader be exemplary in controlling his own family. He was to raise children known for their obedience and morally upright behavior. The verb for

17 Zodhiates, 1220.

“*manage*” carries the idea of governing, leading, and giving direction to the family. The same Greek word appears in 1 Thess. 5:12 (“are over you”), and 1 Tim. 5:17 (“direct”), and also in v. 5 (“manage”). The term demands an effective exercise of authority bolstered by a character of integrity and sensitive compassion. Its use in v. 5 with the verb “take care of” defines the quality of leadership as related more to showing mercy than to delivering ultimatums.¹⁸

But it is not just the pastor/elders that need to have their homes in order, so do the deacons. The leaders are to set an example that the congregation can follow, especially when it comes to families.

1 Timothy 3:12 *“Let deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well.”*

What a blessing to have strong, godly families. It is a self-evident truth that this occurs when men are guided by the Bible, a perfect resource that provides all the information we need for success. God is so good!



SELF-EXAMINATION

Fathers, what have you learned from the 5 principles?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

¹⁸ Thomas D. Lea and Hayne P. Griffin, vol. 34, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 112.

How does this Biblical role differ from your current parenting style and does there need to be any changes?

ACTION PLAN

Commit these to prayer each day asking God to work them out in your life.

Dads, you have been chosen, and ordained by God, to lead and serve as a priest over the institution He created - your family. Quit looking at your inabilities and weaknesses, and start looking to God's promises (2 Pet. 2:4), and His grace (2 Cor. 12:9-10), to enable and empower you to accomplish the tasks *He* has given.

Biblical Roles of the Responsible Mother

THE MOTHER'S ROLE AS A CARING INFLUENCE

Mothers, besides knowing the role as a *helpmate* to your husband, there are key biblical principles guiding the relationship with your children. As we turn to 1 Thessalonians 2:7-8, we see Paul using motherly terms to describe his behavior toward the believers at Thessalonica. Even though these Biblical principles can apply to all Christians, there are some solid truths here for mothers.

1. THE CARING MOTHER IS *GENTLE* WITH HER CHILDREN.

1 Thessalonians 1:7a *"But we were gentle among you..."*

FACT FILE

Gentle = *Mild, peaceable, quiet, composed.*

This was quite a statement about the apostle Paul and his fellow ministers, since they were leaders who regularly used their authority. But their purposes were not selfish, rather carried out for the good of others. The Bible says that they were *"among"* them, serving with a gentle and kind spirit. Noted Bible scholar and author, John MacArthur says,

The term **gentle** is at the heart of this verse. It means to be kind to someone and encompasses a host of other virtues: acceptance, respect, compassion, tolerance of imperfections, patience, tenderheartedness, and loyalty.¹⁹

19 John F. MacArthur, Jr., *1 & 2 Thessalonians*, MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 2002), 45.

What a picture of gentleness; Paul is focusing on how he acted among them. He behaved this way, not *“as pleasing men, but God who tests our hearts”* (1 Thess. 2:4). His whole motivation was that of *pleasing* God. I do understand that some women are gentle by nature, while others have a tougher demeanor. But, since God is going to test your heart to see if you are gentle toward your children, then you should be ready to confess any wrongs when they come up, repent, and be transformed. It goes without saying that a gentle mother *is not* out of control, angry, yelling, judging, or manipulating toward her children.

The word *“were”* in this verse, as *“we were gentle,”* originated from a Hebrew word implying *a state of change, condition, or the passing from one state to another, to become.*²⁰ This is a perfecting process, and by determining to *yield* daily to the Holy Spirit, God will cause you to become all that He calls you to be!

DIG DEEPER: FURTHER STUDY

Read the following verses; write out what they say about gentleness, and how it could be applied to parenting.

Proverbs 15:1 *“A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.” NAS*

2 Timothy 2:24 *“And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient.”*

James 3:17 *“But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.”*

20 Zodhiates, 367-368

2. THE CARING MOTHER *NURTURES* HER CHILDREN.

1 Thessalonians 2:7b “...as a nursing mother...”

FACT FILE

Nurse - *The act of nursing, suckle, nourish, train, something that nourishes, to supply with nourishment, to educate or foster, to further the development of someone or something.*

The obvious picture here is a mother breast-feeding her child. The mother and child both know that this is the place of nourishment, love and attention, which is the way God has designed the mother-child relationship. A loving and caring mother *wants* to give to the infant but, as a child grows, this *type of sacrifice* and intimacy can fade away, or become dulled.

Paul brings to remembrance his actions toward those God has placed under his care, reveals that his heart toward them is faithful and tender like a nursing mother. Paul uses many examples of motherly love: Galatians 4:19 says “*My little children, for whom I labor in birth again until Christ is formed in you,*” and “*I do not write these things to shame you, but as my beloved children I warn you*” (1 Cor. 4:14). He also directs believers to imitate him, as he imitates Christ.

From conception, and throughout the life of her child, a mother is called to nurture. Obviously methods change with the maturity of a child, but a mother’s heart should always be to nourish and build up. The role of a mother is to show her children love and acceptance by *actions* and *words*. A nurturing mother *does not* use harsh words, ignore or push her children away, or withhold affection from them. She does not indulge in mind games, or sinful manipulation as discipline.

