

Marriage, Homes, and Families

Thirteen Lessons on God's Bible Plan
for Marriage, Homes, and Families

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5:33 However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.

6:1 Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 2 "Honor your father and mother"-which is the first commandment with a promise— 3 "that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth."

4 Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord. NIV

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1. Families

The teaching of the New Testament organizes families: husbands and wives, children and grandchildren, and parents and grandparents. It is common for parents to think that, as they grow older, their children will care for them. Certainly, children in a happy home come to predict tranquility based on the behavior of their parents. The New Testament lays down some rules.

Parents for the children, not the children for the parents.

In speaking of supporting our children, Paul said: "For the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children." II Cor 12:14. Fathers especially are to nurture and admonish their children spiritually. In Eph 6:4, they are told: "And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord." Fathers are also responsible for the physical nourishing of their children. The Lord said: "9 Or what man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? 10 Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent?" Matt 7:9-10. Young women are to "manage their homes" and "be busy at home" (I Tim 5:14; Tit 2:5). Central to family life is the duty of parents to take care of the physical needs of the children.

However, children are not without obligation to their parents: "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 2 'Honor your father and mother,' which is the first commandment with promise: 3 'that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth.'" Eph 6:1-3.

Provide for all members of the family.

Paul writes: "But if any widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn to show piety at home and to repay their parents; for this is good and acceptable before God." 1 Tim 5:4. In this day of social welfare programs, it is easy to forget that the Bible gives us the command to see after the physical necessities of our parents and grandparents. Just because older people have the means does not mean that they have the necessities. Sometimes they do not get proper food in the house, do not go to the doctor, or do not even keep their places clean. In James 1:27, the word *visit* requires that we look after orphans and widows with the idea of taking care of them. This is true of all orphans and widows, but it is especially true of those who are relatives. What can we do to help them?

- See that they have proper food and medical care.
- Help them keep their place clean.
- If necessary, let them live with you.
- Take them to church.
- Visit them and fellowship in their difficulty.

Of course, we are to take care of the spiritual needs of children and parents, too. But if we ignore their physical needs, we are worse than unbelievers. Paul said, "But 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." I Tim 5:8. The scriptures govern the treatment of our relatives. The golden rule says in Matt 7:12: "Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets." Therefore, we should do unto our family members as we would have them do to us. Gal 6:10 says: "Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith." If we are to do good to all men, how much more so ought we to do good to our very own relatives?

Conclusion

Parents and children in conflict with one another should be mindful of their God-given duties to one another. Doing the will of God will repair any breaks that occur in the family walls, assuring happiness in the present and helping to secure an eternal reward in heaven.

Study Questions

1. Should children save up for their parents; or the parents for the children? _____
2. What kind of man would give a son a stone and snake when he asks for food? _____. What should he give him? _____
3. How does Paul say that we learn piety? _____
Where is it to be first applied? _____
4. In writing to Timothy and Titus, what responsibilities does Paul give to younger women? _____
5. What are some of the things we can do to help family members in need? _____
6. If we fail to take care of our family members, we are worse than what group of people? _____

2. Families and the Media

Entertainment is able to reach into the minds and hearts of our young people without our knowing it. Television, movies, and the internet are three electronic media used to deliver modern entertainment that is often not suitable for our children and for our adults, too. If left unchecked, these media assault our morals and the New Testament teaching in four ways: permissive sex, mindless violence, abusive acts, and abusive language.

Permissive Sex

Christians are not to be sexually immoral. In fact, the "sexually immoral" have their part "in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." Rev 21:8. In Gal. 5:19-21, sexual immorality is described as an obvious act of a sinful nature: "The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery. . . I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God." NIV. That those of us who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God is a point that cannot be missed. Even TV's prime time (a time thought of as for family viewing) presents sexually immoral situations as if they are OK, and the "in" thing to do. Sexually moral, single life and faithful, married life are not what is presented. Parents should guard their children against this corruption.

Mindless Violence

Christians are not to be violent. Jesus told us: "But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also." Mt 5:39-40. Yet TV and movies fill homes with destructive violence. Beatings and killings of the worst kind are common and graphic. The heroes murder and maim for the general good. What are our children to think? How do we reconcile this mindless violence with Paul's teaching on virtue in Phil 4:8?

Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy -- meditate on these things.

Abusive Acts and Language

Christians are not to abuse themselves or others with words or acts. Jesus taught us to "love your neighbor as yourself." Mt 19:19. Love of others and of us leaves no room in our lives for abuse. Ugly words and acts are

not acceptable to God. James describes the tongue and its control in James 3:8: "But no man can tame the tongue. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison." In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus warned us not to be angry with our brother or call him names. To do so places us in danger of the judgment and in danger of the fire of hell (Mt 5:22).

Screening the Use of Modern Media

Parents must screen the use of modern media. Neither our children nor we can get entirely away from these evil influences of the present world. To do so, we would have to leave the present world (I Cor. 5:10). However, we can screen the use of these media and help our children find good and wholesome alternatives. The internet which offers many evil temptations should be screened as carefully as TV and movies. Parents and church members should teach children to avoid the evil while providing wholesome alternatives. Keeping our children safe today will keep our homes and the church safe for tomorrow.

Conclusion

Remember that the best defense against evil is a good offense. Paul was exactly right when he told us to occupy our minds with noble and virtuous thoughts. If we do, the God of peace will be with us (Phil 4:-9).

Study Questions

1. What are three modern media that assault our minds and the minds of our children with evil? _____
2. What are three ways in which we are assaulted? _____

3. What will be the fate of the sexually immoral? _____
4. How do those who will not inherit eternal life live? _____

5. What is our best offense against violence? _____
7. If we become angry and call our brother names, of what are we in danger? _____
8. Why should we screen TV, movies, and the Internet? _____

3. Parents Beware

We have a clear Bible teaching on the subject of attending the services. Heb 10: 25 teaches us: "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching." Heb 10:25. The teaching to attend services is clear. Yet many of us remain truant, failing to attend regularly the services of the church, and worse, failing to bring our children. The consequences of this neglect are very clear in the next two verses: "26 For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, 27 but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries."

Missing the power

When we fail to attend, we miss the power of God, Jesus, and the saints to edify and build us up in the faith. The preceding verse, Heb.10:24, teaches: "Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. 24 And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works."

The impact poor of attendance

Poor attendance impacts not only on our fellow members in Christ, but it influence falls most heavily on our children. For, when parents stay home, so do their children. All parents, especially Christian parents, should know their responsibility. Eph.6:4 teaches: "Provoke not your children to wrath: but nurture them in the chastening and admonition of the Lord." What do our children miss when they do not attend services?

A Missed Chance to Study the Bible

The children miss a chance to study the Bible. Christians are charged: "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." 2 Tim 2:15. Television cartoons on Sunday morning will malnourish children who should be at the Bible school feasting on God's word. Certainly our Biblical studies are more important than our secular studies. Most parents would not dream of denying their children a secular education, and yet some of these same parents ignore the Christian education of their children.

The Decline of Christian Companionships

The children miss the chance to have Christian companions. "Do not be deceived: 'Evil company corrupts good habits.'" 1 Cor 15: 33. Usually the only opportunity to associate with Christian people is at the services. When parents miss these few hours a week, they are dictating that their children will only have the influence of those of another faith or those of no faith. A lack of Christian companions will also lead to marrying outside the faith when they grow older.

Children will not have the building up that comes with worship.

The children miss the opportunity to be built up in the worship. Even the singing builds us all up in the faith. This includes the children. "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." Col. 3: 16. There is also the combined edifying effect of the Lord's Supper, praying, teaching, and preaching. These are helpful to children by word and example.

Conclusion

If you have not been attending regularly, won't you start attending all the services of the church now? It will benefit you and your children in the present, in their future, and in eternity. To adapt the poet's phrase: "Do it for heaven and your children's sake!"

Study Questions

1. What are two responsibilities that we have regarding attending the services of the church? _____
2. Upon what groups of people does our lack of attendance impact? _____
3. What three things do our children miss when they do not attend the services of the church? _____
4. What do children learn to do when they study the Bible (2 Tim 2:15)? _____
6. What is the effect of evil companionships? _____
7. How does worship build children up in Christ? _____

4. Hey, Dad, the Vacation Is Over

When August comes, we know school will soon start. All of us will be sure to get our kids ready to start back to school. School supplies, vaccinations, and new clothes—all of these will make our children school ready. Almost 100% of the parents that I know take this responsibility seriously. Yet many of us are indifferent to the need of that other education—the spiritual education of our children. The Bible is clear in its command: "And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord." Eph 6:4.

