

# Joy of a Word Filled Family

## Study Guide

### How to Lead a Family Altar

#### WFF: Message One (990915WE)

In this lesson we are taking a look at our owner's manual. You see we were bought with a price, we are no longer our own. The Owner of your life and my life has written out just what He expects from each of us. He also has included instructions that keep us running in tip top condition - FOREVER.

Have you looked at your Bible that way this week?

- It is the exact and perfect and errorless guide to maintenance (how to stay victorious),
- Fuel needs (how to grow by eating spiritually),
- Warranty questions (assurance of salvation) and so on.

There is nothing more vital nor practical than to consult the Owner's Manual God's Word!

This is part one of a look at what the Owner of we who are saved, has to say about His expectations for the Family, specifically dads

This is the standard; it is the way God designed life to be. You may be single, single parenting, childless, grandparents, and so on. What we look at tonight is vital for all of us because it is God's Word, and God's Way!

### PART ONE: DADS IT'S NOT EASY

To declare God's requirements for a family to grow in Him is an awesome task -- even humorous! One professor early on told of a fellow:

- He started in ministry fresh out of Seminary and as a newlywed, he preached "The Ten Commandments of Child Rearing".
- Two years and one child later he changed his sermon to: "Five Biblical Principles for Parenting".
- A few years and another child later he re-titled his sermon: "Three Suggestions for Parents".
- And as you can assume after ten years and three children, he was selling used cars....

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Parenting is difficult at times! At one bookstore I counted 54 titles on marriage and family with 18 on how to raise kids... many didn't even agree!

One great authority on life Mark Twain had an interesting insight on parenting. Consider this advice in those exasperating moments all of us as parents share. Twain's philosophy was: when a kid turns 13, stick him in a barrel, nail the lid on top and feed him through the knothole. When he turns 16, plug up the hole! Enough of human options.

Look with me at Ps. 127-28, Stages of God's work at growing Dads.

Psalms 127:1-2 Lay a Godly foundation; v. 3-5 Trust God for blessed fruitfulness

Psalms 128:1-4 Enjoy a happy family life; v. 5-6 Reap the joys of a satisfying family in old age

I think it is fascinating to dig out and study what God recorded in a three thousand year old Hebrew manuscript from the Jewish Wisdom Literature called the Kethubim, known to us today as the Proverbs of King Solomon.

## **NEGLECTED PARENTING MEANS A DISOBEDIENT CHILD**

If we have a disobedient child, Proverbs says he will be:

- EFFECT #1 = A grief to his mother: Proverbs 10:1 A wise son maketh a glad father: but a foolish son [is] the heaviness of his mother. Proverbs 17:25 A foolish son [is] a bitterness to her that bare him. (KJV)
- EFFECT #2 = A rebel to his father: Proverbs 15:5 A fool despiseth his father's instruction: but he that regardeth reproof is prudent. (KJV)
- EFFECT #3 = A sorrow to his father: Proverbs 17:21-25 He that begetteth a fool [doeth it] to his sorrow: and the father of a fool hath no joy. 25 A foolish son [is] a grief to his father. (KJV)
- EFFECT #4 = A disaster to his father: Proverbs 19:13 A foolish son [is] the calamity of his father (KJV)
- EFFECT #5 = A disgrace to his parents: Proverbs 19:26 He that wasteth [his] father, [and] chaseth away [his] mother, [is] a son that causeth shame, and bringeth reproach. (KJV)
- EFFECT #6 = A user of his parents: Proverbs 28:24 Whoso robbeth his father or his mother, and saith, [It is] no transgression; the same [is] the companion of a destroyer. (KJV)

Do we want to have shame on your hands? Do we want to have a disaster on our hands? Just don't do anything, and that's what we'll have.

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## **HOW TO KEEP FROM RAISING DISOBEDIENT CHILDREN?**

In a study conducted several years ago, sociologists Sheldon and Eleanor Glueck of Harvard University tried to identify the crucial factors in delinquency (*Unraveling Juvenile Delinquency* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1950), pp. 257-271). They developed a test by which they could predict the future delinquency of children five or six-years-old. Their follow-up tests, four years later, provided to be ninety percent accurate. They determined that the four necessary factors to prevent delinquency are:

1. THE FATHER'S DISCIPLINE: Discipline must be firm, fair, and consistent.
2. THE MOTHER'S SUPERVISION: A mother must know where her children are and what they're doing at all times, and be with them as much as possible.
3. THE FATHER AND MOTHER'S AFFECTION: Children need to see love demonstrated between the father and mother, and have it physically demonstrated to them.
4. THE FAMILY'S COHESIVENESS: The family must spend time together.

Quite a promise -- what an opportunity to have such a rare and precious home.

## **AMERICAN FAMILIES ARE CRUMBLING**

Dr. Albert Siegel said recently in the *Stanford Observer*:

When it comes to rearing children, every society is only 20 years away from barbarism. Twenty years is all we have to accomplish the task of civilizing the infants who are born into our midst each year. These savages know nothing of our language, our culture, our religion, our values, our customs of interpersonal relations. The infant is totally ignorant about communism, fascism, democracy, civil liberties, the rights of the minority as contrasted with the prerogatives of the majority, respect, decency, honesty, customs, conventions, and manners. The barbarian must be tamed if civilization is to survive."

## **WE MUST BE GOD'S DADS TODAY**

The Minnesota Crime Commission released a report a number of years ago which sounds a lot like Dr. Siegel's warning:

Every baby starts life as a little savage. He is completely selfish and self-centered. He wants what he wants when he wants it; his bottle, his mother's attention, his playmate's toy, his uncle's watch. Deny these and he seethes with rage and aggressiveness which

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would be murderous were he not so helpless. This means that all children, not just certain children, are born delinquent. If permitted to continue in the self-centered world of infancy, given free reign to his impulsive actions, every child would grow up a criminal, a thief, a killer, a rapist.

If we read those words and think our youngsters are excluded, we make a grave error. Every child has the potential of becoming a study in hostility...a heartache...a model of wickedness.

There's no denying it--parents must deal with the evil that rests in their children's lives. Those who fail to do so consistently and wisely will face a future of misery.

### **WHAT IS THE KEY FOR A GODLY DAD?**

Deuteronomy 6:7-9 "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.<sup>8</sup> "You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes.<sup>9</sup> "You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

SAY IT! First, notice that the practice is an imperative. YOU SHALL TEACH THEM. Second, notice that the process is simple. TALK. Not preach, scold, cajole, pound it into them, dump on them...no, make it be so natural a part of your daily life you just talk about it! Let it be natural and unforced, let it flow into every part of life. The key is, if you can see God in every part of life, so will they. If God stays at church or when you prepare a lecture, they will compartmentalize Him right out of their social life, private life, sports life, dressing life, recreation life and every other part of their lives. As one great old saint said, 'There's no difference between the sacred in the secular'. That's what Moses says. Let God flow into all of life. How? Moses gives us

### **FIVE POWERFUL POINTERS TO GODLY DADS:**

LET GOD OUT WHEN YOU SIT IN YOUR HOUSE. (v. 7a) And that suggests we are at home and so are they. Just open your life at mealtimes. Share how you have seen His hand in your life, His face in your devotions, His voice in your heart as you worship. Tell them how your Heavenly Father is so patient with your weaknesses, so loving with your failures, so gentle with your correction. Then live that out for them.

LET GOD OUT WHEN YOU WALK IN THE WAY (v. 7b) Do you walk with them? Take a talk walk and listen until you hear them through their words, and then talk to that person you see in the words. Turn off the radio in the car and let them talk. Seize those moments.

LET GOD OUT WHEN YOU LIE DOWN (v. 7c) One of the most crucial times of ministry for us as dads is at bedtime. Do you treasure those closing moments of the

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day? So many little thoughts, little fears, little hurts, can all be worked on. A wise dad takes life and parenting one day at a time! We train them, lead and guide them, and let God move their hearts by prayer.

LET GOD OUT WHEN YOU RISE UP ( v. 7d) ! Every morning we have the opportunity to start the course of not only our day but our family. Do we take this precious opportunity? Do we re-orient them toward the loving presence of Jesus by our kindness, gentleness or goodness? Or is it lateness, shortness and gruffness that they see? Rise up oh men of God...

LET GOD OUT WHEN THEY ARE AWAY FROM HOME (v.8) ! Make it Portable! Deuteronomy 6:8 Tie them as symbols on your hands [this speaks of what we do for a living] and bind them on your foreheads [this stands for our minds, thoughts and values. god must be a part of all we do and think]. (NIV) Deuteronomy 6:9 Write them on the door frames of your houses and on your gates. (NIV) Chuck Swindoll[1] says, "Here again the meaning of Moses' words goes beyond the literal. the door posts and gates signify all our domestic and community activities. Every action of our lives, those lived inside the home as well as out, is to have His Word etched on it."

## **PART TWO: SOME PRACTICAL WAYS WE DADS CAN START TO DISCIPLINE OUR CHILDREN**

A Simple plan:

1. Read the Bible to them
2. Begin Monthly breakfast dates with our children asking them these questions [what do you like about the way God made you, our family and God; what do you want to be when you grow up?]
3. Start a Spiritual Life Journal on them [saved, prayed, wanted to be a missionary, reading achieved in the Word, and so on.]
4. Pray every night with them [sing and sit together].
5. Tell them stories from when you were a child and use them to teach moral, spiritual and practical lessons on your failures and successes.
6. Tell them Bible stories and APPLY them to their lives.
7. Learn the verses they are learning.

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[1] You and Your Child, IFL Study Guide, p. 59.

8. Start them a read through the Bible chart and help them.
9. Take them on your ministry trips to rest home, hospital, visitation, evangelism and so on.

### A Sample page from a growing Dad's Bible

Passage	Comments
<p>Genesis 19:1-38 Now the two angels came to Sodom in the evening, and Lot was sitting in the gate of Sodom. When Lot saw them, he rose to meet them, and he bowed himself with his face toward the ground.<sup>2</sup> And he said, "Here now, my lords, please turn in to your servant's house and spend the night, and wash your feet; then you may rise early and go on your way." And they said, "No, but we will spend the night in the open square."<sup>3</sup> But he insisted strongly; so they turned in to him and entered his house. Then he made them a feast, and baked unleavened bread, and they ate.</p> <p><sup>4</sup> Now before they lay down, the men of the city, the men of Sodom, both old and young, all the people from every quarter, surrounded the house.<sup>5</sup> And they called to Lot and said to him, "Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us that we may know them carnally."<sup>6</sup> So Lot went out to them through the doorway, shut the door behind him,<sup>7</sup> and said, "Please, my brethren, do not do so wickedly!<sup>8</sup> "See now, I have two daughters who have not known a man; please, let me bring them out to you, and you may do to them as you wish; only do nothing to these men, since this is the reason they have come under the shadow of my roof."</p> <p><sup>9</sup> And they said, "Stand back!" Then they said, "This one came in to stay here, and he keeps acting as a judge; now we will deal worse with you than with them." So they pressed hard against the man Lot, and came near to break down the door.<sup>10</sup> But the men reached out their hands and pulled Lot into the house with them, and shut the door.<sup>11</sup> And they struck the men who were at the doorway of the house with blindness, both small and great, so that they became weary trying to find the door.</p> <p><sup>12</sup> Then the men said to Lot, "Have you anyone else here? Son-in-law, your sons, your daughters, and whomever you have in the city—take them out of this place!<sup>13</sup> "For we will destroy this place, because the outcry against them has</p>	<p>v. 9 Compromise ruins our testimony</p>

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<p>grown great before the face of the Lord, and the Lord has sent us to destroy it.”<sup>14</sup> So Lot went out and spoke to his sons-in-law, who had married his daughters, and said, “Get up, get out of this place; for the Lord will destroy this city!” But to his sons-in-law he seemed to be joking.</p> <p><sup>15</sup> When the morning dawned, the angels urged Lot to hurry, saying, “Arise, take your wife and your two daughters who are here, lest you be consumed in the punishment of the city.”<sup>16</sup> And while he lingered, the men took hold of his hand, his wife’s hand, and the hands of his two daughters, the Lord being merciful to him, and they brought him out and set him outside the city.<sup>17</sup> So it came to pass, when they had brought them outside, that he said, “Escape for your life! Do not look behind you nor stay anywhere in the plain. Escape to the mountains, lest you be destroyed.”<sup>18</sup> Then Lot said to them, “Please, no, my lords!<sup>19</sup> “Indeed now, your servant has found favor in your sight, and you have increased your mercy which you have shown me by saving my life; but I cannot escape to the mountains, lest some evil overtake me and I die.<sup>20</sup> “See now, this city is near enough to flee to, and it is a little one; please let me escape there (is it not a little one?) and my soul shall live.”<sup>21</sup> And he said to him, “See, I have favored you concerning this thing also, in that I will not overthrow this city for which you have spoken.<sup>22</sup> “Hurry, escape there. For I cannot do anything until you arrive there.” Therefore the name of the city was called Zoar.</p> <p><sup>23</sup> The sun had risen upon the earth when Lot entered Zoar.<sup>24</sup> Then the Lord rained brimstone and fire on Sodom and Gomorrah, from the Lord out of the heavens.<sup>25</sup> So He overthrew those cities, all the plain, all the inhabitants of the cities, and what grew on the ground.</p> <p><sup>26</sup> But his wife looked back behind him, and she became a pillar of salt.</p> <p><sup>27</sup> And Abraham went early in the morning to the place where he had stood before the Lord.<sup>28</sup> Then he looked toward Sodom and Gomorrah, and toward all the land of the plain; and he saw, and behold, the smoke of the land which went up like the smoke of a furnace.</p> <p><sup>29</sup> And it came to pass, when God destroyed the cities of the plain, that God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow, when He overthrew the cities</p>	<p>v. 23-29 Lot lost his wife, his fortune and his married daughters to Sodom! Loving the world is costly.</p> <p>v. 30 Sin begets more sin.</p> <p>v. 36 Compromise defiles our kids.</p> <p>v. 38 His descendents became God's enemies!</p>
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in which Lot had dwelt.

30 Then Lot went up out of Zoar and dwelt in the mountains, and his two daughters were with him; for he was afraid to dwell in Zoar. And he and his two daughters dwelt in a cave.31 Now the firstborn said to the younger, "Our father is old, and there is no man on the earth to come in to us as is the custom of all the earth.32 "Come, let us make our father drink wine, and we will lie with him, that we may preserve the lineage of our father."

33 So they made their father drink wine that night. And the firstborn went in and lay with her father, and he did not know when she lay down or when she arose.34 It happened on the next day that the firstborn said to the younger, "Indeed I lay with my father last night; let us make him drink wine tonight also, and you go in and lie with him, that we may preserve the lineage of our father."35 Then they made their father drink wine that night also. And the younger arose and lay with him, and he did not know when she lay down or when she arose.

36 Thus both the daughters of Lot were with child by their father.

37 The firstborn bore a son and called his name Moab; he is the father of the Moabites to this day.38 And the younger, she also bore a son and called his name Ben-Ammi; he is the father of the people of Ammon to this day.

## Lot and Abraham

Lot	Abraham
Took The Best (13:11)	Trusted God
Lost His Wife (19:26)	Kept His Wife who became a Mother of God's People
Lost His Kids (19:14)	Blessed His Children
Cursed His Descendents (19:38)	Blessed His Descendents
Lust Of Eyes (13:10)	Contented
Settled Gay Community (13:12-13)	Settled God's Country
Defiled Daughters (19:36)	Blessed Sons
Descendents God's Enemies	Descendents God's People

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(19:37)	
Lot's Line Ended	Abraham's Line Never Ends
Competitor/ Opportunist	Peacemaker (13:8)
Took/ Grabbed	Trusted God's Choice (13:9)

### **FATHERS: WOULD YOU DO IT ANY DIFFERENTLY?**

One father summed it up this way. He said, "My family's all grown, and the kids are all gone. But, if I had to do it all over again, this is what I'd do:

1. I would love my wife more in front of my children.
2. I would laugh with my children more--at our mistakes and our joys.
3. I would listen more, even to the littlest child.
4. I would be more honest about my own weaknesses, never pretending perfection.
5. I would pray differently for my family--instead of focusing on them, I'd focus on me.
6. I would do more things together with my children.
7. I would encourage them more and bestow more praise.
8. I would pay more attention to little things, like deeds and words of thoughtfulness.
9. And then, finally, if I had to do it all over again, I would share God more intimately with my family; every ordinary thing that happened in every ordinary day I would use to direct them to God."

I like the way Charlie Shedd[2] described it in one of his original promises to his tiny son, Peter:

I hope that I will be able to make religion natural to you. It is natural. In fact, I think this relationship with God is the only thing that is one hundred percent natural. We will pray together until it is easy for you to put your arms on the window sill of heaven and look into the face of God. Before I put you back in your crib, I want to tell you something Philip said.

We had been out in the country for a ride. It was evening and we ran out of gas. We were walking along after we had been to the farm house, and I was carrying a can of gas. Philip was only four. He was playing along, throwing rocks at the

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[2] Letters to Phillip,

telephone poles, picking flowers, and then, all of a sudden it got dark. Sometimes night comes all at once in the country. Philip came over, put his little hand in mine and said, "Take my hand, Daddy. I might get lost."

Peter, there is a hand reaching to you from the heart of the universe. If you will lay your hand in the hand of God and walk with Him, you will never ever get lost.

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# How to Raise Pure Kids

## WFF: Message Two (990922WE)

Our generation<sup>[1]</sup> has nothing to look forward to but oblivion. The entailments of this are terrifying drugs, AIDS, suicide, alcoholism, broken homes, terrorism, crime, child pornography, and a host of other symptoms that are heartbreaking. It is a short step from the "exploded" doctrines of the past to the disintegration of hope for the future.

- In the 1960s, kids lost their authority. It was the decade of protest-church, state, and parents were all called into question and found wanting. Their authority was rejected, yet nothing ever replaced it.
- In the 1970s, kids lost their love. It was the decade of me-ism, dominated by hyphenated words beginning with self. self-image, self-esteem, self-assertion. It made for a lonely world. Kids learned everything there was to know about sex but forgot everything there was to know about love, and no one had the nerve to tell them there was a difference.
- In the 1980s, kids lost their hope. Stripped of innocence, authority, and love, and plagued by the horror of a nuclear nightmare, large and growing numbers of this generation stopped believing in the future. (author unknown]

The challenge is before us dads! That is why we are continuing our study of one of the most vital subjects in the world, Growing Dads God's Way! The future of the church, the future of the Christian Home and the future of our nation and world is shaped by the dads in each. What kind of a dad are we going to be?

To get started on the right road we can open to Proverbs. Note with me some key words. Start with Proverbs 1:8 "My son"; 1:10, 2:1, 3:1, 21; 4:1, 10, 20; 5:1; 6:1, 20; 7:1. What do you see? A dad who is guiding his children into God's way and showing by his words and example how to be godly!