Remember, *love* is the most powerful motivator, not just a demonstration of feelings and emotions. And unselfish love is only possible through a relationship with Jesus Christ, by abiding in Him. This involves knowing God’s word, and going to Him in prayer for wisdom and strength. He can enable you to *give* continuously, expecting nothing in return, just as a mother loves her nursing infant. Take heed to what one author says:

If a nursing mother does not feed herself, she cannot feed her baby. If she eats certain foods, her baby will get sick. Similarly, the spiritual diet of a Christian parent is vitally important to the health of a newer Christian. The gentleness and unselfishness of Paul as a spiritual parent shines through in this illustration.²¹

21 John F. Walvoord, Roy B. Zuck and Dallas Theological Seminary, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 1 Th 2:7.

SELF-EXAMINATION

How are you doing in your abiding relationship with Christ?

Write out in your own words how this principle applies to you.

3. THE CARING MOTHER *CHERISHES*, OR *TENDERLY CARES* FOR HER CHILDREN.

1 Thessalonians 2:7c “...cherishes her own children.” V. 7

Cherish (tender care, NAS) - *To give heed to, to pay attention to, to minister, to soften by heat, to keep warm as of birds covering their young with feathers (Deut. 22:6), to cherish with tender love, to foster with tender care.* Vine’s Expository Dictionary

Paul uses the Greek word *thalop*, translated *cherishes* in the NKJ version of the Bible. Also take special note of the words “*her own children*.” God had given Paul the responsibility of not only bringing believers into His kingdom, through preaching, but also treating them as his own spiritual children. For Paul, that meant responsibility, and concern so great that he compares it to motherhood. The term “*cherishes her own children*” evokes thoughts of protective, tender care toward children who cannot be considered so precious by any other. Another translation, (NAS) “*tenderly cares*,” indicates continuous action. Isn’t that the truth - a mom’s work is never done when it comes to cherishing and ministering to her children.

A Christian mother will keep her heart soft and tender, which is not always easy. Because such love brings vulnerability, mothers can be tempted to become hardened, or calloused from the disappointments of neglect, rejection, or rebellion of their children. Frustration, fatigue, and worry are other pressures that can affect a mother’s mood. To remain strong, a mother must continually be *yielding*, asking the Holy Spirit to guard her heart (Eph. 4:30; 5:18). A tender mother *forgives* her children and *seeks* their forgiveness when she has been wrong (Matt. 6:12, 14-15).

DIG DEEPER: FURTHER STUDY

Read the following verses and write out how they could help you be a better mom.

Ephesians 4:32 *“And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.”*

Philippians 2:3 *“Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself.”*

Write out in your own words how this principle applies to you.

4. THE CARING MOTHER AFFECTIONATELY LONGS FOR HER CHILDREN.

1 Thessalonians 2:8a *“So, affectionately longing for you...”*

FACT FILE

Affectionately longing – “The Greek word, translated **fond affection** (*homeiromai*; (used only here in the New Testament) means to long for someone passionately and earnestly, and, being linked to a mother’s love, is intended here to express an affection so deep and compelling as to be unsurpassed. Ancient inscriptions on the tombs of dead babies sometimes contained this term when parents wanted to describe their sad longing for a too-soon-departed child.”²²

Affectionately longing can only mean a love that is expressed through physical contact, and acts of kindness. It cannot be overstated that a truly loving mother must affirm her children with hugs, kisses, encouraging

22 John F. MacArthur, Jr., *1 & 2 Thessalonians*, MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 2002), 46.

words, and other appropriate displays of *affection*. An affectionate mother *knows* her children individually and *studies* how to make each child feel special. Longing indicates continuously keeping them in your thoughts, desiring their companionship, and being creative to remind them of your love by perhaps baking cookies, leaving notes in their lunches, or spending time on individual activities.

✓ ACTION PLAN

Take a moment right now and pray, asking God to show you any hindrances that may be keeping you from being affectionate toward your children. Write down some ways you are, and or can be showing affection.

DIG DEEPER: FURTHER STUDY

Read the following verse and write out how it inspires new attitudes or actions toward your children.

Romans 12:10 *“Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another.”*

Write out in your own words how this principle applies to you.

5. THE CARING MOTHER GIVES OF HERSELF TO DO WHAT IS BEST FOR HER CHILDREN.

1 Thessalonians 2:8b *“...we were well pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God but also our own life, because you had become dear to us.”*

FACT FILE

Impart – this verb has the idea of sharing something, which one already retains in part.

Paul and his companions not only preached in Thessalonica, but they also imparted their lives for the sake of Christ. In this context, it literally means, “they gave up their souls,” deepest inner being, for the sake of the Thessalonians. A woman who fulfills the biblical role for motherhood does the same thing when she, at great cost to herself, unselfishly and generously sets aside her life for the benefit of her beloved children.”²³ A godly mother understands that her priority is to place the loving and training of her children before self-interest. She loves her children with God’s *supernatural* love, despite their mistakes, failures, and sins.

 **SELF-EXAMINATION**

Mothers, what have you learn from the 5 principles?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

How does this Biblical role differ from your current parenting style and does there need to be any changes?

Commit to pray for these changes each day.

23 John F. MacArthur, Jr., *1 & 2 Thessalonians*, MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 2002), 47.