Bring Them Up

The first part of the command is to bring them up, and it's directed to fathers. The phrase *bring up* is translated *nourish* in Eph 5:29 and refers to Christ nourishing and cherishing the church. In the Revised Version, the word is translated *nurture*. Therefore, fathers are to nurture their children with spiritual nourishment.

In the Discipline

The Greek word used is *paideia* and denotes "the training of a child, including instruction;" hence, "discipline, correction," "chastening suggesting the Christian discipline that regulates character." (from Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words, Copyright (c)1985, Thomas Nelson Publishers) The point is that fathers must secure the education of their children--secular education and spiritual education.

Instruction of the Lord

The Greek word here *nouthesia*, lit., "a putting in mind" (*nous*, "mind," *tithemi*, "to put"), is used in 1 Cor 10:11, of the purpose of the Scriptures; in Eph 6:4, of that which is ministered by the Lord. *Nouthesia* is "the training by word," whether of encouragement, or, if necessary, by reproof or remonstrance. In contrast to this, the synonymous word *paideia* stresses training by act, though both words are used in each respect. (from Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words, Copyright (c)1985, Thomas Nelson Publishers) The source of the teaching is from the Lord. The father is expected to carry out the instruction and training of his children by word, action, and example. The saying, "like father like son," could not be truer. In word and deed, fathers teach their children for good or for bad.

Many Fathers Ignoring Their Duty

In spite of the very specific teaching, many fathers ignore the responsibility to provide their children with opportunities for spiritual growth. Here are a few specific steps fathers can take:

- Have their children in Bible classes on Sunday morning and Wednesday evening.
- Bring their children to all the services of the church.
- Attend the Bible studies and services of the church, setting a proper example.
- Make the children's spiritual education as important as their secular education.

Conclusion

Get a good start now. Just as we want our children to get off to a good start at school each August, let's resolve to get them off to a good spiritual start by having them at all the services of the church with us. This is a command specific to fathers. It cannot be delegated. However, single moms, take notice your vacation is over, too. Start now.

Study questions

1. What are the two charges given fathers in Eph 6:4? _____

2. Explain the comparison of Christ to the church and fathers to their children. _____

3. How do discipline and training go together? _____
4. What are the three ways a father is to carry out the teaching of his children? _____
5. List four steps a father can take to advance the spiritual education of his children _____

6. Describe the role of single moms in regard to the spiritual training of children in homes without fathers. _____

5. Fathers and Discipline

In modern America, child rearing is by and large the duty of the mother. Our mother sees after our schooling and behavior. Even church attendance is often left to the mother. However, the Bible gives clear and undeniable responsibility to fathers: "Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord." (Eph. 6:4 NIV).

The Total Education

As we saw in the preceding lesson, Fathers are responsible for the total education of their children. *Training* suggests the broad education of the child and instruction includes chastisement and correction (W. E. Vine, An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words). *Of the Lord* gives special focus aimed at character and religion as taught by the Lord. Although mothers are equal partners in child rearing, fathers cannot abrogate or delegate their responsibility. *It is a two-man job.*

Abusive Discipline

As fathers do the job, they are warned against abusive discipline: "Do not exasperate your children." Eph 6:4 NIV. The New King James Version says: "do not provoke your children to wrath." In the NKJV, the discipline part of this direction is in the word training. Training is by word as well as correction and reproof, as in the word *disciple*. Fathers should replace the use of nagging, hassling, and even striking, with instruction from the Bible and coaching to bring the child to this standard of behavior. Fathers are never to ignore abusive, disrespectful, or sinful behavior.

The Discipline of a Loving Father

True children enjoy the discipline of a loving father. Proverbs 3:11-12 is quoted in Hebrews 12:6: "My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son." NIV. The Hebrew writer states several truths:

- Fathers discipline those they love.
- Children respect fathers who discipline them.
- Fathers must discipline children, as they think best.

- Discipline is for the child's own good.
- No discipline seems pleasant at the time.
- Discipline produces a harvest of righteousness and peace.