What are the three keys we are in the midst of learning? Lets turn back now to Deuteronomy and note these keys for becoming a godly dad.

1. Lead the Family Devotions: The Key is to Emphasize Biblical communication Deuteronomy 6:7-9
2. Raise Pure Children: The Key is to Eliminate worldly contamination Deuteronomy 6:10-25
3. Disciple your wife: The Key is to Experience personal consecration Deuteronomy 6:4-6

Last time we studied the first key, the critical job of initiating and leading time for your family in the Word of God. If you missed that time the tape is available. This morning we are going to study the second key to being a godly dad. The second way we can grow

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as godly dads is to set our course to raise pure children. The best way to do this is to follow the second imperative of Deuteronomy 6:

### **Raise Pure Children: The Key is to Eliminate Worldly Contamination**

*Deuteronomy 6:10-25 “So it shall be, when the Lord your God brings you into the land of which He swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob,*

- To give you large and beautiful cities which you did not build, (peaceful, prosperous America)
- 11 “Houses full of all good things, which you did not fill, hewn-out wells which you did not dig, vineyards and olive trees which you did not plant (economic prosperity, lack of famine and poverty)
- When you have eaten and are full— (comfortable and satisfied daily life)
- 12 “then beware, lest you forget the Lord who brought you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage.13 “You shall fear the Lord your God and serve Him, and shall take oaths in His name. (the danger of comfort is not needing and forgetting God!)
- 14 “You shall not go after other gods, the gods of the peoples who are all around you15 ‘(for the Lord your God is a jealous God among you), lest the anger of the Lord your God be aroused against you and destroy you from the face of the earth. (Danger # 1 Lessen our worship of God as all our focus)
- 16 “You shall not tempt the Lord your God as you tempted Him in Massah. (Danger # 2 Lessen our Trust in God. This event occurred in Ex. 17:1-7 where they lacked water and thought they would die of thirst. Rather than trusting God in this trial they tested Him by complaining and quarreling. In the future the Israelites were to remember this embarrassing incident.) 17 “You shall diligently keep the commandments of the Lord your God, His testimonies, and His statutes which He has commanded you.
- 18 “And you shall do what is right and good in the sight of the Lord, that it may be well with you, and that you may go in and possess the good land of which the Lord swore to your fathers,19 “to cast out all your enemies from before you, as the Lord has spoken. (Danger # 3 Lessen our grip on God's call to holy living)
- 20 “When your son asks you in time to come, saying, ‘What is the meaning of the testimonies, the statutes, and the judgments which the Lord our God has commanded you?’21 “then you shall say to your son: ‘We were slaves of Pharaoh in Egypt, and the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand;22 ‘and the Lord showed signs and wonders before our eyes, great and severe, against Egypt, Pharaoh, and all his household.23 ‘Then He brought us out from there, that He might bring us in, to give us the land of which He swore to our fathers.24 ‘And the Lord commanded us to observe all these statutes, to fear the Lord our God, for our good always, that He might preserve us alive, as it is this day.25 ‘Then it will be righteousness for us, if we are careful to observe all these commandments before the Lord our God, as He has commanded us.’ (Danger # 4 Lessen our training of our children in God's way)

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## What Happens when We Neglect to Cultivate Godly Choices?

Passage	Comments
<p>Genesis 19:1-38 Now the two angels came to Sodom in the evening, and Lot was sitting in the gate of Sodom. When Lot saw them, he rose to meet them, and he bowed himself with his face toward the ground.<sup>2</sup> And he said, “Here now, my lords, please turn in to your servant’s house and spend the night, and wash your feet; then you may rise early and go on your way.” And they said, “No, but we will spend the night in the open square.”<sup>3</sup> But he insisted strongly; so they turned in to him and entered his house. Then he made them a feast, and baked unleavened bread, and they ate.</p> <p>4 Now before they lay down, the men of the city, the men of Sodom, both old and young, all the people from every quarter, surrounded the house.<sup>5</sup> And they called to Lot and said to him, “Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us that we may know them carnally.”<sup>6</sup> So Lot went out to them through the doorway, shut the door behind him,<sup>7</sup> and said, “Please, my brethren, do not do so wickedly!<sup>8</sup> “See now, I have two daughters who have not known a man; please, let me bring them out to you, and you may do to them as you wish; only do nothing to these men, since this is the reason they have come under the shadow of my roof.”</p> <p>9 And they said, “Stand back!” Then they said, “This one came in to stay here, and he keeps acting as a judge; now we will deal worse with you than with them.” So they pressed hard against the man Lot, and came near to break down the door.<sup>10</sup> But the men reached out their hands and pulled Lot into the house with them, and shut the door.<sup>11</sup> And they struck the men who were at the doorway of the house with blindness, both small and great, so that they became weary trying to find the door.</p> <p>12 Then the men said to Lot, “Have you anyone else here? Son-in-law, your sons, your daughters, and whomever you have in the city—take them out of this place!<sup>13</sup> “For we will destroy this place, because the outcry against them has grown great before the face of the Lord, and the Lord has sent us to destroy it.”<sup>14</sup> So Lot went out and spoke to his sons-in-law, who had married his daughters, and said, “Get up, get out of this place; for the Lord will destroy this city!” But to his sons-in-law he seemed to be joking.</p> <p>15 When the morning dawned, the angels urged Lot to hurry, saying, “Arise, take your wife and your two daughters who are here, lest you be consumed in the punishment of the city.”<sup>16</sup> And while he lingered, the men took hold of his hand, his wife’s hand, and the hands of his two daughters, the Lord being merciful to him, and they brought him out and set him outside the city.<sup>17</sup> So it came to pass, when they had brought them outside, that he said, “Escape for your life! Do not look behind you nor stay anywhere in the plain. Escape to the mountains, lest you be destroyed.”<sup>18</sup> Then Lot said to them, “Please, no, my lords!<sup>19</sup> “Indeed now, your servant has found favor in your sight, and you have increased your mercy which you have shown me by saving my life; but I cannot escape to the mountains, lest some evil overtake me and I die.<sup>20</sup> “See now, this city is near enough to flee to, and it is a little one; please let me escape there (is it not a little</p>	<p><b>v. 9 Compromise ruins our testimony</b></p> <p><b>v. 23-29 Lot lost his wife, his fortune and his married daughters to Sodom! Loving the world is costly.</b></p> <p><b>v. 30 Sin begets more sin.</b></p> <p><b>v. 36 Compromise defiles our kids.</b></p> <p><b>v. 38 His descendants became God's enemies!</b></p>

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one?) and my soul shall live.”<sup>21</sup> And he said to him, “See, I have favored you concerning this thing also, in that I will not overthrow this city for which you have spoken.<sup>22</sup> “Hurry, escape there. For I cannot do anything until you arrive there.” Therefore the name of the city was called Zoar.

<sup>23</sup> The sun had risen upon the earth when Lot entered Zoar.<sup>24</sup> Then the Lord rained brimstone and fire on Sodom and Gomorrah, from the Lord out of the heavens.<sup>25</sup> So He overthrew those cities, all the plain, all the inhabitants of the cities, and what grew on the ground.

<sup>26</sup> But his wife looked back behind him, and she became a pillar of salt.

<sup>27</sup> And Abraham went early in the morning to the place where he had stood before the Lord.<sup>28</sup> Then he looked toward Sodom and Gomorrah, and toward all the land of the plain; and he saw, and behold, the smoke of the land which went up like the smoke of a furnace.

<sup>29</sup> And it came to pass, when God destroyed the cities of the plain, that God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow, when He overthrew the cities in which Lot had dwelt.

<sup>30</sup> Then Lot went up out of Zoar and dwelt in the mountains, and his two daughters were with him; for he was afraid to dwell in Zoar. And he and his two daughters dwelt in a cave.<sup>31</sup> Now the firstborn said to the younger, “Our father is old, and there is no man on the earth to come in to us as is the custom of all the earth.<sup>32</sup> “Come, let us make our father drink wine, and we will lie with him, that we may preserve the lineage of our father.”

<sup>33</sup> So they made their father drink wine that night. And the firstborn went in and lay with her father, and he did not know when she lay down or when she arose.<sup>34</sup> It happened on the next day that the firstborn said to the younger, “Indeed I lay with my father last night; let us make him drink wine tonight also, and you go in and lie with him, that we may preserve the lineage of our father.”<sup>35</sup> Then they made their father drink wine that night also. And the younger arose and lay with him, and he did not know when she lay down or when she arose.

<sup>36</sup> Thus both the daughters of Lot were with child by their father.

<sup>37</sup> The firstborn bore a son and called his name Moab; he is the father of the Moabites to this day.<sup>38</sup> And the younger, she also bore a son and called his name Ben-Ammi; he is the father of the people of Ammon to this day.

## Lot And Abraham

Lot	Abraham
Took The Best (13:11)	Trusted God
Lost His Wife (19:26)	Kept His Wife who became a Mother of God's People

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Lost His Kids (19:14)	Blessed His Children
Cursed His Descendents (19:38)	Blessed His Descendents
Lust Of Eyes (13:10)	Contented
Settled Gay Community (13:12-13)	Settled God's Country
Defiled Daughters (19:36)	Blessed Sons
Descendents God's Enemies (19:37)	Descendents God's People
Lot's Line Ended	Abraham's Line Never Ends
Competitor/ Opportunist	Peacemaker (13:8)
Took/ Grabbed	Trusted God's Choice (13:9)

### **The Most Dangerous Addiction in the World**

What is the best way to deaden your children spiritually? What is the most deadly virus your children could ever be exposed to? Perhaps we should listen to a renowned media expert. Professor Neil Postman of New York University, says that between the ages of six and eighteen, the average child spends some 15,000 to 16,000 hours in front of the TV, whereas he spends only 13,000 hours in school. Postman says that during the first twenty years of an American child's life, he will see some one million commercials, at the rate of about 1,000 per week!

As to television's effects, the results are infamous:

- Shortened attention span. Can't think about God.
- Reduced linguistic powers. Can't talk about God.
- Limited capacity for abstraction. Can't dream about heaven.
- Blur of adulthood and childhood. Can't grow in Christ.

To attract and hold its audience, the TV industry feels it has to parade the taboos of culture: adultery, promiscuity, homosexuality, incest, violence, and sadism. As a result the lowest of activities become commonplace, and even morally cachet.

What does that mean? It means we are headed away from growing godly families if they are being exposed to constant deadly spiritual viruses on TV. Let me affirm and repeat what one pastor said in Chicago last year:

I am aware of the wise warnings against using words like "all," "every," and "always" in what I say. Absolutizing one's pronouncements is dangerous. But I'm going to do it anyway. Here it is: It is impossible for any Christian who spends the bulk of his evenings, month after month, week upon week, day in and day out watching the major TV networks or contemporary videos to have a Christian mind. This is always true of all Christians in every situation! A Biblical mental program cannot coexist with worldly programming.

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## **What is God's Method for Growing Us?**

*Colossians 3:16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.*

*Romans 12:1-2 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. 2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.*

## **What Will You Choose for Your Mind Today?**

- ❖ Watch godlessness—It will callous you
- ❖ Watch sensuality—It will defile you
- ❖ Watch violence—It will desensitize you
- ❖ Watch evil—It will distance you
- ❖ Watch worldliness—It will discourage you
- ❖ Watch Satan's mind—You will forfeit Christ's

## **How Do We Raise Pure Children?**

Let's be blunt: don't say you are committed to Christ unless you are pursuing the mind of Christ! God has a will for your mind! Saturated with the word.

So the goal is the mind of Christ. We need to pray and seek and plan how to promote our and their growth in Christ's Mind!

So the scandal is Christian neglect. We can't let another day go by without praying for their minds. We need to plan for their purity. We need to expose them to the right things.

The cure is to saturate your mind with the word. We read to them. We help them read. We discuss the Word of God. We demonstrate by our love that we love God's word!

How? Col. 3

- Stop indiscriminate and endless watching of TV and videos.
- Start systematically and prayerfully reading and studying God's word
- You have the time -- take it!

Let's choose the mind God has willed us to have today.

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## Some Further Thoughts on How to Win

The only way to gain purity is by obedience to God's command that we mortify our lusts. Here are eight practical action items to begin the MORTIFICATION process in our life and the life of our family. That word means

- To throttle sin and crush it in our lives, sapping it of its strength, rooting it out, and depriving it of its influence. ...
- Mortification involves the cultivation of new habits of godliness, combined with the elimination of old sinful habits from our behavior.[\[2\]](#)

Probably the most helpful presentation of this vital subject is found in the book *The Vanishing Conscience* by John MacArthur[\[3\]](#). The seventh chapter entitled "Hacking Agag to Pieces", is wonderful. Listen to these key Biblical commands, we can start with today, that are highlighted:

1. Abstain from fleshly lusts. If there are specific areas we know RIGHT NOW are sin, we must repent of them.
2. Make no provision for the flesh. We need to cut the supply routes. If there are magazines, videos and so on that are less than Christly, destroy them. If there are avenues like cable that defile, cancel it. Do what ever it takes to starve the evil desires of our and their flesh.
3. Fix your heart on Christ. This is daily and purposeful and planned.
4. Meditate on God's Word. After we read and ponder, we memorize and then comes meditation.
5. Pray without ceasing. This is the best, greatest and most powerful way to touch their lives.
6. Watch and pray. Be on the constant lookout for Satan's advances. Never trust the flesh. Resist the devil.
7. Exercise self-control. This is a daily pattern of saying no to specific temptations and saying yes to the Holy Spirit as he prompts us.
8. Be filled with the Holy Spirit. Which is letting the Word of God fill our lives!

Each of these Biblical commands are for us as Christians to obey. They are not something we pray for and wait. They are for us to actively grab a hold of and obey.

The realities of life dictate that we move from this calm and tranquil haven of joy--the God designed home--to 1998.

## The Crumbling World Around Us

When school started this fall, a group of 3.6 million children born in 1979, that the U. S. Government has been tracking since 1986 will be in their second year of college in September, 1998. Of these 3.6 Million:

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- 504,000 grew up with unmarried parents -- one in seven.
- 936,000 were latchkey, "raise yourself" kids -- one in three.
- 1,080,000 have seen mom and dad split up since they began in kindergarten -- one in three, so far.

If we aren't leading our children in the right way, the world will sweep them away!

## **Danger Signs for Dads**

A few years ago, the Houston police published this list entitled: "Twelve Rules for Raising Delinquent Children." Running through this piece of irony is the recurrent theme of parental example:

- 1) Begin with infancy to give the child everything he wants. In this way he will grow up to believe the world owes him a living.
- 2) When he picks up bad words, laugh at him. This will make him think he's cute. It will also encourage him to pick up 'cuter' phrases that will blow off the top of your head later.
- 3) Never give him any spiritual training. Wait until he is 21 and then let him 'decide for himself.'
- 4) Avoid use of the word 'wrong.' It may develop a guilt complex. This will condition him to believe later, when he is arrested for stealing a car, that society is against him and he is being persecuted.
- 5) Pick up everything he leaves lying around--books, shoes and clothing. Do everything for him so he will be experienced in throwing all responsibility onto others.
- 6) Let him read printed matter he can get his hands on. Be careful that the silverware and drinking glasses are sterilized, but let his mind feast on garbage.
- 7) Quarrel frequently in the presence of your children. In this way they will not be too shocked when the home is broken up later. (The behavior of parents toward one another must be governed by one principal condition: obedience to God. Who can hope that children will turn out well, when the marriage from which they spring has turned out ill? The development of the children is not something isolated, which can succeed without respect to the relationships which are connected with it. They are members of a moral organism.)
- 8) Give a child all the spending money he wants. Never let him earn his own. Why should he have things as tough as YOU had them?
- 9) Satisfy his every craving for food, drink and comfort. See that every sensual desire is gratified. Denial may lead to a harmful frustration.
- 10) Take his part against neighbors, teachers and policemen. They are all prejudiced against your child.
- 11) When he gets into real trouble, apologize for yourself by saying 'I never could do anything with him.' And finally:
- 12) Prepare for a life of grief. You will be apt to have it.

That's not God's way...

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## Fathers: Would You Do It Any Differently?

One father summed it up this way. He said, “My family’s all grown, and the kids are all gone. But, if I had to do it all over again, this is what I’d do:

- ❖ I would love my wife more in front of my children.
- ❖ I would laugh with my children more--at our mistakes and our joys.
- ❖ I would listen more, even to the littlest child.
- ❖ I would be more honest about my own weaknesses, never pretending perfection.
- ❖ I would pray differently for my family--instead of focusing on them, I’d focus on me.
- ❖ I would do more things together with my children.
- ❖ I would encourage them more and bestow more praise.
- ❖ I would pay more attention to little things, like deeds and words of thoughtfulness.

I like the way Charlie Shedd<sup>[4]</sup> described it in one of his original promises to his tiny son, Peter:

I hope that I will be able to make religion natural to you. It is natural. In fact, I think this relationship with God is the only thing that is one hundred percent natural. We will pray together until it is easy for you to put your arms on the window sill of heaven and look into the face of God. Before I put you back in your crib, I want to tell you something Philip said.

We had been out in the country for a ride. It was evening and we ran out of gas. We were walking along after we had been to the farm house, and I was carrying a can of gas. Philip was only four. He was playing along, throwing rocks at the telephone poles, picking flowers, and then, all of a sudden it got dark. Sometimes night comes all at once in the country. Philip came over, put his little hand in mine and said, “Take my hand, Daddy. I might get lost.”

Peter, there is a hand reaching to you from the heart of the universe. If you will lay your hand in the hand of God and walk with Him, you will never ever get lost.