The Physical Necessities

Fathers are to provide the necessities of life. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus taught: "Which of you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake." Paul stated our obligation to our families in I Timothy 5:8: "If anyone does not provide for his relatives and especially for his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever." The golden rule applies to fathers. A father should do unto his children, as he would have them do unto him.

Conclusion

In conclusion, fathers are responsible for instruction, training, discipline, and life's necessities. However, as we have discussed, rearing children is a two man job, involving the mother also. In single parent homes, mothers and fathers must go it alone. This is also the case when there is a protracted absence of the parent, such as one who is away in the military or one who is sick and incapacitated.

Study Questions

1. What is the meaning of "Fathers do not exasperate your children"? _____

2. What do the words *discipline* and *disciple* have in common? _____

3. How does the Lord show his love to his sons? _____

4. At the time discipline is administered, how does it seem? _____
5. What is the harvest of discipline? _____
6. What attitude should children have toward fathers who discipline them? _____
8. How can the church help single moms with the discipline of their children? _____

6. Mothers

Luke 2:52 tells us the ingredients for proper child growth and development: “And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.” This passage focuses on four aspects of children’s growth and development important to the work of mothers. Wisdom reflects intellectual growth; stature, physical growth; favor with God, spiritual growth; and men, social growth. Our abundant free and public institutions place intellectual, physical and social growth within easy reach of all, even our less well-off families. Mothers, just as fathers, must see to this total education of their children. “But 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.

The Physical Growth and Development of Children

Mothers should attend to the spiritual growth and development of their children. If mothers do not teach and nurture children spiritually, who will? Lois, the grandmother, and Eunice, the mother, of Timothy passed down their “sincere faith” to him (2 Tim 1:5). Indeed, they instructed him from infancy in the Scriptures: “But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, 15 and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.” 2 Tim 3:14-15.

The Spiritual Development of Children

Mothers should commit to the spiritual development of their children. They must actively pursue training and education for them:

- Have your children at all the services of the church where they grow unto salvation. Peter tells us: “. . . as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby.” 1 Pet 2:2.
- Teach them to be workers who do not need to be ashamed, handling aright the word of truth (2 Tim 2:15).
- Train your girls and young ladies that when they grow up, they should love their husbands and children and that they should be self-controlled, pure, busy at home, and kind (Titus 2:4-5).
- Train your boys and young men to be self-controlled (Titus 2:6).

The Role of the Mother

The New Testament instructs mothers how to do this teaching. “In everything set them an example by doing what is good. In your teaching, show integrity, seriousness, and soundness of speech . . .” Titus 2:7. The example of a Godly mother says more than words. The mother should teach her children to hear the instruction of their father and don’t forsake the law of their mother (Prov 1:8). At the same time, children should love the Lord more than they love their father or their mother (Mt 10:37).

Conclusion

As with fathers, so it is with mothers. Mothers are responsible for the total education of their children, especially the spiritual education. Children will naturally look to their mothers for an example. The command is all-inclusive: set them an example of what is good in every thing you do.

Study questions

1. In what four ways did Jesus grow? _____

2. What did Lois and Eunice pass down to Timothy? _____

3. How do children benefit from attending all the services of the church?

4. What are we to teach girls and young women? _____

5. What are we to teach boys and young men? _____

6. What does Proverbs 1:8 teach about children’s relationship to their father? _____
7. How should children react to the law of their mother? _____

8. For what part of a child’s education is the mother responsible? _____

7. Children

Children can get along better with their parents if they obey the command, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 'Honor your father and mother,' which is the first commandment with promise: 'that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth.'" Eph 6:1-3. In addition to the commands, there is a promise. "That it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth." One has every reason to believe that if children obey and honor their parents, they will have a longer and happier life. When I was a child, my parents had some definite do's and do not's. Parents, try teaching these do's and don'ts to your children. Children, try these do's and do not's in obeying and honoring your parents.

Do:

- Go to every service of the church.
- Sit where your parents can see you.
- Bring your friends home so your parents can meet them.
- Go where you tell your parents you are going.
- Be home at the time you say you are going to be there.
- Clean your own room and pick up your own things.
- Help your mom take care of younger brothers and sisters.
- Be a happy camper when you are doing your chores.
- Treat older people with respect.
- Study your Bible lessons.
- Tell the truth.

Do Not:

- Sass or talk back to your parents.
- Use slang or vulgar language.
- Be hateful or abusive to others.
- Pout when you are corrected or cannot have your way.
- Talk and misbehave in church.

- Misbehave at school or in the neighborhood.
- Run with kids who do bad things.
- Start drugs and you won't have to stop.
- Leave a mess for others to clean up.
- Talk family business outside the family unless you are being abused or someone is in danger. For example, if you or some other family member is being abused, you must tell.

Conclusion

Do unto each of your parents as you would have them do unto you. The end of it all is to practice the golden rule (Mt 7:12) with your parents, brothers, and sisters. Remember that if you obey and honor your parents, you will live a long and happy life. On the other hand, if you carelessly regard others and recklessly carry on, you are sure to come into great and dangerous trouble.

Study questions:

1. What is the one condition on obeying parents? _____
2. What is the first commandment with promise? _____
3. What exactly is promised? _____
4. What are your top three do's – the ones that will help you most in your life? _____

5. What are your top three don'ts – the ones that will help you most in your life? _____

6. When must a family member talk family business outside the home? _____
7. How does the golden rule apply to you and your parents, or to you and your children? _____
8. What will lead you to great trouble in your life? _____

9. What will lead you to a long and happy life? _____

8. "Husbands, Love Your Wives"

Paul instructed husbands in Eph 5:25-28 to love their wives: "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her . . . So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself." This passage establishes the very nature of a man's most important human relationship. The phrase, as Christ loved the church, describes how men are to love their own wives. The phrase, *as their own bodies*, speaks to the degree of this love. These powerful metaphoric phrases extend into practical do's and do not's.

Do:

- Compliment your wife in public and private.
- Express appreciation for services: cooking, laundry, caring for children, and housework. These are services to be appreciated, not obligations to be taken for granted.
- If your wife is a Christian, go to services with her even if you are not a Christian, or if you are lukewarm or erring. Public fronts are tough for us all. If for no other reason, do it for the children's sake.
- Create loving opportunities for you and your wife, offering kind words, approving actions, and fond and intimate gestures. Someone has said that good hugs, three times a day, will insure a loving relationship. You cannot be distant to someone you are nice to and hug often.
- Spend as much leisure time as possible at home with your wife and children. Create mutual activities to do together.
- Be your wife's best friend.
- Return your wife's angry words with kind, soft words.

Do Not:

- Criticize your wife in public, but give your suggestions at home on the most positive and informative level possible, offering them only if necessary.
- Contradict what your wife is saying before friends and the children.
- Take the children's side against their mother.

- Physically or verbally abuse your wife. Remember, she is your own body.
- Flirt with other women.
- Leave the disciplining of the children to your wife.
- Habitually leave your wife alone at night to go other places or to be with other people.
- Keep secrets from your wife.
- Speak to your wife with angry or sarcastic words.

Peter taught us: "Husbands, likewise, dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered." 1 Peter 3:7.

Conclusion

Consideration and respect of their wives makes husbands and wives joint heirs of the gracious gift of life. What a wonderful reward this gift is now and in the hereafter. To achieve this relationship takes continuing effort and consideration on the part of the husband. Neglect, sarcasm, and ridicule aimed at the wife can never foster a proper loving relationship.

Study Questions

1. Describe the love of a husband for his own wife, using Christ as an example. _____
2. Describe the love of a husband for his own wife, using his own body as an example. _____
3. Husbands, what are the three most important things you can do for your wife to really help your relationship? Wives, what are the three most important things your husband can do to really improve your relationship? _____

4. Husbands, what are the three most important things you can stop doing to really help your relationship? Wives, what are the three most important things your husband can stop doing to really improve your relationship? _____

9. An Excellent Wife

"An excellent wife is the crown of her husband, But she who causes shame is like rottenness in his bones," wrote Solomon in Proverbs 12:4. In Proverbs 31:10-31, he concludes his book with a long statement defining this excellent wife. He begins in Prov 31:10-12:

Who can find a virtuous wife?
For her worth is far above rubies.
11 The heart of her husband safely trusts her;
So he will have no lack of gain.
12 She does him good and not evil