## Some Final Goals as God's Dads

The Biblical Method is for us as parents to be doing the following:

1. **POINTING** them in the way they should go Proverbs 22:6 Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it. (KJV)

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2. **LIVING** around them with loving affection Ephesians 6:4 And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. (KJV)

3. **REMEMBERING** that much depends on us. 1 Corinthians 4:1-2 Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. 2 Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful. (KJV)

4. **KEEPING** conscious of the priority of their eternal soul. Matthew 18:6 But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and [that] he were drowned in the depth of the sea. (KJV)

5. **LEADING** them into personal knowledge of the Scriptures 2 Timothy 3:15 And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. (KJV)

6. **DEMONSTRATING** our love for God's House and His People Hebrews 10:24-25 And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: 25 Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some [is]; but exhorting [one another]: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching. (KJV)

7. **SHOWING** them how to live by faith Habakkuk 2:4 Behold, his soul [which] is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith. (KJV)

8. **CALLING** them to the imperative of obedience Deuteronomy 6:1-7 Now these [are] the commandments, the statutes, and the judgments, which the LORD your God commanded to teach you, that ye might do [them] in the land whither ye go to possess it: 2 That thou mightest fear the LORD thy God, to keep all his statutes and his commandments, which I command thee, thou, and thy son, and thy son's son, all the days of thy life; and that thy days may be prolonged. 3 Hear therefore, O Israel, and observe to do [it]; that it may be well with thee, and that ye may increase mightily, as the LORD God of thy fathers hath promised thee, in the land that floweth with milk and honey. 4 Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God [is] one LORD: 5 And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. 6 And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: 7 And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. (KJV)

9. **EXPECTING** them to always tell the truth Ephesians 4:25 Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbor: for we are members one of another. (KJV)

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10. **REMINDING** them to redeem precious time Ephesians 5:16 Redeeming the time, because the days are evil. (KJV)

11. **EMPHASIZING** personal discipline Titus 2:12 Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; (KJV)

12. **REMEMBERING** God's pattern of dealing with His children Psalm 103:13 Like as a father pitieth [his] children, [so] the LORD pitieth them that fear him. (KJV)

13. **EXEMPLIFYING** God as the Perfect Parent. We should emulate the example and priorities of the Apostle Paul in 1 Thessalonians 2:11 As ye know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, as a father [doth] his children, (KJV). Note the order and content of his parenting was:

14. **POSTITIVE** “exhorted”

15. **PERSONAL** “ and comforted”

16. **PRACTICAL** “ and charged every one”

17. **ABHORING** sin's potential grip on their lives John 8: 34 Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin. (KJV)

18. **BELIEVING** God's promises Joshua 1:8 This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success. (KJV)

19. **PRAYING** for their personal habits of prayer 1 Thessalonians 5:17 Pray without ceasing. (KJV)

What is God's way? God's way is for us as parents to actively and continually lead them into obedience! Let's get started. Chuck Swindoll wrote a masterful treatment on this topic: Growing Wise in Family Life. Some think it is his best. Listen to him:

“Specifically, how do I respond to the evil bent in my child? You must counteract it. You don't dare leave it alone! Too many parents have chosen to do that. That's why you read of ten-year-olds scheming the death of their parents, or twelve- and fifteen-year-olds committing heinous crimes. “First, to get the “inside help” you need, you need to lead the child to a knowledge of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. That spiritually dead nature needs life. Only personal faith in Jesus Christ can make that happen. Salvation is of highest priority! “Second, you need to deal with wrong as it occurs. Deal with it sufficiently until the child learns that wrong won't be permitted. Your child must learn to respect authority. Your child must also learn to obey. You don't shrug and say, 'I just

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can't do anything with my five-year-old.' You stay at it until your little one gets the message. If you need professional help, pursue it. Your desire is to shape that stubborn will with wisdom."

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[1] Ravi, Shattered Visage, p. 103-104.

[2] John MacArthur, The Vanishing Conscience, Dallas:Word, 1994, p. 156.

[3] Ibid. pp. 145-66.

[4] Letters to Phillip,

# Men—How to Nurture Your Wife Spiritually

## WFF: Message Three (991013WE)

We have come to the third and most crucial elements of a growing dad. Do you remember the three keys we are in the midst of learning? Lets turn back now to Deuteronomy and note these keys for becoming a godly dad.

### Key Number One: Lead the Family Devotions

#### A GODLY DAD WILL EMPHASIZE BIBLICAL COMMUNICATION

*Deuteronomy 6:7-9 And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. 8 And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. 9 And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates.*

- And remember the essence of all Biblical communication is simplicity. When Jesus taught the common people (the unschooled and unpolished) heard Him gladly. If you analyze the Word of God you will find that some of the greatest portions of God's Word are the simplest. The Sermon on the Mount, known and loved around the world is 60% monosyllabic words. The great love chapter I Corinthians 13 is over 50% one-syllable words.
- What was the teaching style of Jesus? Outdoors, indoors, sitting, walking, standing anytime or place, He shared from life around them. Using the elements of the world they all understood He spoke of sowers and seeds, reapers and harvests, tombs and bones, plants and animals, coins and jobs, trees and birds, Heaven and Hell. Just the words and pictures of common people.
- The power of Christ's teaching was in the absolute conviction He had of the truth of what He was saying. Are you emphasizing the personal talking about God in your family? Are you initiating talks about God with all the members of your family? Take the challenge. Introduce God into the daily life of your family!

### Key Number Two: Raise Pure Children

#### A GODLY DAD WILL ELIMINATE WORLDLY CONTAMINATION

*Deuteronomy 6:10-15 And it shall be, when the LORD thy God shall have brought thee into the land which he swore unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give thee great and goodly cities, which thou buildedst not, 11 And houses full of all good things, which thou filledst not, and wells digged, which thou diggedst not, vineyards and olive trees, which thou plantedst not; when thou shalt have eaten and be*

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*full; 12 Then beware lest thou forget the LORD, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage. 13 Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God, and serve him, and shalt swear by his name. 14 Ye shall not go after other gods, of the gods of the people which are round about you; 15 (For the LORD thy God is a jealous God among you) lest the anger of the LORD thy God be kindled against thee, and destroy thee from off the face of the earth.*

- Are we guarding the minds of our families as much as we protect our lawns from weeds? Do you emphasize hand washing more than soul consecration? What steps are we taking to insure our homes are havens for spiritual growth?

### **Key Number Three: Disciple your wife**

#### **A GODLY DAD WILL EXPERIENCE PERSONAL CONSECRATION**

*Deuteronomy 6:4-6 Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD: 5 And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. 6 And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart:*

Now we look at the hardest part of a godly dad's role. There is no way we can ever minister to our wife's deepest needs if we are not holy! The key to a godly marriage and a powerful Christian home is the personal experience of godliness. We try so hard and then lessen our grip on the essentials and then they slip away! Remember the humorous recounting of our lessening of our loving care of our wives?

#### **A HAPPY MARRIAGE IS A WONDERFUL BLESSING**

Winston Churchill[1] once attended a formal banquet in London at which the attending dignitaries were asked the question, "If you could not be who you are, who would you like to be?" Naturally everyone was curious as to what Churchill, seated next to his beloved Clemmie, would say. When it finally came Churchill's turn, the old man, who was the dinner's last respondent to the question, rose and gave his answer. "If I could not be who I am, I would most like to be" — here he paused to take his wife's hand — "Lady Churchill's second husband." The old boy made some points that night. But his comments also apply to everyone who has a good marriage.

#### **THE SEVEN AGES OF THE MARRIED COLD**

Several years ago, the Saturday Evening Post published an article entitled "The Seven Ages of the Married Cold." It revealed the reaction of a husband to his wife's colds during their first seven years of marriage. It went something like this:

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- The first year: "Sugar dumpling, I'm really worried about my baby girl. You've got a bad snuffle, and there's no telling about these things with all this strep throat going around. I'm putting you in the hospital this afternoon for a general checkup and a good rest. I know the food's lousy, but I'll be bringing your meals in from Rossini's. I've already got it all arranged with the floor superintendent."
- The second year: "Listen, darling, I don't like the sound of that cough. I called Doc Miller and asked him to rush over here. Now you go to bed like a good girl, please? Just for papa."
- The third year: "Maybe you'd better lie down, honey; nothing like a little rest when you feel lousy. I'll bring you something to eat. Have you got any canned soup?"
- The fourth year: "Now look, dear, be sensible. After you've fed the kids, washed the dishes, and finished the floor, you'd better lie down."
- The fifth year: "Why don't you take a couple of aspirin?"
- The sixth year: "I wish you'd just gargle or something, instead of sitting around all evening barking like a seal!"
- The seventh year: "For Pete's sake, stop sneezing! Are you trying to give me pneumonia?!"

The decline of marriage as seen through the common cold is a funny look at a not-so-funny reality.

One gifted author[2] has identified 25 ways to be a husband discipling his wife:

1. A husband discipling his wife includes his wife in envisioning the future.
2. A husband discipling his wife accepts spiritual responsibility for his family.
3. A husband discipling his wife is willing to say "I'm sorry" and "forgive me" to his family.
4. A husband discipling his wife discusses household responsibilities with his wife and makes sure these are fairly distributed.
5. A husband discipling his wife seeks the consultation of his wife on all major financial decisions.
6. A husband discipling his wife follows through with commitments he has made to his wife.
7. A husband discipling his wife anticipates the different states his marriage will pass through.
8. A husband discipling his wife, likewise, anticipates the stages his children will pass through.
9. A husband discipling his wife frequently tells his wife what he likes about her.
10. A husband discipling his wife provides financially for his family's basic living expenses.
11. A husband discipling his wife deals with distractions so that he can talk with his wife and family.
12. A husband discipling his wife prays with his wife on a regular basis.

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13. A husband discipling his wife initiates meaningful family traditions.
14. A husband discipling his wife initiates fun outings for the family on a monthly basis, or even more often.
15. A husband discipling his wife takes the time to give his children practical instruction about life, which in turn gives them confidence with their peers.
16. A husband discipling his wife goes over the upcoming week with his wife to clarify their schedule and anticipate any pressure points.
17. A husband discipling his wife keeps the family out of debt.
18. A husband discipling his wife lets his children into the interior of his life.
19. A husband discipling his wife makes sure he and his wife have drawn up a will and arranged a well-conceived plan for their children in case of death.
20. A husband discipling his wife lets his children into the interior of his life.
21. A husband discipling his wife praises his wife often in public.
22. A husband discipling his wife explains sex to each child in a way that gives him or her a wholesome perspective.
23. A husband discipling his wife encourages his wife to grow as an individual.
24. A husband discipling his wife takes the lead in establishing with his wife clear and well-reasoned convictions.
25. A husband discipling his wife joins a small group of men who are dedicated to improving their skills as husbands and fathers.
26. A husband discipling his wife provides time for his wife to pursue personal interests.

### **What Are We to do As Husbands to Disciple[3] Our Wife?**

#### **1. First we need to consider what every wife needs to succeed:**

- ❖ COMPANIONSHIP: Proverbs 31:11 The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil.
- ❖ SECURITY: Proverbs 31:12 She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life.
- ❖ SIGNIFICANCE: Proverbs 31:10 Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies.
- ❖ EMOTIONAL RESPONSIVENESS: Proverbs 31:28 Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her.

#### **2. Second, we as husbands[4] need to provide for our wife what she desperately wants to know about us:**

- ❖ What we look to as we define our identity,
- ❖ How very deep is our insecurity,
- ❖ How we measure our success by our performance.

Then our wife can understand[5] that we need them to help us succeed:

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1. A husband needs to feel his wife's admiration,
2. A husband needs to feel his wife's support,
3. A husband needs to feel that his wife supports him in his work,
4. A husband needs to feel his wife's support for him in public,
5. A husband needs to feel his wife's support through all the seasons of life.

### **Christian Marriage Headaches**

Without a growing marriage of shared life, following Christ's Word together most marriages[6] end up with these common Christian marriage headaches:

- ❖ An unbiblical Husband with irresponsible headship (This husband is nothing but a little boy in search of a mommy, and he seems to have found one in his wife. He is thoroughly self-centered, but manages to appear to others as a loving and devoted husband.);
- ❖ An unbiblical Husband with an emotionally detached headship (This man is one of the most stable and even-tempered men in his community. He has been asked to serve on the boards of numerous organizations because of his organized mind and methodical way of making decisions. He is about as detached and emotionally unavailable as a father can get.);
- ❖ An unbiblical Husband with a dictatorial headship (His idea of being "head of the household" means that nothing happens without his approval. Whenever his wife dares to question his authority or decisions, he resorts to intimidation tactics and then goes into a blind rage.);
- ❖ An unbiblical Husband with a workaholic headship; (This man never leaves work mentally or emotionally. He lives under pressure and sprays his family with his frustrations)
- ❖ An unbiblical Husband with a spiritually apathetic headship (This husband is a believer and a church attender. But beyond that he's unresponsive to spiritual things he never exercises spiritual leadership in this home. And that void blocks an intimacy his wife yearns for.)

### **THE SEVEN DEEPEST NEEDS OF YOUR WIFE**

1. **LEAD HER:** A discipling husband gives the stability and direction of a spiritual leader.
2. **NEED HER:** A discipling husband tells his wife she is meeting vital needs in his life and work that no other woman can meet.

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3. **CHERISH HER:** A discipling husband allows his wife to see and hear that he cherishes her and delights in her as a person.
4. **PROTECT HER:** A discipling husband shows that he understands his wife by protecting her in areas of limitations.
5. **NOTICE HER:** A discipling husband enjoys setting quality time aside for intimate conversation with his wife so she knows that he is aware of her presence even when his mind is on other matters.
6. **SACRIFICE FOR HER:** A discipling husband is willing to serve his wife in encouraging and regular ways.
7. **WASH HER:** A discipling husband can be heard reading the Word of God to his wife. He is the one who initiates God's Word into the cycle of daily life.

One final and vital aspect of marriage: intimacy. And that is the key to sex. Let's get to work here and note a passage to discuss: Deut. 24:5 - newlywed verse "cheer up", discover how to please her.

As Dr. William S. Appleton has pointed out, "It is essential to remember that marital dullness is not confined to middle and later years; indeed it can and does occur in the first year of marriage."

Certainly, an emotionally flat, chronically dull marriage signals the need for positive steps toward building intimacy, injecting new life into the relationship. Recently a young husband said to me with a note of despair, "My wife and I have already lost touch with each other." It was a graphic description of their lack of intimacy, for to experience intimacy is to touch--emotionally, physically, mentally, and spiritually.

Here are some of the strands that make up the bond of intimacy between a husband and wife. They are given in no particular order, and you may have others of your own to add.

- Physical touching of an affectionate, nature
- Shared feelings
- Closeness and open communication and honesty
- Intellectual agreement on major issues
- Spiritual harmony

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- Sensitive appreciation of the mate's physical and emotional responses
- Similar values held
- Imparted secrets
- Genuine understanding

## **A GODLY HUSBAND DISCIPLES HIS WIFE AS HE EXPERIENCES PERSONAL CONSECRATION**

*Deuteronomy 6:4-6 "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one! 5 "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. 6 "And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart.*

1. LIVE IT! Biblically discipling my wife starts in my heart. God doesn't say fear Me, study Me or even Serve Me. He said - LOVE ME. That is our priority and all else flows down from it. In fact, loving God fulfills the whole law! [Romans 13:10]
2. SHOW THAT YOU ARE LIVING IN HOPE Genesis 48:15-16 And he blessed Joseph, and said, God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk, the God which fed me all my life long unto this day, 16 The Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads; and let my name be named on them, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth.
3. SHOW THAT YOU SEE GOD'S HAND IN ALL OF LIFE Genesis 50:19 And Joseph said unto them, Fear not: for am I in the place of God?
4. SHOW THAT YOU WATCH FOR CHRIST Philippians 3:20-21 For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ: 21 Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.
5. SHOW THAT YOU DENY UNGODLINESS Titus 2:11-13 For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, 12 Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; 13 Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;
6. SHOW THAT YOU LOOK FOR THE CITY Hebrews 11:13 These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

## **A Disciples Path to Follow**

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## **RENOUNCING SELF AS THE AUTHORITY OF MY LIFE**

- Mark 8:34-37 When He had called the people to [Himself,] with His disciples also, He said to them, "Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. 35 "For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it. 36 "For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? 37 "Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? (NKJV)
- Renouncing self as the authority and focus of my life...

## **GROWING DEVOTION TO CHRIST**

- Matthew 10:37-39 "He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. 38 "And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. 39 "He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it. (NKJV)
- Building a relationship of supreme and incomparable love for Jesus Christ...

## **HUNGERING FOR THE WORD**

- John 8:31 Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. (NKJV)
- Committing to regular study and devotion to God's Word...

## **FOLLOWING THE WAY OF THE CROSS**

- Matthew 16:24-27 Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. 25 "For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. 26 "For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? 27 "For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works. (NKJV)
- Unquestioning allegiance to our Lord Jesus Christ's captivating leadership...

## **YIELDING MY LIFE TO CHRIST**

- Luke 9:23-27 Then He said to [them] all, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. 24 "For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it. 25 "For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and is himself destroyed or lost? 26 "For whoever is ashamed of Me and My

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words, of him the Son of Man will be ashamed when He comes in His [own] glory, and [in His] Father's, and of the holy angels. 27 "But I tell you truly, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the kingdom of God." (NKJV)

- Recognizing the true owner of my time, money and talents...

## **LIVING IN THE LOVE OF JESUS**

- John 13:34-35;

*Reflecting the love of Christ in my attitude and actions*

So what is the greatest need of any wife? A consecrated husband. A man of God. A true follower of Jesus. The most irresistible man in the world to his wife is a godly man emphasizing personal consecration!

1. **Lead the Family Devotions:** The Key is to Emphasize Biblical communication Deuteronomy 6:7-9
2. **Raise Pure Children:** The Key is to Eliminate worldly contamination Deuteronomy 6:10-15
3. **Disciple your wife:** The Key is to Experience personal consecration Deuteronomy 6:4-6

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[1] Hughes, R. Kent, Preaching the Word: Ephesians—The Mystery of the Body of Christ, (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books) 1997.

[2] Robert Lewis and William Hendricks, (1991), Rocking the Roles, Colorado Springs, CO, Navpress, 261 pages, p. 69.

[3] Robert Lewis and William Hendricks, (1991), Rocking the Roles, Colorado Springs, CO, Navpress, p. 81.

[4] Ibid. p. 113.

[5] Ibid. p. 119.

[6] Ibid. p. 156.

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## **Beautiful Women**

### **WFF: Message Four (991110WE)**

The other day while standing in one of those endless lines at the super market my eyes caught the following headlines on a newspaper, "World's most beautiful woman hospitalized". Quickly whipping out my cell phone I called Bonnie and immediately knew it was a false story . . . actually, it was about Elizabeth Taylor married countless times, unhappy, overweight and in ill health. The world probably has no better candidate for that role. But God does.

### **The Most Beautiful Women in God's Word**

This morning may I introduce again the beautiful woman of God's Word? **MARY**, the mother of James and Jesus!

- Who is presented as the most honored woman in the Bible? **MARY**
- Who was chosen out of all the women in the whole world to raise God's Son? **MARY**
- Who is the greatest living, breathing example of Proverbs 31 in ordinary everyday life? **MARY**
- Without exception who is probably the most beloved and best known woman in the world? **MARY**

Luke 3:23 gives us an unusual insight. It appears to some scholars that this is because Matthew traces the legal descent of the house of David using only heirs to the throne, while Luke traces the complete line of Joseph to David. A more likely explanation, however, is that Matthew follows the line of Joseph (Jesus' legal father), while Luke emphasizes that of Mary (Jesus' blood relative). Although tracing a genealogy through the mother's side was unusual, so was the virgin birth. Luke's explanation here that Jesus was the son of Joseph, "so it was thought" (v. 23), brings to mind his explicit virgin birth statement (1:34-35) and suggests the importance of the role of Mary in Jesus' genealogy.