The following is a condensed version of her wonderful traits:

- Trustworthy: Her husband has full confidence in her.
- Good: She brings him good, not harm, all of her life.
- Industrious: She selects wool and flax and she works with eager hands.
- Providing: Getting up while it is dark, she provides food for her family.
- Economical: Out of her money, she buys a field and plants a vineyard.
- Vigorous: She sets about her work vigorously; her arms are strong.
- Kind: She opens her arms to the poor and extends hands to the needy.
- Prepared: When it snows, she has no fear for her household.
- Strong and Dignified: She is clothed with strength and dignity.
- Unafraid: She can laugh at the days to come.
- Wise: She speaks wisdom and faithful instruction is on her tongue.
- Watchful: She watches over the affairs of her household.
- Busy: She does not eat the bread of idleness.
- Fearful of the Lord: A woman who fears the Lord is to be praised.

Solomon describes the outcome for this woman in verses 28-31. Her children will call her blessed. Her husband will recognize and praise her for her fine qualities. Her works will bring her praise from the entire city. She will be rewarded.

The Bible instructs us on those things Christian wives must do:

Submit to Their Husbands: "Wives should submit to their husbands in everything." Eph 5:24. In verse 21, Paul tells us that all Christians should be "submitting to one another in the fear of God."

Be an Example: "That even if some do not obey the word, they [husbands], without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives, when they observe your chaste conduct accompanied by fear." 1 Peter 3:1-2.

Conclusion

There are also attributes that disgrace a husband. Solomon tells us in Prov 12:4: "She who causes shame is like rotteness in his bones." Some attributes that the world values are quite empty. For example, "Charm is deceitful and beauty is passing." Prov 31:30. In contrast, Peter spoke of the beauty of the inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit in 1 Peter 3:4. May all Christian wives seek to add the noble and great qualities taught in God's word.

Study Questions

1. Was Solomon's ideal wife a working woman who interacted with the outside world? _____
2. Describe how valuable a virtuous wife is to her husband. _____

3. Identify the working nature of the ideal woman in Proverbs 31. _____

4. In Ephesians 5:21-22, who is to submit to whom? _____

5. What is the power of a good example in 1 Peter 3:1-2? _____

6. How can a woman disgrace her husband? _____

10. Everything I Needed to Know Was in the Bible

A popular book expounds on the notion: All I needed to know, I learned in kindergarten. A better view of childhood from a spiritual point of view is that "Everything I needed to know was in the Bible." How often as a child and young adult, do we ignore those teachings from the Bible, only to be burnt hard in later life by the devastating nature of those very sins spoken of by parents and teachers in Bible classes. Here are a few of those direct commands and principles. Young people, take heed. Parents, let us be good teachers.

Abstain from every form of evil.

1 Th 5:22 tells us directly to "abstain from every form of evil." We do not seem to get it. We are also told, "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." 1 Peter 5:8. When we get near evil, the devil is there with his enticement to sin. It is not something you can flirt with. James outlines the entrapment procedure used by the devil in James 1:14-16: "But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death. Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren."

How easy it is to be deceived and enticed: just smoke one cigarette; just hang out in the bar one night; just use pot one time. Rather than flirt with these evils, we should flee. "Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart." 2 Tim 2:22.

Bad company corrupts good morals.

We learn in our youth to avoid evil companions. We need to stay close to those "who call on the Lord." Watch out for the companions that are doing wrong things. They will corrupt us: "Do not be deceived: `Evil company corrupts good habits.'" 1 Cor 15:33. How often my mom warned me about my company. And how often bad company almost lured me into doing things that could have ruined my life. Drugs, violence, and immoral acts—all of these and more—lie in wait. More often than not, bad companions introduce young people to these devastating sins. Watch out for bad friends. Be careful. 1 John 2:15-16 tells us "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the

world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world." The company you keep may do you in. But if you resist, the devil will flee from you James 4:7.

Pride goes before a fall.

It is so easy for us to think more of ourselves than we ought. We think we are smarter than our parents and teachers. We think we know more than we do. It is often our way or no way. But the wise man warned in Proverbs 16:18: "Pride goes before destruction, And a haughty spirit before a fall." In James 4:6, the New Testament concurs: "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble." In the beatitudes, Christ spoke of a better way: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Again, "Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth." We should subject our pride to the will of God: "13 Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole [duty] of man." Eccl 12:13 NIV

Conclusion

Yes, everything we need to know is in the Bible. These are only starters. God's word equips the young in every good work: "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work." 2 Tim 3:16-17.