God is very interested in your beauty this morning. Did you check to see if you were beautiful before you came? Beautiful to God is what I mean!

1. BEAUTY WAS REQUIRED IN THOSE WHO WERE REGULARS IN GOD'S PRESENCE! Exodus 28:2 "And you shall make holy garments for Aaron your brother, for glory and for beauty. 40 For Aaron's sons you shall make tunics, and you shall make sashes for them. And you shall make hats for them, for glory and beauty. (NKJV)

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2. BEAUTY WAS EXPECTED IN CORPORATE (GROUP) WORSHIP! 1 Chronicles 16:29 Give to the LORD the glory [due] His name; Bring an offering, and come before Him. Oh, worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness! (NKJV)
  3. BEAUTY WAS HOW GOD DESCRIBES THE PRAISE HE DESIRES! 2 Chronicles 20:21 And when he had consulted with the people, he appointed those who should sing to the LORD, and who should praise the beauty of holiness, as they went out before the army and were saying: "Praise the LORD, For His mercy [endures] forever." (NKJV)
  4. BEAUTY IS A MARK OF PLEASING PERSONAL WORSHIP TIMES! Psalm 27:4 One [thing] I have desired of the LORD, That will I seek: That I may dwell in the house of the LORD All the days of my life, To behold the beauty of the LORD, And to inquire in His temple. (NKJV)
  5. BEAUTY IS HOW GOD DESCRIBES THE HOLINESS HE DESIRES FOR US! Psalm 29:2 Give unto the LORD the glory due to His name; Worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness. (NKJV) Psalm 96:9 Oh, worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness! Tremble before Him, all the earth. (NKJV)
  6. GOD IS BEAUTIFUL! Psalm 50:2 Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God will shine forth. (NKJV) Isaiah 33:17 Your eyes will see the King in His beauty; They will see the land that is very far off. (NKJV)
  7. GOD WANTS TO MAKE US BEAUTIFUL EVERYDAY! Psalm 90:17 And let the beauty of the LORD our God be upon us, And establish the work of our hands for us; Yes, establish the work of our hands. (NKJV)

### **How Did Mary's Father Raise Her?**

So what are some of the ways Heli, father of Mary, may have directed his daughter?

- I. HELI ENCOURAGED THAT MARY LISTENED TO GOD. (Luke 1:26-28). Like Samuel was told, come to God's Word and say, "Speak Lord, your servant hears." And every time we open this book, He does speak. It is only a question of are we listening!
- II. HELI ENCOURAGED THAT MARY HUMBLER HERSELF BEFORE GOD SAID YES TO GOD'S GRACE. (Luke 1:29 Who me?) No airs, no pride, just a humble troubled heart that anyone would even say such a thing. She knew her own heart, certainly God would to! She was Saved by God. (Luke 1:30 lit. 'discovered grace of God ') Mary joined the countless multitude who are heirs of life eternal by God's grace. Her study of the Word led her to the open arms of "God my Savior".

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- III. HELI ENCOURAGED THAT MARY SURRENDERED TO GOD'S WILL (Luke 1:31-33) To produce within her body tiny hands that would some day touch lepers with a healing touch, to form a mouth within her womb that would speak the very Word of God, to feel the kick of feet that would walk the roads of Israel and spread the Gospel. What an incredible ministry opportunity.
- IV. HELI ENCOURAGED THAT MARY EXPERIENCED GOD (Luke 1:34-37) She wouldn't even consider anything immoral. Instead she was surrounded by the Shekinah as God the Son entered her womb. God doing the impossible is what our life for Him is all about.
- V. HELI ENCOURAGED THAT MARY SERVED GOD JOYFULLY (Luke 1:38-45) She was a Slave of God. Luke 1:38 "I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May it be to me as you have said." Then the angel left her. (NIV) Wow, what a submissive and godly attitude. I'll say yes Lord yes to your will and to your way! All I am all I have all I'll ever be . . . And off she goes to be a blessing, starting with her cousin who hadn't told her the big news yet!
- VI. HELI ENCOURAGED THAT MARY IMMERSSED HERSELF IN THE SCRIPTURES. (Luke 1:46-55) She Sought God. Have you paused to ask yourself how she did it? For starters, chew on this - In a world where Mary lived every drop of water was carried home by women from springs or wells in clay pots. Every ounce of flour was ground with a stone mill. Every bread loaf was baked in an oven with a wood fire burning to heat it. All dishes were washed (remember that well, the pot, the walk . . .) So time was at a premium, what's new right? But also, women were not at a premium. Jesus was the first to elevate women to their proper place. In Mary's time they were close to being furniture. So her knowledge of the Scriptures must have come from either her dad who Luke tells us was named Heli (Luke 3:23 traces Mary back to Adam to show Jesus was Savior of the world. Matthew 1 traces Joseph back to Abraham to show Jesus was the Messiah of the Jews.) Maybe Heli encouraged his daughter by exposing her deeply to the Scriptures. What a wonderful pursuit for any dad. Whatever the means Mary SOUGHT GOD!

Mary was a woman about whom all we know in a practical way is that she learned her manners from the Word of God. Sounds like a good idea. If we were to look over her shoulder as she read from the scrolls and listened to God's truth we might learn what made her tick! One thing we can be sure of, as a relative of David and Solomon, she would have read God's Word they were inspired to write. Look with me at Proverbs 14:1 The wise woman builds her house, But the foolish pulls it down with her hands. (NKJV)

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How did Mary cultivate godliness? She discovered the TEN SECRETS FOR ETERNAL BEAUTY! First Mary would have applied herself to avoid the portrait of the Foolish Woman in Proverbs and to emulate the godly woman's portrait:

1. MARY WAS BEAUTIFUL BECAUSE SHE HAD LEARNED TO AVOID BEING IMMODEST AND ALLURING IN HER DRESS. Proverbs 7:10 Then out came a woman to meet him, dressed like a prostitute and with crafty intent. (NIV).
  - Her clothing points to her not to her Father in Heaven and His holiness.
  - Remember the words of Paul in the New Testament Gallery of beautiful women? God emphasizes a beauty of the unseen character, the flesh flaunts the body, God beautifies the spirit!
  - 1 Timothy 2:9 I also want women to dress modestly, with decency and propriety, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or expensive clothes, (NIV)
2. MARY WAS BEAUTIFUL BECAUSE SHE HAD LEARNED TO HATE AND AVOID SIN AND NEVER PLAY WITH GOD'S MERCY. Proverbs 7:13-14 She took hold of him and kissed him and with a brazen face she said: 14 "I have fellowship offerings at home; today I fulfilled my vows. (NIV).
  - There is no fear of God, the future consequence or the present destructiveness of her actions.
  - 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; 20 you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body. (NIV)
3. MARY WAS BEAUTIFUL BECAUSE SHE HAD LEARNED TO AVOID BEING DECEITFUL AND MANIPULATIVE IN HER GOALS. Proverbs 7:21-23 With her enticing speech she caused him to yield, With her flattering lips she seduced him. 22 Immediately he went after her, as an ox goes to the slaughter, Or as a fool to the correction of the stocks, 23 Till an arrow struck his liver. As a bird hastens to the snare, He did not know it [would cost] his life. (NKJV)
  - An ugly woman is self driven and wants her way. A beautiful woman wears heavenly beauty Psalm 90:17 And let the beauty of the LORD our God be upon us, And establish the work of our hands for us; Yes, establish the work of our hands. (NKJV)

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- 1 Peter 3:4 Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight. (NIV)
4. MARY WAS BEAUTIFUL BECAUSE SHE HAD LEARNED TO AVOID BEING LOUD AND ASSERTIVE IN HER COMMUNICATION. Proverbs 9:13 The woman Folly is loud; she is undisciplined and without knowledge. (NIV) Proverbs 7:11 (She is loud and defiant, her feet never stay at home; (NIV)
- This includes disrespect, hostility, aggressiveness and cunningness. All in all bad news.
  - James 3:17 But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. (NIV)
5. MARY WAS BEAUTIFUL BECAUSE SHE HAD LEARNED TO AVOID BEING A FIGHTER, QUARRELING TO GET HER WAY. Proverbs 20:3 [It is] honorable for a man to stop striving, Since any fool can start a quarrel. (NKJV)
- Selfish ambition is that way of life that isn't from God. It is as James said, earthly sensual and devilish.
  - 2 Timothy 2:24 And the Lord's servant must not quarrel; instead, he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. (NIV)

MARY WAS BEAUTIFUL BECAUSE SHE HAD LEARNED TO AVOID BEING THESE UNGODLY IN THESE AREAS. Moms and dads, what are you raising? A wise woman or a foolish one? Bring your daughters up to the X-Rays of God's Word and see what He finds.

- Is she loud, assertive, boisterous, whiney or the center of attention? Or is she quiet, submissive, gentle and humble?
- Does she dress in a way that draws a young man to think about her body and its enticements or her spirit and its beauty?
- Does she have a holy hatred of sin or does she have a desire to watch sinners [TV and Movies] as they live out their fleshly fantasies?
- Does she use all her powers to get her own way? Does she manipulate by tears, looks and whatever it takes to accomplish her ends?
- Is she argumentative, easily quarreling and fighting with you or her brothers and sisters? Or is she peaceable, gentle and easily intreated?
- If these symptoms are present in any degree or amount the prognosis for the future bleak. One gifted expositor in writing about these verses said, "...we may say with a surgeon's frankness, her home will be like Scarlett's - troubled, torn down, and literally Gone with the Wind.

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6. MARY WAS BEAUTIFUL BECAUSE SHE HAD LEARNED TO LOVE BEING A HOMEMAKER Proverbs 31:13 She seeks wool and flax, And willingly works with her hands. (NKJV) As Paul said, she is a worker at home in Titus 2:5. She loves to tangibly serve others with food and skills, she has a home that is open and hospitable, she is given to ministry to the sick and needy and less fortunate.
  7. MARY WAS BEAUTIFUL BECAUSE SHE LEARNED TO SERVE OTHERS! Proverbs 31:15, 20 She also rises while it is yet night, And provides food for her household, And a portion for her maidservants. 20 She extends her hand to the poor, Yes, she reaches out her hands to the needy. (NKJV) She has learned the love of Christ for others.
  8. MARY WAS BEAUTIFUL BECAUSE SHE LEARNED PRUDENCE IN FINANCIAL MATTERS. Proverbs 31:16, 24 She considers a field and buys it; From her profits she plants a vineyard. 24 She makes linen garments and sells [them,] And supplies sashes for the merchants. (NKJV) She is a saver not a spender. She can see beyond today alone.
  9. MARY WAS BEAUTIFUL BECAUSE SHE HAD LEARNED THE GREAT VALUE OF HARD WORK. Proverbs 31:17,19 She girds herself with strength, And strengthens her arms. 19 She stretches out her hands to the distaff, And her hand holds the spindle. (NKJV) God puts a premium on hard work and so she moves toward it not away. There is no slothfulness, indolence or lack of motivation.
  10. MARY WAS BEAUTIFUL BECAUSE SHE HAD LEARNED HOW TO INTERNALIZE BIBLICAL WISDOM Proverbs 31:26 She opens her mouth with wisdom, And on her tongue [is] the law of kindness. (NKJV). The Word is in her heart and life and so it comes out of her mouth. And when it does it is dressed in the clothes of the Spirit, gentle and kind.

MARY WAS BEAUTIFUL BECAUSE SHE HAD LEARNED THESE SECRETS OF GODLY WOMANHOOD. Is there any comparison. This kind of woman and daughter is a blessing to all. A Builder of the home and family. And, as Solomon said Proverbs 31:25,28 Strength and honor [are] her clothing; She shall rejoice in time to come. 28 Her children rise up and call her blessed; Her husband [also,] and he praises her: (NKJV) the future smiles at her and her children bless her. This is our goal as parents.

MARY NEVER STOPPED GROWING SPIRITUALLY. She was Sensitive to God. (Luke 2:19) But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. (NIV). Where did Luke get all this material he recorded in his two volume work on the first century event that changed everything? Yes, some of it came right out of the air from heaven. The Holy Spirit just told him what to say (inspiration). But the rest came from hard work, interviewing the witnesses. Yes, every word of God's Word is inspired (inerrant,

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infallible, pure and divine) but each one came from somewhere. I think these words were from Mary after a long time of pondering (lit. 'to put together') all that God had done.

1. MARY LISTENED TO GOD.
2. MARY HUMBLING HERSELF BEFORE GOD SAID YES TO GOD'S GRACE.
3. MARY SURRENDERED TO GOD'S WILL
4. MARY EXPERIENCED GOD
5. MARY SERVED GOD JOYFULLY
6. MARY IMMERSING HERSELF IN THE SCRIPTURES.
7. MARY NEVER STOPPED GROWING SPIRITUALLY.

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## Joseph a Model Dad

### WFF: Message Five (991201WE)

The key to Joseph's parenting was that he led his family to worship God. It was nothing spectacular; nothing superhuman; just regular and consistent. But the results were extraordinary. A modern illustration of this type of consistency can be found in the upbringing of John Paton[1].

John Paton was a Scottish missionary to the New Hebrides, islands that are today called Vanuatu, located one thousand miles north of New Zealand and four hundred miles west of Fiji. Paton arrived November 4, 1858, on the island of Tanna at the age of thirty-four, with his wife, Mary Ann. A son was born February 12, 1859. "Our island exile filled with joy," Paton wrote in his autobiography[2] (page 79), but "the greatest of sorrows was treading hard upon the heels of that joy!" First came the fever, then diarrhea, then pneumonia and delirium. On March 3 Mary died. "To crown my sorrows, and complete my loneliness, the dear baby boy, whom we had named after her father, Peter Robert Robson, was taken from me after one week's sickness on the 20th of March (page 79).

Paton buried both of them with his own hands and "with ceaseless prayers and tears...claimed that land for God." He confessed, "But for Jesus, and the fellowship He vouchsafed me there, I must have gone mad and died beside that lonely grave! (page 80).

What kind of father prepared John G. Paton for that kind of perseverance -- another fifty years of rugged, faithful missionary labor?

Paton's father, James, was converted at seventeen and immediately convinced his mother and father that the family should have morning and evening prayer together. Paton writes about his father:

*"And so began in his seventeenth year that blessed custom of Family Prayer, morning and evening which my father practiced probably without one single avoidable omission till he lay on his deathbed at seventy-seven years of age...None of us can remember that any day ever passed unhallowed thus; no hurry for market, no rush to business, no arrival of friends or guests, no trouble or sorrow, no joy or excitement, ever prevented at least our kneeling around the family altar, while the High Priest led our prayers to God, and offered himself and his children there. (page 14)"*

The place of the Lord's Day was just as crucial in shaping the children in their relation to God and the joy of his fellowship. Paton writes:

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*"Our place of worship was the Reformed Presbyterian Church at Dumfries...four miles from our Torthorwald home; but the tradition is that during all these forty years my father was only three times prevented from attending the worship of God...Each of us, from very early days considered it no penalty, but a great joy, to go with our father to the church; the four miles were a treat to our young spirits, the company by the way was a fresh incitement... A few other pious men and women, of the best Evangelical type, went from the same parish...and when these God-fearing peasants 'foregathered' on the way to or from the House of God, we youngsters had sometimes rare glimpses of what Christian talk may be and ought to be. They went to church, full of beautiful expectancy of spirit -- their souls were on the outlook for God, and they returned from church, ready and even anxious to exchange ideas as to what they had heard and received of the things of life." (pages 15-16)*

*"There were eleven of us brought up in a home like that; and never one of the eleven, boy or girl, man or woman, has been heard, or ever will be heard, saying that Sabbath was dull or wearisome for us. " (page 17)*

Such was the father and the family that fit John G. Paton to suffer, to survive, and rejoice in the glorious work of the gospel among the cannibalistic tribes of the New Hebrides.

So I ask you, and myself

- (1) Dad, Is your family altar established? Is there a place and a time for family focus on the Word and prayer that takes priority over less important things? Do you lead it when ever possible?
- (2) Dads, do you come to corporate worship here at our fellowship with a beautiful expectancy of spirit on the lookout for God?

A great secret of rearing children who endure for fifty years in the New Hebrides is to be a disciplined, Bible-saturated, worshiping, and joyful dad.

Is that true? Listen to the world, they have taken note of it. Marion Levy in her societal critique has written,

“for the first time in the history of humankind the overwhelming majority of little boys and little girls continued under the direct domination and supervision of ladies until they reached maturity. This has never happened before in history. Crusades, wars, migrations, pestilence - nothing for a people as a whole ever before took so large a percentage of young adult and older adult males out of the family context for so much of the waking time of the children. Most of us have not even noticed the change, nor do we have any idea of its radicality.”[3]

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How bad is it? U.S. News and World Report states these facts: 1 in 4 children born have no father to welcome them at birth. Only 40% of children grow up in 2 parent families. A million children each year go through divorce, 9 out of 10 will stay with their mothers. And when he is present a normal dad gives his children only 3 minutes of time to them with his undivided attention!

## **GODLY DADS:**

1. know their job is important but their home is essential
  2. express deep love for their wives but always save some for their children
  3. pay attention and respond to their children but even more to God
- Often bouquets are thrown to moms on Mother's Day and dads get a shot between the eyes on Fathers Day. Amazingly every one of the 27 references to fathers in Proverbs is POSITIVE! And, when we get to the New Testament the pattern continues. A model dad is Joseph. Everything we see him do is right on.
    - If you are a dad, follow his lead.
    - If you want to be a dad, listen up and learn.
    - If your children are grown, listen and share. Let's all commit to be fathers of the Word

## **Joseph**

1. **Godly dads like Joseph are full of compassion.** Matthew 1:19 Then Joseph her husband, being a just [man,] and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly. (NKJV) he planned to put away Mary privately
2. **Godly dads like Joseph listen to God** Matthew 1:20-24 But while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. 21 "And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins." 22 So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: 23 "Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel," which is translated, "God with us." 24 Then Joseph, being aroused from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord commanded him and took to him his wife, (NKJV)
3. **Godly dads like Joseph stay in touch with God** Matthew 2:13-19 Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, "Arise, take the young Child and His mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I bring you word; for Herod will seek the young Child to destroy Him." 14 When he arose, he took the young Child and His mother by night and departed for Egypt, 15 and was there until the death of Herod, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken

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by the Lord through the prophet, saying, "Out of Egypt I called My Son." 16 Then Herod, when he saw that he was deceived by the wise men, was exceedingly angry; and he sent forth and put to death all the male children who were in Bethlehem and in all its districts, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had determined from the wise men. 17 Then was fulfilled what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying: 18 "A voice was heard in Ramah, Lamentation, weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping [for] her children, Refusing to be comforted, Because they are no more." 19 But when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, (NKJV)

4. **Godly dads like Joseph demonstrate love to their families.** Matthew 2:13-16  
Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, "Arise, take the young Child and His mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I bring you word; for Herod will seek the young Child to destroy Him." 14 When he arose, he took the young Child and His mother by night and departed for Egypt, 15 and was there until the death of Herod, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, "Out of Egypt I called My Son." 16 Then Herod, when he saw that he was deceived by the wise men, was exceedingly angry; and he sent forth and put to death all the male children who were in Bethlehem and in all its districts, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had determined from the wise men. (NKJV) Joseph was a leader in Caring. He was a protector of his family: he made decisions for the future of his family going to Egypt.
5. **Godly dads like Joseph work hard to provide for their families.** Matthew 2: 19  
After Herod died, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt 20 and said, "Get up, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who were trying to take the child's life are dead." 21 So he got up, took the child and his mother and went to the land of Israel. 22 But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning in Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. Having been warned in a dream, he withdrew to the district of Galilee, 23 and he went and lived in a town called Nazareth. So was fulfilled what was said through the prophets: "He will be called a Nazarene." (NIV) Joseph was a leader in God's order for the home. He was a provider: he went to Nazareth and worked. Proverbs 19:14 Houses and wealth are inherited from parents, but a prudent wife is from the LORD. (NIV); Proverbs 13:22 A good man leaves an inheritance for his children's children, but a sinner's wealth is stored up for the righteous. (NIV)
6. **Godly dads like Joseph give their children lessons in living.** Mark 6:3 "Is this not the carpenter, the Son of Mary, and brother of James, Joses, Judas, and Simon? And are not His sisters here with us?" And they were offended at Him. (NKJV). He was a modeler: Taught Jesus his trade and that took time side by side Mowing, driving, care for the car, finances, etc. Men just put some time in them each week.

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7. **Godly dads like Joseph follow God's Word for raising children.** Luke 2:27-33  
So he came by the Spirit into the temple. And when the parents brought in the Child Jesus, to do for Him according to the custom of the law, 28 he took Him up in his arms and blessed God and said: 29 "Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace, According to Your word; 30 For my eyes have seen Your salvation 31 Which You have prepared before the face of all peoples, 32 A light to [bring] revelation to the Gentiles, And the glory of Your people Israel." 33 And Joseph and His mother marveled at those things which were spoken of Him. (NKJV)
8. **Godly dads like Joseph lead their family in worship.** Luke 2:41 His parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover. (NKJV)
- He was a worshiper, he took them to the feast Joseph was a leader in godliness.
  - He was a Maintainer: Pr. 22:28 keep family boundaries
9. **Godly dads like Joseph see children as the Lord does!** Mark 6:3 "Is this not the carpenter, the Son of Mary, and brother of James, Joses, Judas, and Simon? And are not His sisters here with us?" And they were offended at Him. (NKJV)
- Joseph had 7 children, he loved his wife and family and paid the price for them! Children are an eternal blessing. Children are gifts from the Lord. Children are a reward from the Lord. Psalm 127: 3 Sons are a heritage from the LORD, children a reward from him. 4 Like arrows in the hands of a warrior are sons born in one's youth. 5 Blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them. They will not be put to shame when they contend with their enemies in the gate. (NIV)

### **WHY IS HAVING CHILDREN SO VALUABLE TO A GODLY DAD?**

- Children teach dads to sacrifice: Having children limits: toys (boats, off road vehicles, fancy cars, exotic vacations, excessive sports, discretionary spending), time, flexibility, mobility. . . it diminishes financial savings, it takes a great deal of emotional and spiritual energy. But it is one of the only investments you can enjoy both here and in heaven. It provides one of the only investments that will honor you here and in heaven.
- Children multiply blessings: Children are a direct physical, visible, tangible blessing from the Lord. Children are unique because they are your very own plus they are brothers and sisters in Christ plus best friends for life. Nothing is more precious as the years pass than to see your children following Christ. Nothing is more heart rending than to not see them follow Him. In the world today there is a myth that children are expensive. The truth is they are rich and precious treasures sent from God Himself. Happy is anyone who has many!

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- Children keep us alert to danger: In an age characterized by 2 Timothy 3:2-4 People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, 3 without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, 4 treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God -- (NIV)

## **THE POWER OF THE FATHER IN PAUL'S DAY**

In Paul's day, certain attitudes existed that made life perilous for children. One of these was a Roman law called the *patria potestas*, which literally meant "the father's power." This particular law allowed the father to have absolute power over every single member of his family. For example, he could sell them all as slaves; he could make them work in his fields in chains; and he could even take the law into his own hands and punish any member of his family as severely as he wanted, even to the point of inflicting the death penalty. And he had that power as long as he lived. When a child was born, for example, the child was taken and placed between the feet of the father. If the father reached down and picked up the child, the child stayed in the home. But, if the father turned and walked away, the child was literally thrown away.

A letter of 1 B.C. from a man named Hilarion to his wife, Alis, gives us some insight into how children were viewed. It says, "Hlarion to Alis his wife, heartiest greetings. Know that we are still, even now, in Alexandria. Do not worry if when all others return, I remain in Alexandria. I beg and beseech you to take care of the little child, and as soon as we receive wages, I send them to you. If---good luck to you---you have another child, if it is a boy, let it live; if it is a girl, expose it" (Papyri Oxyrhynchus IV, 744).

Seneca, a philosopher during the Roman Empire, said, "We slaughter a fierce ox, we strangle a mad dog, we plunge a knife into a sick cow, and children who are born weakly and deformed, we drown."

When children were thrown out by their parents, they would often be taken, if they were still alive, and left in the forum. People would then come by at night and collect the boys to nourish them and make them slaves, and the girls to raise as prostitutes.

So, Paul was speaking to a world where the children were severely abused. The parent-child relationship was as sick as it is in our society--and by the way, no worse!

## **FIVE POSITIVE ATTRIBUTES OF A GOOD FATHER**

### **FIRST, A GODLY DAD SHARES HIS LIFE WITH HIS FAMILY!**

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*1 Thessalonians 2:8 So, affectionately longing for you, we were well pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God, but also our own lives, because you had become dear to us. (NKJV)*

This concept is the compass for determining your child's moral compass. A pastor from the SF Bay area wrote[4], "Homosexuals are not born, they are made." His ministry to homosexuals, some tragically from Christian homes discovered a thread in all their lives. The Father's love as commanded here and especially in Ephesians 6:4, provides the God-given guide for those children to find their orientation. Is it a choice, yes. Is it their personal responsibility before God? Yes. But do we as parents have a responsibility? Yes, and if we drive them away by our sin, it is a shared responsibility.

This Pastor goes on to say[5], "Either the father was passive and the mother was dominant, or the father was so hard and brutal that the boy was driven away to identify solely with the tenderness and warmth of his mother. Somewhere the compass malfunctioned."

#### **FOUR LANDMARKS OF A LOVING FATHER**

What are four landmarks of a loving father? What marks out the region we must guard? Let me briefly trace them:

##### **Fathers must be FAIR**

Ephesians 6:4 Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord. (NIV).

How are we as dads unfair at times? The great reformed bible teacher William Hendriksen[6] suggests at least six ways fathers embitter their children:

- Beware of Overprotection. Let the boys be boys, not little girls. They need to run, climb, get scraped and explore or they will not develop into the leader and protector they must become.
- Beware of Favoritism. Look at Esau and Jacob's mom Rebecca, then Jacob and his doting on Joseph. It embittered those around.
- Beware of Discouragement. If we always say they will never amount to anything, they might believe us. If we say you are a pain, they will feel it.
- Beware of destroying Individuality. God has made and gifted each of his children uniquely, as spiritual snowflakes. Don't make clones of yourself, let God make them as He plans.
- Beware of Neglect. Spend time with them. Put the work or TV to bed early and spend special and long times with those fast passing childhood days.

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- Beware of Bitter Words and outright physical Cruelty. Don't abuse them verbally or physically. That means do not correct them in anger. James 1:20 for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God. (NKJV)

### **Fathers must be TENDER.**

Ephesians 6:4 And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up [ this word means[7] “to nourish, to provide for with tender care” ] in the training and admonition of the Lord. (NKJV). Here are a few practical application of this idea:

- Listen to them before you spank them[8], so they know their feeling are important.
- Apologize to them when you have been wrong, harsh, angry or negligent.
- Accept the concerns, constructive criticism and ideas your wife offers. And, put them in practice.
- Be a hugger, holder, encourager and friend. And, spread it onto mom to, not just the children.

### **Fathers must be FIRM.**

*Ephesians 6:4 And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training*

[this word is neat[9], it “may be described as training by means of rules and regulations, rewards, and when necessary, punishments. It refers primarily to what is done to the child.”]

*and admonition*

[by contrast this word means “training by means of the spoken word, whether that be teaching, warning, or encouragement. It refers primarily to what is said to the child.”]

*of the Lord. (NKJV)*

Years back when members of Britain's Royal Family toured the US they were asked to share the most amazing thing they had observed in America. Without a moment of hesitation the reporter was told, “The Way the parents obey their children.”[10]

Listen to Ken Taylor[11] whose Living Bible paraphrase has touched so many lives:

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A Father's task is many sided, but the most important part of his work is to fit himself and his family into God's plan of family authority. Children are to be encouraged by the fathers pat on the back. And, helped to better things when necessary by the application of the hand or stick to the seat of learning. of course there are other methods of discipline besides spanking, but whatever is called for must be used. To refuse to discipline a child is to refuse the clear command of God. A child who does not learn to obey both parents will find it much harder to learn to obey God.

God said if your home is not in order you may not lead in the church 1 Timothy 3:4-5 one who rules his own house well, having [his] children in submission with all reverence 5 (for if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?); (NKJV)

### **Fathers must be CHRISTLIKE.**

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. (NKJV)

### **SECONDLY, A GODLY DAD LEADS A LIFE OF INTEGRITY IN THE WORLD**

*1 Thessalonians 2:8b So, affectionately longing for you, we were well pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God, but also our own lives, because you had become dear to us. (NKJV)*

We are here on earth for better or worse, why not spend the days of our pilgrimage for the glory of God. We as dads need to lead the way in how to live among this sinful and fallen race in a godly way. Chuck Swindoll notes some temptations we as dads must by God's grace resist. These are great, you need to write them down:

A godly dad won't misuse his Material Possessions. We must provide for our family or as 1 Timothy 5:8 says "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." (NKJV) However the temptation is TO SUBSTITUTE WHAT YOU PURCHASE FOR YOUR FAMILY FOR YOUR PRESENCE WITH YOUR FAMILY. In other words, Toys instead of Time. That means nights at the office, endless travel, weekends working...no gift can replace your presence. Ask them what they remember about growing up. It won't be the label on their clothing. It will be father son or daughter breakfasts, trips to the zoo, park or games. It will be the nights you waited up for them, the games you cheered them and the hours you coached them in the back yard or workshop. Give them time with you. That's what they want and need.

A godly dad won't misuse his Emotional Strength. We are daily tempted to SAVE OUR BEST FOR THE WORKPLACE AND GIVE OUR FAMILIES THE LEFTOVERS. Are you

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like a jet at the airport? You exercise, refuel and taxi out of the hangar to fly to work full of energy and ideas all day, only to run low on fuel as you land and taxi into your recliner to shut down for the day? Where are you investing your life? In things that won't matter in a hundred years? Be careful.

A godly dad won't misuse his Verbal Communication. We often fall into the trap as dads of starting to DELIVER LECTURES RATHER THAN EARNING THE RIGHT TO BE RESPECTED THROUGH LISTENING AND LEARNING. Remember James 1:19 So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; (NKJV)

A godly dad won't misuse his Personal Achievement. This is such a subtle temptation to some of us dads. We have fallen into the wrong pattern of DESIRING TO BE PERFECT AND DEMANDING THE SAME FROM THE REST OF OUR FAMILY. It is when nothing is ever good enough.

Tom Eisenman[12] describes some of the tendencies of men who are perfectionists:

- Perfectionists tend to think in dichotomous categories. Everything is either great or bad, perfect or worthless.
- Perfectionists also engage in minimizing or maximizing. Failures are maximized and successes are minimized. The small thing that went wrong destroys or at least overshadows everything else.
- Perfectionists set unreasonable goals for themselves and others.
- Perfectionists judge their personal worth by their performance, and others by the same standard.
- We must realize that God is a God of the second chance. We are sinners. All of us fail Him and others and we must get right with Him and them, and go on. Hebrews 4:15 For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all [points] tempted as [we are, yet] without sin. (NKJV)

A godly dad won't misuse his Sexual Drive. This is the fifth area of living in this wicked world we must guard. This is the temptation to SEEK INTIMATE SATISFACTION OUTSIDE THE BONDS OF MONOGAMY. Simply it means to seek and find sensual satisfaction in reading, seeking, listening, imagining or even experiencing any woman other than your wife.

James 1:13-15 Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. 14 But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. 15 Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death. (NKJV).

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Don't give in, even for a fleeting peek, a lustful glance, a quick peek in the magazine, a moment on the movie channel, or a meeting with a woman. Flee, say no and don't look back. It often helps to take reminders of your family with you to work. Look at their smiling faces in pictures on business trips, put them around your office or work area, talk about your wife as your sweetheart and best friend to your co-workers, especially if they are women. And most of all remember the lives of your family rest in your care.

A godly dad won't misuse his Spiritual Faith. The final area we are tempted in is TO UNDER-ESTIMATE THE IMPORTANCE OF CULTIVATING YOUR FAMILY'S SPIRITUAL APPETITE. You must lead the way to the Word, church, prayer meeting, verse memorization. the children should see dad praying, reading, witnessing, serving in the Lord's work, helping the helpless, sacrificing resources to invest in eternity, resisting worldliness and pride. All those area are caught more than taught.

### **THIRDLY, GENUINE LABORING**

*1 Thessalonians 2:9 For you remember, brethren, our labor and toil; for laboring night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, we preached to you the gospel of God. (NKJV)*

Although Paul is talking about tent making to support himself, the element here we need to look at is he gave them what they needed to hear at any cost. Dads, have you given your children what they need to make it in life, even at great personal cost to your work goals, athletic desires and even personal free time? What are the essentials we must work at. Lets just trace some children who made it out in the world that are described in the OT, and be sure we are similarly equipping them.

SCHOOLING TODAY. Every summer ends with the weary masses of families in the fall frenzy of preparation for school. The clothes, supplies, books and all that goes with education. For the fifty-plus millions of public school children, it is veritable jungle of penetrating caustic errors, virulent moral infections, twisted historical analyses of the past, often scathing public attacks on traditional biblical values and living. They are confronted with:

- Sex education that is actually pushing them to lust building and self gratification.
- Self actualization training that seeks them to learn self worship.
- Meditation and relaxation techniques that are only thinly veneered Eastern Occultic and New Age arts.
- School buildings that host peer pressures of highest magnitude, violence that terrifies and often plants lifelong fears, exposure to drugs, pornography and rock lyrics that are nearly indelible in their staining capacity.

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Then there are those who are going to Christian schools that face just as much preparation pressures to get them ready and get them there, as well as the added pressure of paying the tuition. But even Christian Schools are not safe from so many potential dangers.

There are potential doctrinal errors from new or ungrounded faculty members.

There are serious dangers of:

- spiritual elitism “I go to CHRISTIAN School”;
- legalism or externalism “They don’t have our standards, so they aren’t spiritual, Christians, etc.;
- spiritual apathy “another chapel speaker, verse to memorize, etc.;
- worst of all spiritual fakes “learned the ropes, do what told, never experienced the truth, living on mom and dads or he teachers experience of Christ.

And finally, and not least of all, there are the home-schoolers. They have the challenges of time, space, finances, criticism and misunderstanding as well as legal threats from an often hostile government. Their pressures are no more nor less, They face dangers equally as deadly as the other groups. Have you thought of these?

- Isolationists: being not merely insulated from the world but so isolated we can’t even relate let alone be as Paul in 1 Corinthians 9:22 to the weak I became as weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all [men,] that I might by all means save some. (NKJV) Matthew 11:19 "The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Look, a glutton and a winebibber, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' But wisdom is justified by her children." (NKJV) Is your homeschooling preparing soldiers for the Gospel Army or is it handicapping them from serving a needy world for Christ?
- Exclusivists: believing my way, our way is the only right way. And with it the danger of elevating my hero, my pastor, my seminar leader, my curriculum developer, my spiritual mentor, my bible teacher to an ungodly pedestal. 1 Corinthians 1:11-13 For it has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chloe's [household,] that there are contentions among you. 12 Now I say this, that each of you says, "I am of Paul," or "I am of Apollos," or "I am of Cephas," or "I am of Christ." 13 Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? (NKJV) Is your homeschooling divisive or edifying to other Christians?

Without a doubt, the biblical context of education was the home. The portrait in Deuteronomy was a teaching home. The setting of the wisdom literature and especially

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Proverbs is a father and mother educating their children. Historically the OT synagogue and NT church only supplemented what was already learned at home. However, if because of the collapse of the family, the economic conditions of today, and the outside demands on our families, what must parents be sure their children know, however they are taught reading, writing and arithmetic? Let's examine three OT saints educated outside the home. The elements they learned should be the mandate for us. They were ready for the world and survived it. And isn't that our goal? Not just to have the finest young saints at home but wherever they go?

There is a place in Scripture for some to be taught outside the home.

- Young Samuel in 1 Samuel 1 was raised and taught in the tabernacle of God. This was much like our Christian Schools of today perhaps. Was it safe? No. Meet fellow students - Eli the teachers sons, Hophni and Phinehas. 1 Samuel 2:12 Now the sons of Eli [were] corrupt; they did not know the LORD. (NKJV) As we well know they were driven by their lusts and immoral v. 15-17, 22. But in spite of the evil peer pressure 1 Samuel 2:21 And the LORD visited Hannah, so that she conceived and bore three sons and two daughters. Meanwhile the child Samuel grew before the LORD. (NKJV)
- Probably Teenaged Daniel

### **Live consistently**

*1 Thessalonians 2:10 You [are] witnesses, and God [also,] how devoutly and justly and blamelessly we behaved ourselves among you who believe; (NKJV). This is just plain old transparency that is so hard for us men.*

### **Speak Encouragingly**

*1 Thessalonians 2:11-12 as you know how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father [does] his own children, 12 that you would walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory. (NKJV)*

One author[13] on the family has noted that in the average home surveyed, there are ten negative words for every positive word spoken. What kind of words are we using dads? Are they healthy and wholesome to build up our children?

*Ephesians 4:29-32 Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers. 30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. 31 Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. 32 And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you. (NKJV)*

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Do our words strengthen, encourage and heal? Or are they destroying your child from the inside out?

A few years back newspaper writer Mark Patinken[14] wrote a funny yet piercing article about the ways dads often talk to their children. He entitled it, “You’re grounded - and other Dadisms”.