Study questions

1. What should be the Christian attitude toward evil? _____

2. What are five steps from temptation to sin? _____

3. What are young people to flee? _____
To follow? _____
4. What are the consequences to hanging around with the wrong crowd?

5. List the three things that are not of the Father but of the world? _____

6. What goes before destruction? _____

11. How Shall the Young Secure Their Hearts

The last lesson, Everything I Needed to Know Was in the Bible, pointed out how children and young adults ignore teachings from the Bible, only to be burnt hard in later life by the devastating nature of those very sins spoken of by parents and teachers in Bible classes.

Keeping the young from harm's way.

We saw three direct commands that will keep both young and old from harm's way.

- Abstain from every form of evil. 1 Thess 5:22 tells us directly to "abstain from every form of evil."
- Evil company corrupts good habits. We are taught in our youth to avoid evil companions. Watch out for the companions that are doing things that are wrong. They will corrupt us: "Do not be deceived: `Evil company corrupts good habits'" 1 Cor 15:33.
- Pride goes before a fall. It is so easy for us to think more of ourselves than we ought. We think we are smarter than our parents and teachers. We think we know more than we do. It is often our way or no way. But the wise man warned in Prov 16:18: "Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before stumbling."

God's word securing the hearts of the young.

In 1719, almost 300 years ago, Isaac Watts, a poet, wrote the words to our song, How Shall the Young Secure Their Hearts? The answer is the same today—God's word. Look carefully for the meaning in Watts' song. God's word is the answer to the problems of youth. Indeed, everything we need to know is in the Bible.

How shall the young secure their hearts,
And guard their lives from sin?
Thy word the choicest rules imparts
To keep the conscience clean.

`Tis like the sun, a heavenly light,
That guides us all the day;
And thro' the dangers of the night,
A lamp to lead our way.

Thy word is everlasting truth;
How pure is every page.
That holy book shall guide our youth,
And well support our age.

In the words of Jesus: "Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth." John 17:17-18. Only the truth has the power to sanctify our young people. Only the gospel can save them: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek." Rom 1:16-17.

Just a vapor.

For young, and sometimes, the older people too, life seems endless in its opportunities for redemption. We think there will always be time to fulfill our good intentions. The future lies before us: I will obey the gospel; I will start going to church; I will quit hanging out with those guys; I will start doing what my folks tell me to do. These are good intentions voiced against the uncertainty of life. Beware! "For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away." James 4:14.

Conclusion

How shall the young secure their hearts? Remember everything we need to know is in the Bible! May our young people learn the word of God and live by His word. May our older people set the proper example by living by the word of truth, the gospel of our salvation (Eph. 1:13).

Study questions

1. What three things will keep our young from harm's way? _____

2. What is central to securing the hearts of the young? _____
3. List the references to God's word in the Isaac Watts song. _____

4. What is God's power to save? _____
5. Why is it urgent for young people to obey the Lord now? _____

12. "From the Beginning It Has Not Been So"

In Mt. 19:3-6, the Pharisees tried Christ. "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for just any reason?" they asked. He answered them:

Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning 'made them male and female,' 5 and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? 6 So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate." Matt 19:3-6.

God's Rules for Marriage

God laid down the rules of marriage from the very beginning, and Christ reiterated them:

- A man shall leave his father and mother.
- A man shall be joined to his wife.
- The two shall become one flesh.
- God joined them together as man and wife.
- Let not man separate.

One Man, One Woman, One Flesh

The Bible teaching in both the Old and New Testaments could not be clearer. God created one man, one woman, one flesh. Man cannot separate them. Yet, we live in an age when divorces frequently break up marriages. Often, we do not teach strongly that marriage is a lifetime proposition. In fact, many assume that if things do not work out, they can easily obtain a divorce; and a new marriage can easily follow. Not so! Jesus was clear and emphatic when he added: "And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, [marital unfaithfulness, NIV] and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery." Matt 19:9.