There’s a ...book out filled with 80 pages of the one liners your mother used to tell you. It’s called Momilies. You’d probably recognize most of it. For example:

“Sit up straight.”

“Don’t cross your eyes or they will freeze that way.”

“If you can’t say anything nice, don’t say anything at all.”

It got me thinking about the things fathers used to say. They usually carried a different tone. What follow are a few Dadisms:

- I will break every bone in your head.
- I will break every bone in your body.
- Because I’m your father, that’s why...
- When I was a boy...
- ...I used to walk eight miles to school every morning...
- ...after finishing my chores...
- You want your allowance, you know where the mower is.
- How’d you like to spend the rest of the summer in your room?
- You call that hair combed?
- Talk to your mother.
- Is that any way to talk to your mother?
- You want something to cry about? I’ll give you something to cry about....
- Douglas, I mean Hugh, I mean Matthew... whatever your name is... come here.
- Now.

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# How to be a Father of the Word

WFF: Message Six (991208PM)

## FATHERS HAVE A BIG CHALLENGE

One of the questions I often ask men who have raise children is, "Would you do it any differently?" I listen carefully and try to learn from those ahead of me in their earthly pilgrimages. Do you know what? The changes they often share are so easy to implement even today. No matter where you are in the parenting process. One father summed[1] it up this way. He said,

*"My family's all grown, and the kids are all gone. But, if I had to do it all over again, this is what I'd do:*

- I would love my wife more in front of my children.*
- I would laugh with my children more--at our mistakes and our joys.*
- I would listen more, even to the littlest child.*
- I would be more honest about my own weaknesses, never pretending perfection.*
- I would pray differently for my family--instead of focusing on them, I'd focus on me.*
- I would do more things together with my children.*
- I would encourage them more and bestow more praise.*
- I would pay more attention to little things, like deeds and words of thoughtfulness.*
- And then, finally, if I had to do it all over again, I would share God more intimately with my family; every ordinary thing that happened in every ordinary day I would use to direct them to God."*

This explains why Charlie Shedd[2] made one of his original promises to his tiny son, Peter:

*I hope that I will be able to make knowing God natural to you. It is natural. In fact, I think this relationship with God is the only thing that is one hundred percent natural. We will pray together until it is easy for you to put your arms on the windowsill of heaven and look into the face of God.*

*Before I put you back in your crib, I want to tell you something Philip said.*

*We had been out in the country for a ride. It was evening and we ran out of gas. We were walking along after we had been to the farmhouse, and I was carrying a can of gas. Philip was only four. He was playing along, throwing rocks at the telephone poles, picking flowers, and then, all of a sudden it got dark.*

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*Sometimes night comes all at once in the country. Philip came over, put his little hand in mine and said, "Take my hand, Daddy. I might get lost."*

*Peter, there is a hand reaching to you from the heart of the universe. If you will lay your hand in the hand of God and walk with Him, you will never ever get lost.*

### **SO WHAT ARE WE MISSING TODAY?**

In a study conducted several years ago, sociologists Sheldon and Eleanor Glueck, of Harvard University, identified several crucial factors in the development of juvenile delinquents. They created a test that can, with about 90 percent accuracy, predict future delinquency of children 5-6 years old. They listed four necessary factors in preventing juvenile delinquency.

- First, the father's discipline must be firm, fair, and consistent.
- Second, the mother must know where her children are and what they are doing at all times, and be with them as much as possible.
- Third, the children need to see affection demonstrated between their parents, and from their parents to them.
- And fourth, the family must spend time together as a unit.

In a similar report, but from a Christian perspective, Dr. Paul D. Meier, a Christian psychiatrist, wrote that the key to right parent-child relationships could be summed up in five things:

- (1) Parents' love for each other and for the children;
- (2) Discipline;
- (3) Consistency;
- (4) A good parental example; and
- (5) A man at the head of the home.

### **KNOWING GOD AS THE PERFECT FATHER**

The perfect Father would be the one who knows everything about you and still loves you; who is always on your side; who is big enough for anything; and who never lets you down. Of course that is the description God's Word gives of the ONLY perfect Father in God's Word. We all have met Him. Jesus introduced us to God as Our perfect Father:

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First Jesus says we need to notice our seeing father. Jesus calls Him Our Father who sees all of our secrets. That means He is watching; He “knows everything and still loves us”. What a comfort to have God as our Perfect Father. He is on your side .

Matthew 6:4 so that your giving may be in secret. **Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.**

Matthew 6:6 But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. **Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.**

Matthew 6:18 so that it will not be obvious to men that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and **your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.**

Secondly, our Perfect Father is our constant resource. We are to draw upon your supplying father. Have you met and entered into communion with our Father of mercy. Oh how much He loves you and is supremely “on your side”.

2 Corinthians 1:3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, **the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort,**

Thirdly, this Perfect Father Jesus introduced us to is powerful. He is saying trust in your strong father. The Name of the Lord as Father of spirits means He is strong. To put that down to earth for us, He is “big enough for anything”.

Hebrews 12:9 Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. **How much more should we submit to the Father of our spirits and live!**

Finally Jesus has introduced us to our Perfect Father who won't ever let us down, leave us or change into something less than perfection. We are to constantly go back and rest on Him. That means we are to hope IN OUR secure father. The name of the Lord as our Father of lights communicates the incredible truth that God is changeless. Our Lord is unfailing. To say it in daily talk, He is the Father who will “never let you down”.

James 1:17 Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from **the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.**

The perfect Father would be the one who knows everything about you and still loves you; who is always on your side; who is big enough for anything; and who never lets

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you down. So how do we who re so imperfect perform one of the most difficult tasks in life?

We start by seeing our Perfect Father as He is, and then we start in the power of His Spirit to emulate Him. God is the model. God alone is Perfect. We are imperfect and sometimes failing students of the Perfect Father. But even if we fail at times, we can always point our families to their Perfect Father, right?

## **OUR PATTERN IS GOD'S WORD**

So what should we look for? Good habits that show up in the great dads of God's Word! The first great dad we will see is Job. From his life we need to grab and copy his habit of prayer. And by the power of God's Spirit start making it characteristic of your life!

The Book of Job is perhaps the oldest book in the world. It is also perhaps the clearest view into the spirit world, the spiritual side of parenting and the cosmic proportion of conflicts we face as we parent and lead as dads.

### **❖ HABIT NUMBER ONE: PRAYER JOB PRAYED**

What is the key truth about the Good Dad Job? JOB PRAYED

Job 1:5 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. (NKJV)

Can we learn something about how to parent our families from Job's like? Yes, some powerful habits he had. There are five distinct elements of Job's parenting habits. You may want to even note these in your Bibles.

First, **Job prayerfully followed the life of his children.** Note the words, "when the days of feasting".

Job 1:5 **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. (NKJV)

He knew what was going on in his children's lives. He knew their cycle of house visits, parties, get-togethers and so on. He was in touch on a daily basis with where they were and where they were headed. He followed his children around

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in his heart because he had a godly concern and love for them. ARE YOU FOLLOWING YOUR CHILDREN'S LIVES? You and I will never pray effectively for those who are not regularly on our hearts.

Secondly, **Job prayerfully sought the personal consecration of each member of his family.**

Job 1:5 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. (NKJV)

Note the words, "Job would send and sanctify them". This speaks of his high priestly role at the head of his family. He went to God seeking their purity before the Lord. In a practical way dads, it is you that needs to know your boys and girls and seek their sanctification. It is you that needs to tell them when they are out of line, immodest, heading toward sin and so on! And as dads we are also husbands. We are as Paul said in Ephesians 5, to seek our wife's sanctification through God's Word! A godly dad will know his children and wife's spiritual status and be prayerfully caring about their growth toward Christ-likeness. DO YOU CARE FOR YOUR DAUGHTERS AND SONS AND WIFE'S CONSECRATION?

In the middle of v. 5 we see another truth. **Job prayerfully offered himself to God as an intercessor for his family.**

Job 1:5 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. (NKJV)

It wasn't talk it was work! HAVE YOU OFFERED YOURSELF TO GOD AS AN INTERCESSOR? Prayer is much like holding something for someone you love. You just make sure that you guard it.

Next, **Job prayerfully looked at his family from God's perspective. Note the words "in their hearts".** He was so vitally concerned about their inner spiritual life that he cried out to God for them. HAVE YOU started doing this, DADS?

Job 1:5 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,**

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**"It may be that my sons have sinned and cursed God in their hearts."**

Thus Job did regularly. (NKJV)

Job was so aware of the constant pressure of the world, the flesh and the devil. He wanted pure children, holy families and strong worshipers of God Almighty. So he was looking over the lives of his family members trying to see them from the inside out. What a challenge, what an opportunity, what an encouragement this can be dads. Sometimes we just need to look at them, as they will be instead of only as they are. Remember God says we are seated with Christ. That is our future glorified condition. And He relates to us on that basis. Never overlooking sin, but always seeing us, as we shall be by His grace.

Finally, **Job prayerfully persisted**. He was a great dad because he kept on. It wasn't just when they were little. He prayed through their growing years and never stopped. You know the key to success in any endeavor is to get started and not quit.

Job 1:5 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**. (NKJV)

"Continually" He started following their lives. He started to offer prayers for his family as their intercessor. and wouldn't stop. He was ready for the unexpected death of his children. He prepared them for it every day! HAVE YOU STARTED? KEEP ON! QUIT? GET STARTED!

Fathers of the Word will be like Job who interceded prayerfully for His family. Job 1:5 - WOW. Do you see how serious this dad was? Job had five objectives:

**Followed**: Knew what was going on in his kids' lives "cycle" - knew daughters at home invited out to sons.

**Cared**: Sought their personal lives to be consecrated "sent and consecrate", examined and cleansed.

**Offered**: Personally stood as priest of his family offering atoning sacrifices for sin in general.

**Looked**: He was not only concerned about externals, he was vitally concerned about the heart! "In hearts"

**Persisted**: Continually did so with spiritual persistence, "continually".

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A Godly father in tune with the Scriptures will: know his children deeply, personally and directly; get involved in making sure they keep pure; stands ready to seek their repentance and restoration; looks at heart attitudes; and won't stop!

So, Fathers of the Word will be like Job who was involved prayerfully with his family.

## ❖ HABIT NUMBER TWO: OBEDIENCE NOAH OBEYED

So Job was a great dad because he PRAYED! Next we need to look at one element of another great dad's life. The dad was Noah, the element is the one word that sums up his life. NOAH OBEYED.

Fathers of the Word will be like Noah who warned his family. Turn to Heb. 11:7, the inspired writer condenses Gen. 6-9 into one verse. Noah:

- Believed God "by faith"
- Stayed in touch with God, "being warned of things", had spiritual perception.
- Obeyed God, "prepared a what? Ark?!"
- Had the respect of family, "saved house".
- Called sin what it was and sinners who they were!
- Saved by faith!

Listen to the inspired biography of Noah's life in Hebrews 11.

Hebrews 11:7 **By faith Noah**, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith. (NKJV)

There are several ways Noah expressed this godly attitude of obedience. Join me in v. 7 as we take apart the keys to a life of obedience.

First, NOAH Believed God "by faith"

Hebrews 11:7 By faith Noah, **being divinely warned of things not yet seen**, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith. (NKJV)

Second, NOAH Stayed in touch with God "being warned of".

Hebrews 11:7 By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he

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condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith. (NKJV)

This means he was in spiritual contact with God (through God's Word and prayer as he listened to God). All this led to spiritual perception of God's will for Noah's family. I hope everyone of you hearing my voice will want to know for certainty God's will for your family so that you can obey it!

Thirdly, NOAH Obeyed God "prepared a what?" It was 450 x 75 x 45 or 1,518,750 sq. feet. This equals 569 R.R. Stock cars, of which 208 could hold the 21,000 land animals of the 1,072,300 total species. The average land animal is the size of a sheep.

Hebrews 11:7 By faith Noah, **being divinely warned of things not yet seen**, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith. (NKJV)

Fourth, NOAH Led his Family: he saved his house Genesis 6:9 This is the genealogy of Noah. Noah was a just man, perfect in his generations. Noah walked with God. (NKJV) they went along with his project alone in the whole world! Why? Because he was living a life of integrity in world and at home.

Finally, NOAH was unafraid to point out sin! He was confronting the whole world of sin and standing against it, longest sermon 100 years.

Hebrews 11:7 By faith Noah, **being divinely warned of things not yet seen**, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and **became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith**. (NKJV).

NOAH Lived by faith.

Hebrews 11:7 By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith. (NKJV)

So, #2, Fathers of the Word will be like Noah who saved his family by warning with word and example!

Believing God (starts)

Being in communion/contact with God (continues)

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Obedying God (always)

Living a life of integrity in world and at home

Confronting the whole world of sin and standing against it, longest sermon 100 years.

Ends as an heir of faith

So, Job prayed. Noah obediently warned.

### ❖ **HABIT NUMBER THREE: LEADERSHIP ABRAHAM DIRECTED**

ABRAHAM COMMANDED the direction of his family!

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." (NKJV)

So what was it God admired about this man of faith? Abraham commanded his family to look beyond the passing fancies of this world system, beyond the materialism of the day (in Ur of the Chaldees). That meant for him to forsake gods of this world; system: sun god, moon god. And it meant to obey the true and living and only God!!

God chose him to "command his family". Does he?

- 21:1-8            obey God's rules
- 21:9-21        have genuine loving personal concern for each
- 22:1-12        sacrifice all for God, even best, closest and most precious

So, then does he command them by example? Yes.

Obey God's rules

Be transparent and genuine in love

Lay it all (literally as in Isaac) on the altar

How did he do that? Look at Hebrews 11:8-10

IF GOD SAID GO HE WENT!

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Hebrews 11:8-10 **By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went,** even though he did not know where he was going. 9 By faith he made his home in the Promised Land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. 10 For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God.

IF GOD SAID LEAVE IT ALL (Materialism) HE DROPPED IT!

Hebrews 11:8-10 By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and **went, even though he did not know where he was going.** 9 By faith he made his home in the Promised Land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. 10 For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God.

IF GOD SAID WORSHIP ONLY ME HE DID!

Hebrews 11:8-10 By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. 9 By faith he made his home in the Promised Land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. 10 **For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God.**

But let's look at the condensed version again, Heb. 11:8-10:

God said go - he went

God said leave materialism - he did

God said give up those gods - he did

God said obey me - he did

So, fathers of God's design will be like Abraham who commanded his family to

(1) Get out of this world system headed away from God and toward judgment;

(2) Leave the quest for things and start seeking the only things that last -- God's kingdom; and

(3) Forsake those gods and bow to the living and true God!

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Let's get specific: There is still a world system to renounce dads. Are you doing so?

- Egalitarianism (all equal) - God says equal worth, not equal responsibility; relativism (no absolutes) - God says yes!
- Exploitationism (get all you can; gusto; go for it)
- Hedonism (please me now!)
- Materialism (life consists in multitude, quality and possession of things and privileges)

But there is still not only a world and its system to renounce, but a kingdom to seek!  
Dad, do live for things eternal:

- Read the Word of God
- Lead family
- Serve in church
- Reach out to lost

Remember there are still many gods to give up. Many of Satan's ways permeate this world. Just a few are:

- Substance abuse for gratification
- Sexual license for gratification
- Sounds of sin -- language and music of rebellion, wickedness and occultism .

Finally there is a final portrait of a bad dad. His habits led to God's curse upon his family. We could say, fathers of the Word won't be like Eli.

He held in children in higher esteem than the Lord!

1 Samuel 2:29

29 Why do you scorn my sacrifice and offering that I prescribed for my dwelling? Why do you honor your sons more than me by fattening yourselves on the choice parts of every offering made by my people Israel?'

### **DANGER SIGNS OF A BAD DAD**

Sometime turn to I Samuel 2 today and jot down these verses to read:

Eli lacked:

**Discretion is vital to God.** It appears Eli had a lack of discretion (staring at woman)

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1 Samuel 1:12 As she kept on praying to the LORD, Eli observed her mouth.

**Discernment is vital to God.** It appears Eli had a lack of spiritual discernment (thought woman praying was drunk)

1 Samuel 1:13-18 Hannah was praying in her heart, and her lips were moving but her voice was not heard. Eli thought she was drunk 14 and said to her, "How long will you keep on getting drunk? Get rid of your wine." 15 "Not so, my lord," Hannah replied, "I am a woman who is deeply troubled. I have not been drinking wine or beer; I was pouring out my soul to the LORD. 16 Do not take your servant for a wicked woman; I have been praying here out of my great anguish and grief." 17 Eli answered, "Go in peace, and may the God of Israel grant you what you have asked of him." 18 She said, "May your servant find favor in your eyes." Then she went her way and ate something, and her face was no longer downcast.

**Disciplining our children is vital to God.** God said that Eli participated in sons' sins because he did not rebuke them

1 Samuel 2:29 Why do you scorn my sacrifice and offering that I prescribed for my dwelling? Why do you honor your sons more than me by fattening yourselves on the choice parts of every offering made by my people Israel?

**Confronting sin in our home is vital to God.** God rebukes Eli because he continued to resist confronting sin in home

1 Samuel 3:13 For I told him that I would judge his family forever because of the sin he knew about; his sons made themselves contemptible, and he failed to restrain them.

**Personal discipline is vital to God.** Eli lacked self restraint and God judges him.

1 Samuel 4:18 When he mentioned the ark of God, Eli fell backward off his chair by the side of the gate. His neck was broken and he died, for he was an old man and heavy. He had led Israel forty years.

How can we summarize the danger signs of a bad dad? Eli had:

- Preoccupation with an occupation to the exclusion of family needs.
- Refusal to face the severity of his children's actions
- Failure to respond quickly and thoroughly to the warnings of others.
- Rationalizing the wrong thereby becoming part of the problem.

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# How to Encourage an Excellent Mother

## WFF: Message Seven (010513AM)

Mother's Day—For Christianity, the concept seems to date back to establishment of England's "Mothering Sunday," gifts were to be offered to worshippers' mothers. Here in the U. S. the first general observance of the occasion was in the churches of Philadelphia after Miss Anne Jarvis campaigned for a holiday for mothers just after the turn of the 20th century.

So this morning we join our nation as together we honor our mothers. Mothers are quite a precious commodity, aren't they? Each of us owes our very existence to our Mom! And in the flurry of phone calls, cards, dinners, flowers, and gifts we express our love. Why? Because it is Biblical. Turn with me to Proverbs 31 and for a moment follow along with me as I read verse 28 "Her children arise and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her"

The Bible says that one who lives a life for God lives on far beyond their earthly days because their life keeps testifying about God's grace.

Today before you get to the car if your mom is with you, think of a way she has touched your life.

- Maybe it is her loving smile, her gentle voice, maybe it is the soft yet strong touch of her hands.
- Can you let her know how her prayers or phone calls or letters have touched you?
- How about her cooking great meals, sewing those buttons, cleaning your room or always having a loving shoulder to cry on?

Surely this is only the start. Not just today should you call and tell her, do it all throughout the year. Rise up and call her blessed! There are so many ways we could honor our mothers, perhaps just remembering of how vital her role is to each of us. Here is the way some have expressed all our sentiments:

*"She cooks, she cleans, she comforts, she corrects. She has six pairs of hands and eyes in the back of her head. Mother[1]. For some, this word conjures up images of June Cleaver, complete with lace apron and pearls -- singing lullabies, baking brownies, kissing away a child's hot tears. Others envision the Erma Bombeck model, who drives a wood-paneled station wagon and whose hobby is dusting. Whatever the type, no one has more influence than a mother. For better or worse, she will forever impact the life of her child. Tough and tender, wise and warm, a mother must be all things to all her family ... at all times. That's quite a job description, and anyone who is a mother or has watched one in action*

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*knows there's no career more demanding or more endangered in today's society."*

So one of the best ways to honor our moms would be to Let them know how they touched our lives. So one facet of today is expressing what we know is true, how precious our moms are to each of us.

Jimmy Dean[2], country and western singer of some renown, released an album back when I was in college in the late seventies. One of the songs on that album is unique since Dean doesn't sing it, he says it. It's titled, "I Owe You." He's at a nostalgic place in his life. While thumbing through the things in his wallet, he inadvertently comes across a number of longstanding "I owe you's" to his mother, which he names one after another. By the time he is through, there's a big knot in your throat.

Borrowing that idea, lets make up another list of "I owe you's" which apply to all of our mothers all over this city, state, and country, all of which are long overdue. Let's stop after each one and consider the priceless value of the one who made your life possible – your mother,

Dear Mom:

As I walk through my museum of memories,

- I owe you...for your TIME. You gave me constantly day and night.
- I owe you...for your EXAMPLE. You lived a life that was consistent and dependable.
- I owe you...for your SUPPORT. You always were there encouraging and challenging.
- I owe you...for your HUMOR. It was perfectly quick and lifting the moment.
- I owe you...for your COUNSEL. It was so wise and quiet.
- I owe you...for your HUMILITY. You were always genuine and gracious.
- I owe you...for your HOSPITALITY. Your home and table were smiling and warm.
- I owe you...for your INSIGHT. Your thoughts were so keen and honest.
- I owe you...for your FLEXIBILITY. Your life was always patient and joyful.
- I owe you...for your SACRIFICES. The countless times you gave of yourself that were so quickly forgotten.
- I owe you...for your FAITH. Your relationship to the Lord was so solid and sure.
- I owe you...for your HOPE. You always radiated a ceaseless and indestructible confidence.
- I owe you...for your LOVE. It was so devoted and deep.

So we remember our moms, because there is no more influential or powerful role on earth than a mother's. Stay at it, dear lady. Never doubt the value of your calling.

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Without your positive supportive partnership, the family simply could not survive. But beyond all that, what is the spiritual side to this day? Does God's Word speak to the role of motherhood?

But what was the Scripture we just read? The 31st chapter of Proverbs is probably the best known and loved portion of God's Word about a godly woman, mother, and wife. Please stand with me as I read Proverbs 31:10–31.

These 22 verses are a poem that offers “God’s beautiful description of the excellent wife as defined by a wife and mother (v. 1). Spiritual and practical wisdom plus moral virtues mark the character of this woman in contrast to the immoral women of v. 3. While the scene here is of a wealthy home and the customs of the ancient Near East, the principles apply to every family. They are set forth as the prayer of every mother for the future wife of her son, and literarily arranged with each of the 22 verses beginning with the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet in consecutive order[3]”. The ancient Jewish rabbis taught that this chapter probably written by Solomon as a reflection upon his great-great grandmother Ruth.

Remember Ruth from that 8th Book of God's Word ? Her distant forefather in Genesis 19 by the name of Lot had sired her race in the midst of a drunken orgy with his own daughters. Yes, Lot who was Abraham’s nephew, in his drunkenness, always condemned in God’s word and with an unscrupulous daughter, produced a tribe of people under God’s judgment.

Here is a woman that because of God’s curse always knew that “ no Moabite could enter God’s assembly to the 10th generation” as Moses recorded those words in Deuteronomy 23:3-4. So, Ruth according to God's Word was despised though personally having done nothing to deserve it! Think of it!

- She is of the *wrong race*.
- She is out of the *wrong family*.
- She is *tainted by the past*.
- She is *hounded by someone else’s sin*.
- She is *scarred by a family scandal*.
- She is *plagued by a dark stain*.

And, after a short, sad marriage with her husband dead and famine about her God writes one of the sweetest Old Testament stories of grace. And she is a “Mother of the Promise” to bring Christ to portray grace. And, since ancient times, the Jewish sages have attributed this 31st chapter to a portrait of this woman Ruth.

A close look at the elements God chose to put into His timeless portrait of a Woman of Excellence shows Seven Elements God noted that in part or in total make the key to describing a woman that is excellent or “powerful” as Proverbs 31:10 translates it in v.

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10. Quite a portrait – and when God describes what is important to Him, each element is timeless and powerful, so let's briefly examine each of these keys to being a godly woman and mother..

1. In v.10 we find the 1st Key = **HER WORTH TO GOD IS INESTIMABLE (KJV)**  
And what in God's sight is this woman worth? She is a woman of inestimable value – Rubies (NIV/KJV) speak of rarity of flawlessness NAS Jewels again – Most valuable ancient commodity! Need we elaborate? This is the value our Lord puts upon: A Virtuous Woman, A Godly Wife, and A Biblical Mother. She is Priceless – Rare – a Treasure! In fact, Proverbs 18: 22 calls her “Grace” from the Lord!
2. In v.11 we find the 2nd Key = **HER HUSBAND BESTOWS UPON HER HIS ABSOLUTE CONFIDENCE.** in v. 10 woman excellence or powerful woman is of inestimable worth. In v. 11 – in her relating to her husband she is a woman of whom he has absolute confidence. “he safely trusts in her”. As the Lord promises in Genesis, she completes her husband.
3. In v. 12 we find the 3rd Key = **HER LIFE IS DEVOTED TO SERVING OTHERS.** She has earned the reality Christ spoke of – servant of all is greatest of all. She devotes self to others.
4. In v. 13-26 we find the 4th Key = **HER BODY IS FOCUSED UPON MINISTRY FOR THE LORD.** Note how differently the Lord Himself describes this priceless woman. There are no descriptions of her hair, skin, weight, clothes, or looks. Starting v.13 and through to v. 26 there is no physical description of fleeting physical beauty. Rather there is a beautiful description of her: Hands given to serving others v.13, v.19, v.20, v.31; her Arms given to serving others v.17; her Mouth given to serving others v.26; her Tongue given to serving others v.26. Thus God's woman is all in God's control, serving others – not self.
5. In v.15 we find the 5th Key = **HER HOUSEHOLD HAS THE HIGHEST PRIORITY.** God measures her life first and foremost by her ministry to her family, not by her focus upon her self, or her career, or her personal gratification. No the Lord honors her for making her family her priority. Remember the New Testament highlights this perspective of the Lord: 1 Timothy 5:14 *Therefore I desire that the younger widows marry, bear children, manage the house, give no opportunity to the adversary to speak reproachfully. 1 Timothy 2:15 Nevertheless she will be saved in childbearing if they continue in faith, love, and holiness, with self-control. Titus 2:4 that they admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children,*
6. In v.28 we find the 6th Key = **HER CHILDREN ARE HER SACRED TRUST FROM GOD THAT REAP A HARVEST OF PRAISE AND BLESSING!** That's God's plan – how sad to say that those 3.6M kids who started 9th grade last fall: 1 out of 7 kids of unmarried parents; 40% will be from broken homes before graduating; and

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30% are Latchkey kids, which means no one greets them at the door as they arrive home from school. Oh to see children as sacred trust.

7. Finally in v.31 we find the 7th Key = **HER LIFE'S WORK OFFERED IN LOVE PRODUCES THE ENDURING PRAISE OF HER FAMILY.** God says the whole world will take note of this woman of inestimable worth.

This essential ingredient of mothering[4] is captured in this paraphrase of I Corinthians 13: "If I talk to my children about what is right and what is wrong, but have not love, I am like a ringing doorbell or pots banging in the kitchen. And though I know what stages they will go through, and understand their growing pains, and can answer all their questions about life, and believe myself to be a devoted mother, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give up the fulfillment of a career to make my children's lives better, and stay up all night sewing costumes or baking cookies on short notice, but grumble about lack of sleep, I have not love and accomplish nothing. A loving mother is patient with her children's immaturity and kind even when they are not; a loving mother is not jealous of their youth nor does she hold it over their heads whenever she has sacrificed for them. A loving mother does not push her children into doing things her way. She is not irritable, when the chicken pox have kept her confined with three whining children for two weeks, and does not resent the child who brought the affliction home in the first place. A loving mother is not relieved when her disagreeable child finally disobeys her directly and she can punish him, but rather rejoices with him when he is being more cooperative. A loving mother bears much of the responsibility for her children; she believes in them; she hopes in each one's individual ability to stand out as a light in a dark world; she endures every backache and heartache to accomplish that. A loving mother never really dies.

- As for homebaked bread, it will be consumed and forgotten;
- As for spotless floors, they will soon gather dust and heelmarks.

And as for children, well, right now toys, friends, and food are all-important to them. But when they grow up it will have been how their mother loved them that will determine how they love others. In that way she will live on. So care, training, and a loving mother reside in a home, these three, but the greatest of these is a loving mother."

Why? Because of: Her Absolutely confident husband; Her Life devoted to serving others; Her Body focused on ministry for the Lord; Her Household has the highest priority; Her Children are her sacred trust from God that reap a harvest of praise and blessing; and Her Life's Work offered in love produces the enduring praise of her family. How about it ladies? Are you patterning your life after God's timeless portrait?

### **Who Were Some of the Other Great Mother's of God's Word?**

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1. EVE KEPT HOPING IN GOD'S PLAN Genesis 4:1 Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, and said, "I have acquired a man from the Lord."
  2. SARAH KEPT BELIEVING GOD'S PROMISES Hebrews 11:11 By faith Sarah herself also received strength to conceive seed, and she bore a child when she was past the age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised.
  3. HANNAH KEPT PRAYING FOR GOD'S WILL 1 Samuel 1:13 Now Hannah spoke in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard. Therefore Eli thought she was drunk.
  4. RUTH KEPT FOLLOWING GOD'S WAY Ruth 1:16 But Ruth said: "Entreat me not to leave you, Or to turn back from following after you; For wherever you go, I will go; And wherever you lodge, I will lodge; Your people shall be my people, And your God, my God.
  5. MARY KEPT TREASURING GOD'S WORD Luke 2:19 But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. ( New International Version)
  6. LOIS KEPT TRAINING GOD'S CHILD 2 Timothy 1:5 when I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded is in you also. 2 Timothy 3:15 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.

### **How Can I Love My Mother?**

How can we really love our mothers? Just a few action items to do on the way home today:

1. **Let them make mistakes** (Mary at the wedding in Cana; John 2:1-4) Moms aren't perfect, just about though. They fail like we all do. But God is only concerned about two things: your response to His Word and how you finish up. Mary responded wonderfully to God's Word in Luke 1:38. Mary stayed with the Lord to the end Acts 1:14, and church history confirm that..
2. **Let them work through their grief** (Mary sword pierce soul; Luke 2:34-35 Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother: "This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, 35 so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too." (NIV)

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- Part of life is pain. Part of motherhood is being so knit to your children their lives pierce your like a sword.
  - Things never turn out like we think at first they will. Sometimes they get better, sometimes they worsen. We need to live in the refreshing and liberating reality of God's Word.
  - Let's start with the facts. There was no perfect family mentioned in the Bible. Not Mary and Joseph's. No, their boys wanted Jesus done in. Yes, when the heat was on and the leaders were plotting against His life, those brothers sent Him into the fire! John 7:1-5 After this, Jesus went around in Galilee, purposely staying away from Judea because the Jews there were waiting to take his life. 2 But when the Jewish Feast of Tabernacles was near, 3 Jesus' brothers said to him, "You ought to leave here and go to Judea, so that your disciples may see the miracles you do. 4 No one who wants to become a public figure acts in secret. Since you are doing these things, show yourself to the world." 5 For even his own brothers did not believe in him. (NIV). Certainly an imperfect family. We know James and Jude changed, but we are not sure about the others.
  - Let's stop expectations of perfection. If all your children follow the Lord you are blessed. If all do not, God understands. He has seen it in the lives of all His children from Eden onward.
  - Need I mention the families of Adam, Abraham, Eli, Samuel, David and so on? The only perfect parents in the Bible, had no children that we know of, like Paul and the apostles.
3. **Let them live on in our words** (Mary Luke 1; tell about them) That is what God does! Look at the Bible. The wonders of Mary, the devotion of Hannah, the care of Jacobed Moses' mom, all remain. Every time I hear about Monica mother of Augustine, or Susanna Wesley mother of John and Charles, and you who faithfully love your children, pray for them and teach them about the Lord . . . the influence of a distant life is touching mine today.
4. **Let them know how they touched our lives** Proverbs 31:28 Her children arise and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her: (NIV) Hannah was in Mary's family tradition and so she spoke of her, keeping her life at work. The Bible says in Hebrews that one who lives a life for God lives on by their life testifying about God's grace. Today before you get to the car if your mom is with you think of a way she has touched your life. Maybe it is her loving smile, her gentle voice, maybe it is the soft yet strong touch of her hands. Can you let her know how her prayers or phone calls or letters have touched you? How about her cooking great meals, sewing those buttons, cleaning your room or always having a loving shoulder to cry on? Surely this is only the start. Not just today should you call and tell her, do it all throughout the year. Rise up and call her blessed!

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## Godly Women and Mothers

### WFF: Message Eight (930516AM)

Mark 14: 3-10. It's just a day before the end of Christ in his earthly ministry. On this night before that long last supper/betrayal night, one of the most touching scenes from the ministry of Christ occurs.

A love filled woman, driven by gratitude, smashes a jar containing her life savings and lavishes it upon Jesus. What a moment to see ... Haven't you wished you might have been there to see, hear, smell and feel such love? And haven't we all wished we could have done the same? We love Jesus so ... And to lavish with selfless abandon a priceless treasure would be our desire. Its mine and I'm sure it is yours this morning. The song writer has captured this moment in these words:

*Such love constrains me to answer his call follow his leading and give him my all...*

The good news this morning is that we can offer a similar gift to the Lord Jesus Christ today. In fact Peter tells us that god is face to face now with us and is waiting for it.

Now turn with me to 1 Peter 3:4 lets read it. What is the context of this gift we can freely give to God? It's in the context of our study of the biblical family. Last time we saw:

#### **THE PRIORITY OF THE BIBLICAL FAMILY: PASS ON THE TRUTH**

Today we continue with our family series and see the pattern for the biblical family: today= a godly woman next= a godly man finally= godly children:

Peter, nearing the end of his ministry writes for God this inspired snapshot of what a gorgeous woman in God's sight looks like. Its a timeless, never out of style, supra-cultural absolute. This is what a woman of god has always looked like. But watch out it is very different from the woman of the nineties, the woman of vogue, cosmopolitan, Victorian and so on. It cuts against the grain of culture and society. Well, what does god say a woman of godly virtue is to be? He gives a four part look:

1. V. 1-2 in her actions she lines up with god's plan for the church and the home. Thus, she is submissive.
2. V. 3 in her adornment she looks like a woman in whom the holy spirit dwells, thus she is modest.
3. V.4 in her attitude she longs to offer god what he is looking for. Thus, she is gentle and quiet.
4. V.5-6 in her attention she is focused on the home. Thus, she is feminine.

Now, let's go thru these verses and see the Word of God explaining these truths.

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I. V. 1-2 in her actions she lines up with god's plan for the church and the home. Thus, she is submissive. "observe"= a Greek word that speaks of peering intently at an athletic event"

II. V. 3 in her adornment she looks like a woman in whom the holy spirit dwells, thus she is modestly "braiding hair" = the roman world custom of gold, gems and so on in towering displays of wealth. "putting on"= the only New Testament ref to the repeated changing of clothes to show great possessions. F.b. Meyer "the one law is to dress as becomes the station in which he has placed us, and in such a way as not to attract notice to ourselves."

III. v. 4 in her attitude she longs to offer god what he is looking for. Thus, she is gentle and quiet. The seven characteristics of Titus 2:3-5 distinguish what a godly women is like:

- She loves her husband= this is not agapao love that does the right thing no matter what one's feelings are. This is phileo, the word describing the emotion of love. It speaks of a friendship. And, in this era it was even if she had no choice about him
- She loves her children=this means positive feelings about them even if she is only to bear her unsaved husband an heir...
- Sober minded=balanced
- Chaste=self restraint, purity
- A worker at home=priority is at home
- Kind=see the 1 Tim 5:9-10 list below.
- Submissive=voluntary acceptance of her divinely ordained role to her husband. See getz quote.
- Why? That the word of god not be dishonored by Christians saying who cares what it says.

IV. v. 5-6 in her attention she is focused on the home. Thus,

- She is feminine.
- \*"obeyed"=to listen to or attend another"
- First Timothy 5:9-10 lists seven qualifications for a woman of god:
  - Pure= one man sort of woman
  - Faithful= reputation for good works
  - Compassionate= nourished children= age of the abandoned child, orphans as well as own
  - Loving=hospitable to strangers=inns notoriously filthy, expensive and immoral
  - Humble= washed feet of saints
  - Bold = helped those in trouble= Christians illegal?
  - Focused = devoted to good works

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## No Regret Families

### WFF: Message Nine (011112PM)

When your life is done, and you look back those last few weeks or months that you have before cancer, or heart or respiratory problems overtake you – will you regret these days of your marriage and family? Will you be saddened when you remember these days? Will you be saddened when you see what your children are doing? Or will these have been the greatest years of your life? I think the choice is yours. Where are you headed in your marriage and as a family tonight? You will never get to anywhere you are not headed right now!

### **DO YOU KNOW THAT A NO REGRET MARRIAGE AND FAMILY IS A WONDERFUL BLESSING FROM THE LORD?**

2 Timothy 4:6-7 For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. 7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.

Look with me at Ps. 127-128 where we find the inspired sketch of the beautiful stages of God's work at growing a wonderful marriage and family. As we look, ask yourself: Is this what I want? Is this what I have? Is this worth changing areas of my personal life to accommodate God's Word and my response?