Divorce, a Dangerous Situation

The Bible teaching is clear, but how serious is the situation that a divorce can create? Sexual immorality and adultery are sins of the most serious condemnation. Gal 5:19 lists sexual immorality as a work of the flesh. "I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the

kingdom of God." Gal. 5:21. Paul warns us, "Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders . . . will inherit the kingdom of God." 1 Cor 6:9-10. A human predicament can get no more serious than the one created by ignoring God's law of marriage and divorce. It often creates a situation where people are living in the sins of sexual immorality and adultery.

Our Clear Christian Duty

We must teach and observe God's law of marriage and divorce. We must teach our young people that marriage is a relationship set apart by God. God sanctified marriage, and we should never treat it frivolously. We should go into the marriage contract knowing that the two become one flesh. What God has joined together, man cannot separate.

Conclusion

The Bible clearly and emphatically teaches that God created marriage. Man cannot destroy what God has created. Modern attitudes toward marriage and divorce create untenable situations for godly people. Faithful children of God will practice and teach the truth on the sanctity of marriage and the danger of divorce.

Study questions.

1. Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any reason? _____
2. List God's rules for marriage as stated by the Lord in Mt 19. _____

3. What are the three "ones" in a marriage? _____

4. What is the danger in sexual immorality? _____

5. What is the teaching in 1 Cor 6:9-10 on male prostitutes and homosexual offenders? _____
6. What should we teach our young people regarding marriage?

7. Who creates a marriage?_____ Who can set a marriage aside? _____

13. "They Shall Be One Flesh"

Genesis 2:18-25 records one of the most wonderful creations—woman. Of man and woman, God said: "They shall be one flesh (Gen. 2:24)." Of this union of man and woman, Jesus quoted this passage from Genesis and added: "So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate." Mt. 19:6.

Breaking the Sacred Union

Only in circumstances described by God can one break this sacred union created by God:

- Marital unfaithfulness in Mt. 19:9: "I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, and marries another woman commits adultery."
- Death of a partner in Rom. 7:2-3: "For the woman who has a husband is bound by the law to her husband as long as he lives. But if the husband dies, she is released from the law of her husband. 3 So then if, while her husband lives, she marries another man, she will be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from that law, so that she is no adulteress, though she has married another man."
- An unbeliever leaves a Christian in I Cor. 7:10-15: " If any brother has a wife who does not believe, and she is willing to live with him, let him not divorce her. 13 And a woman who has a husband who does not believe, if he is willing to live with her, let her not divorce him. . . . 15 But if the unbeliever departs, let him depart; a brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases."

Paul further teaches that a wife is not to depart from her husband. But even if she does depart, let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband. In addition, a husband is not to divorce his wife (1 Cor 7:10-11).

Illicit Relationships

The two become one flesh even in illicit relationships. In I Cor. 6:16, Paul says: "Or do you not know that he who is joined to a harlot is one body with her? For 'the two,' He says, 'shall become one flesh.'" In verse 18, he adds: "Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body." Sexual immorality is a devastating sin that destroys our marriages and our own bodies. It alienates us forever from the Lord.

Love and Respect, Keys to Successful Marriage

In true Christian marriages, husbands and wives love and respect one another as themselves. Paul describes the New Testament law and spirit of proper marriage in Eph. 5:21-33:

- Each must submit to the other as children of God.
- As the church submits to Christ, wives submit to their husbands.
- As Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, husbands love their own wives.
- Husbands love their wives as their own bodies.
- Husbands and wives are united; the two become one flesh.

True Christian Marriages

Christian marriages do not always come easily. Our world fosters and encourages divorce and remarriage, leaving many children without proper parents and homes. To leave children desolate in a broken marriage without Christ, the church, and two loving, respectful parents is the worst of worlds for all. Christians should struggle to avoid sexual immorality and work to create tender, loving, and caring marriages. The church and the home should be central to our lives. The love we share will extend to our children, giving them hope and promise.

Conclusion

Marriage is a sacred union created by God. Faithful Christians should work to keep this union intact. Sexual immorality is destructive to the Christian life and the marriage union. The true basis for marriage is love and respect, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for it.

Study Questions

1. How and when was marriage created? _____

2. How can the marriage union be scripturally broken? _____

3. How does sexual immorality destroy both the body and the soul? _____