#### **Psalm 127:1-2 A NO REGRET FAMILY IS CAREFUL TO LAY A GODLY**

**FOUNDATION:** Unless the Lord builds the house, They labor in vain who build it; Unless the Lord guards the city, The watchman stays awake in vain. 2 It is vain for you to rise up early, To sit up late, To eat the bread of sorrows; For so He gives His beloved sleep.

#### **Psalm 127:3-5 A NO REGRET FAMILY IS CAREFUL TRUST GOD FOR BLESSED**

**FRUITFULNESS:** Behold, children are **a heritage from the Lord**, The fruit of the womb is a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, So are **the children of one's youth**. Happy is the man who has his quiver full of them; They shall not be ashamed, But shall speak with their enemies in the gate.

**Psalm 128:1-4 A NO REGRET FAMILY ENJOYS A HAPPY FAMILY LIFE:** Blessed is every one who fears the Lord, Who walks in His ways. When you eat the labor of your hands, You shall be happy, and it shall be well with you. Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine In the very heart of your house, Your children like olive plants All around your table. Behold, thus shall the man be blessed Who fears the Lord.

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Psalm 128:5-6 **A NO REGRET FAMILY ENJOYS THE FULFILLMENT OF A GODLY FAMILY THAT IS SATISFYING IN OLD AGE:** The Lord bless you out of Zion, And may you see the good of Jerusalem All the days of your life. Yes, may you see your children's children. Peace be upon Israel! And as the Apostle John said at the end of his life in 3 John 4 that the supreme earthly joy we can ever experience is when we see our family following the Lord! "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth."

Quite a promise -- what an opportunity to have such a rare and precious home. And that is exactly what the Lord offers to us this evening.

### **WHAT IS THE END RESULT OF NO REGRET MARRIAGES AND FAMILIES?**

There are few words that can describe the sheer delights of a marriage as God designed it to be. The Lord planned for His people to have marriages described as:

- joyful rivers of intoxicating blessings (Proverbs 5:18-19),
- fruitful vines that delightfully grow around our lives (Psalm 128:3),
- such wonderful attraction that seven years of hard labor waiting for this is like a moment (Jacob in Genesis 29:20),
- goodness and favor from the Lord (Proverbs 18:22), and
- a companion of our youth (Malachi 2:14-15) to whom we make a life long covenant to;
- and enjoy so much we "sport" (Genesis 26:8) with them!

All of us here tonight blessed in our marriages and families can testify what God's Word describes is exactly what we who have followed the Lord have experienced.

- A Biblical or a no regret marriage and family is just a small snapshot of the delights of Heaven.
- A Biblical or a no regret marriage and family is just a living portrait of the perfect love of Jesus.
- A Biblical or a no regret marriage and family is just a traveling demonstration of the way the Lord works on earth.

Winston Churchill<sup>[1]</sup> once attended a formal banquet in London at which the attending dignitaries were asked the question, "If you could not be who you are, who would you like to be?" Naturally, everyone was curious as to what Churchill, seated next to his beloved Clemmie, would say. When it finally came to be Churchill's turn, the old man, who was the dinner's last respondent to the question, rose and gave his answer. "If I could not be who I am, I would most like to be" —

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here he paused to take his wife's hand — "Lady Churchill's second husband." The old boy made some points that night. But his comments also apply to everyone of us this evening who has a no regret marriage and family.

## **WHERE IS YOUR MARRIAGE AND YOUR FAMILY HEADED THIS EVENING?**

Our marriages, if unattended, begin to slowly decline in closeness, intimacy, fruitfulness, and blessing. To illustrate this several years ago, the *Saturday Evening Post* published an article entitled: "The Seven Ages of the Married Cold." It revealed the reaction of a husband to his wife's colds during their first seven years of marriage. It went something like this:

**The first year:** "Sugar dumpling, I'm really worried about my baby girl. You've got a bad snuffle, and there's no telling about these things with all this strep throat going around. I'm putting you in the hospital this afternoon for a general checkup and a good rest. I know the food's lousy, but I'll be bringing your meals in from Rossini's. I've already got it all arranged with the floor superintendent."

**The second year:** "Listen, darling, I don't like the sound of that cough. I called Doc Miller and asked him to rush over here. Now you go to bed like a good girl, please? Just for papa."

**The third year:** "Maybe you'd better lie down, honey; nothing like a little rest when you feel lousy. I'll bring you something to eat. Have you got any canned soup?"

**The fourth year:** "Now look, dear, be sensible. After you've fed the kids, washed the dishes, and finished the floor, you'd better lie down."

**The fifth year:** "Why don't you take a couple of aspirin?"

**The sixth year:** "I wish you'd just gargle or something, instead of sitting around all evening barking like a seal!"

**The seventh year:** "For Pete's sake, stop sneezing! Are you trying to give me pneumonia?!" The decline of marriage as seen through the common cold. A funny look at a not-so-funny reality.

## **THE BIBLE HOLDS THE KEYS TO HOW TO HAVE A NO REGRETS FAMILY!**

TONIGHT WHY NOT DECIDE TO BE A DAD<sup>i[2]</sup> AND HUSBAND WITH NO REGRETS

One of my greatest joys in life is to have a family.

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One of the most challenging responsibilities I have ever had is leading and guiding that family.

Men, as we sit here tonight with our wives and enjoy this meal and the fellowship around the tables, may I challenge you to Finish the Course with joy that God has given you?

Paul confidently said at the end of his life that he had NO REGRETS.

Sins? Yes, but he was a saved sinner.

Scars? Yes, he had murdered Christians and so on.

But regrets? NO! He finished the course of his life with joy.

So that tells me that all of us here can by God's grace finish what ever the Lord has given us to do in life with NO REGRETS!

**A No Regrets Dad and Husband includes his wife in envisioning the future. 1**

Peter 3:7 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.

**A No Regrets Dad and Husband seeks the consultation of his wife on all major financial decisions. 1**

Peter 3:7 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.

**A No Regrets Dad and Husband encourages his wife's personal growth in her personal life. 1**

Peter 3:7 Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.

**A No Regrets Dad and Husband prays with his wife on a regular basis. 1**

Peter 3:7 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. Also Ephesians 5:26 that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word,

**A No Regrets Dad and Husband accepts spiritual responsibility for his**

**family.** 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.

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**A No Regrets Dad and Husband is willing to say "I'm sorry" and "forgive me" to his family.** Mark 9:35 And He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, "If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all." Mark 10:44 And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all. 1 John 1:7 But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.

**A No Regrets Dad and Husband discusses household responsibilities with his wife and makes sure these are fairly distributed.** 1 Corinthians 14:40 Let all things be done decently and in order.

**A No Regrets Dad and Husband follows through with commitments he has made to his wife.** Psalm 15:4 In whose eyes a vile person is despised, But he honors those who fear the Lord; He who swears to his own hurt and does not change;

**A No Regrets Dad and Husband anticipates the different states his marriage will pass through.** Remember the model of Psalm 127-128?

**A No Regrets Dad and Husband likewise, starts early training his children in submission, anticipating the stages his children will pass through.** Luke 2:51-52 Then He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them, but His mother kept all these things in her heart. 52 And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.

**A No Regrets Dad and Husband frequently tells his wife what he likes about her.** Proverbs 31:28 Her children rise up and call her blessed; Her husband also, and he praises her:

**A No Regrets Dad and Husband provides financially for his family's basic living expenses.** 1 Timothy 5:8 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.

**A No Regrets Dad and Husband deals with distractions so that he can talk with his wife and family.** Song of Solomon 2:14-17 "O my dove, in the clefts of the rock, In the secret places of the cliff, Let me see your face, Let me hear your voice; For your voice is sweet, And your face is lovely." 15 Catch us the foxes, The little foxes that spoil the vines, For our vines have tender grapes. 16 My beloved is mine, and I am his, He feeds his flock among the lilies. 17 Until the day breaks And the shadows flee away, Turn, my beloved, And be like a gazelle, Or a young stag Upon the mountains of Bethel.

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**A No Regrets Dad and Husband initiates meaningful family traditions.**

Deuteronomy 6:9 You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates; 6:14 You shall not go after other gods, the gods of the peoples who are all around you; 7:25-26 You shall burn the carved images of their gods with fire; you shall not covet the silver or gold that is on them, nor take it for yourselves, lest you be snared by it; for it is an abomination to the Lord your God. 26 Nor shall you bring an abomination into your house, lest you be doomed to destruction like it. You shall utterly detest it and utterly abhor it, for it is an accursed thing. Psalm 106:35 But they mingled with the Gentiles And learned their works;

**A No Regrets Dad and Husband initiates fun outings for the family on a monthly basis, or even more often.** Mark 3:14 Then He appointed twelve, that they might be with Him and that He might send them out to preach,

**A No Regrets Dad and Husband takes the time to give his children practical instruction about life, which in turn gives them confidence with their peers.**

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. Nehemiah 8:8 So they read distinctly from the book, in the Law of God; and they gave the sense, and helped them to understand the reading.

**A No Regrets Dad and Husband goes over the upcoming week with his wife to clarify their schedule and anticipate any pressure points.** Psalm 133:1

Behold, how good and how pleasant it is For brethren to dwell together in unity! Ephesians 4:26-27 “Be angry, and do not sin”: do not let the sun go down on your wrath, 27 nor give place to the devil. James 3:15-16 This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic. 16 For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there. 1 Peter 3:7 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.

**A No Regrets Dad and Husband keeps the family out of debt.** Romans 13:8 Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law.

**A No Regrets Dad and Husband lets his wife and children into the interior of his life.** 1 Corinthians 11:1 Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ. James 5:16

Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. 1 John 1:7 But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.

**A No Regrets Dad and Husband makes sure he and his wife have drawn up a will and arranged a well-conceived plan for their children in case of death.**

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Luke 16:10 He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much.

**A No Regrets Dad and Husband praises his wife often in public.** Proverbs 31:23 Her husband is known in the gates, when he sitteth among the elders of the land. 31:28 Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her.

**A No Regrets Dad and Husband explains sex to each child in a way that gives him or her a wholesome perspective.** Proverbs 5:1-3 My son, attend unto my wisdom, and bow thine ear to my understanding: 2 That thou mayest regard discretion, and that thy lips may keep knowledge. 3 For the lips of a strange woman drop as an honeycomb, and her mouth is smoother than oil: Proverbs 7:1,10-11 My son, keep my words, and lay up my commandments with thee. 10 And, behold, there met him a woman with the attire of an harlot, and subtil of heart. 11 (She is loud and stubborn; her feet abide not in her house:

**A No Regrets Dad and Husband takes the lead in establishing with his wife clear and well-reasoned convictions.** 2 Peter 3:18 But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen. Proverbs 5:18 Let thy fountain be blessed: and rejoice with the wife of thy youth. Malachi 2:14 Yet ye say, Wherefore? Because the LORD hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously: yet is she thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant.

**A No Regrets Dad and Husband watches and learns from godly of men who are dedicated to improving their skills as husbands and fathers.** Philippians 3:17 Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample.

**A No Regrets Dad and Husband provides time and encouragement for his wife to pursue personal interests.** Proverbs 31:11-16 The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil. 12 She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life. 6 She considereth a field, and buyeth it: with the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard.

So, what are we to do to protect our marriages and families? Avoid at all costs being irresponsible!

1. A MARRIAGE WITH REGRETS HAS AN IRRESPONSIBLE PARTNER. This husband or wife is nothing but a child in search of a mommy, and he seems to have found one in their marriage. They are thoroughly self-centered, but manages to appear to others as a loving and devoted partner.

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2. A MARRIAGE WITH REGRETS HAS AN EMOTIONALLY DETACHED PARTNER.

This husband or wife is one of the most stable and even-tempered people most people know. They are often asked to serve on the boards of numerous organizations because of their organized mind and methodical way of making decisions. But they are about as detached and emotionally unavailable as a married person can get.

3. A MARRIAGE WITH REGRETS HAS A DICTATORIAL PARTNER. Their idea of marriage means that nothing happens without their approval. Whenever someone dares to question their decisions, they resort to intimidation tactics and then go into a blind rage.

4. A MARRIAGE WITH REGRETS HAS A WORKAHOLIC PARTNER. This husband or wife never stops working, their endless tasks are never left either mentally or emotionally. They live under constant pressure and often spray their family with explosions of frustration.

5. A MARRIAGE WITH REGRETS HAS A SPIRITUALLY APATHETIC PARTNER. This husband or wife is a believer and a church attender. But beyond that, they remain unresponsive to spiritual things; they never encourage genuine spiritual nurturing in their home. And that void blocks an intimacy that spiritually shared life always produces.

## ARE YOU FOCUSED ON THE MODEL OF A NO REGRET MARRIAGE AND FAMILY?

**LEAD HER:** By that I mean a husband who leads and a wife who follows. A Christ reflecting husband gives the stability and direction of a spiritual leader.

**NEED HER:** By that I mean a husband who expresses to his wife how much he needs her and a wife who responds. A Christ reflecting husband tells his wife she is meeting vital needs in his life and work that no other woman can meet. Certainly, an emotionally flat, chronically dull marriage signals the need for positive steps toward building intimacy, injecting new life into the relationship. Recently I read of a young husband who said with in a note of despair, "My wife and I have already lost touch with each other." It was a graphic description of their lack of intimacy, for to experience intimacy is to *touch* — emotionally, physically, mentally, and spiritually.

**CHERISH HER:** By that I mean a husband who cherishes his wife and a wife who recognizes it. A Christ reflecting husband allows his wife to see and hear that he cherishes her and delights in her as a person. Here are some of the strands that make up the bond of intimacy between a husband and wife. They are given in no particular order, and you may have others of your own to add. A Biblical marriage as described and designed by God has physical touching of an affectionate nature;

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there will also be honest and vulnerably shared feelings; this leads to increased closeness and open communication and honesty; in the process of discussion there will be intellectual agreement on major issues; which fosters spiritual harmony; which encourages sensitive appreciation of your mate's physical and emotional responses; this strengthens the discovery of similar values held; so that there can be even more imparted secrets; which leads to a life long delight in a helper God designed to have all of your life in whom you have genuine understanding of their goals, plans, desires, feeling, and fears!

**PROTECT HER:** A Christ reflecting husband shows that he understands his wife by protecting her in areas of limitations.

**NOTICE HER:** A Christ reflecting husband enjoys setting quality time aside for intimate conversation with his wife so she knows that he is aware of her presence even when his mind is on other matters.

**SACRIFICE FOR HER:** A Christ reflecting husband is willing to serve his wife in encouraging and regular ways.

**FEED HER:** A Christ reflecting husband can be heard reading the Word of God to his wife. He is the one who initiates God's Word into the cycle of daily life.

**LOVE HER:** A Christ reflecting husband understands that one of the most vital aspects of marriage is *intimacy*. And that is the key to the great joy of marriage life which is sex. Always remember that sex is beautiful and godly because the Lord designed it, commanded it, and blesses it. The Lord even inspired Solomon to use sexual terms to help us understand the beauty of Christ's love for His Bride. If you have a wrong view of marital sexual relationships you will have an unsatisfying marriage, and unfruitful personal life, and an unfulfilled family. A passage to understand how to really love your wife is: "When a man hath taken a new wife, he shall not go out to war, neither shall he be charged with any business: *but* he shall be free at home one year, and shall cheer up his wife which he hath taken" (Deuteronomy 24:5). This is often called the "newlywed verse." Note the "cheer up," which means "discover how to please her." It is essential to remember that marital dullness is *not* confined to middle and later years; indeed it can and does occur in the first year of marriage and sometimes sadly, it stays that way.

So, when your life is done, and you look back those last few weeks or months that you have before cancer, or heart or respiratory problems overtake you – will you regret these days of your marriage and family? Will you be saddened at what you neglected when you remember these days? Will you be saddened at what your legacy through your family has become when you see what your children are doing? Or will these have been the greatest years of your life?

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I think the choice is yours. Where are you headed in your marriage and as a family tonight? You will never get to anywhere you are not headed right now! 3 John 4 I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.

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# Will Your Teen Graduate in Godliness?

WFF: Message Ten (020119AM)

As Jesus lived at home He grew. Luke 2:52 And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men. And when He left home He graduated from all He was to learn in that setting. Is that what will happen in our homes?

The Oxford American Dictionary defines the word graduate as “the successful completion of a recognized course”. And graduation as the “ceremony for a successful completion of a recognized course or a mark of measurement”.

Of course we graduate because there is a set of requirements that have been laid down by others for the courses needed to finish what we call High School. This is just another step that started in Preschool, then Elementary School, Grade School, Middle School, then High School, and leading toward Vocational School, Junior College, University, Graduate School, and finally Post-Graduate School. Right?

Here is the current Oklahoma Requirements for High School Graduation By the State Board of Education Regulations, for students who will graduate from high school in the 2000-2001 school year.

- 2 Science
- 2 Social Studies (Includes American History and Oklahoma History)
- 2 The Arts (Includes Visual Art and General Music)
- 8 Electives
- 21 Total

Most of us hope, plan, and expect our children to graduate when they get to 12th grade. But have we been careful to check and fulfill all the requirements God has for them to graduate SPIRITUALLY into the next level in your lives?

Here are some of the unchanging Requirements by your Heavenly Father for High School Graduation,

By the Heavenly Board of Education Regulations,

Recorded forever in His Word,

For students who will graduate from the school of being raised by a godly MOM AND DAD in your home!

**SUBMISSIVENESS:** Psalm 32:8-9 I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will guide you with My eye.9 Do not be like the horse or like the mule, Which have

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no understanding, Which must be harnessed with bit and bridle, Else they will not come near you. What should we be learning while at home?

- What is my goal for my teen in light of God's Word ? While living with my parents at home I need to learn to obey their instructions and do what I know they expect of me, even when it is not mentioned[1]. This helped me to not force you into repeated reminders, which I sometimes call nagging.

**GRATITUDE:** 1 Thessalonians 5:18 In everything give thanks, for this is the will of God, in Christ Jesus for you! Philippians 2:14 Do all things without complaining and disputing,

- What is my goal for my teen in light of God's Word ? While living with my parents at home I need to learn to not grumble or complain when I participate in my share of the duties because I will remind myself of what a great thing it is to have a family a home, clothes, food, running water, electric lights, and central heating in a world where millions of teenagers have none of these.

**SERVANTHEARTEDNESS:** 1 Peter 2:21-24 For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: 22 “Who committed no sin, Nor was deceit found in His mouth”; 23 who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously; 24 who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness— by whose stripes you were healed.

- What is my goal for my teen in light of God's Word ? While living with my parents at home I need to learn to stop when I think your demands are unfair, and choose to move forward to do them first, and after showing an obedient attitude, I will ask if we can talk. Then I will explain my side and try to understand yours.

**PEACEMAKING:** Isaiah 32:17 The work of righteousness will be peace, And the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance forever.

- What is my goal for my teen in light of God's Word ? While living with my parents at home I need to learn to not stonewall you and give you the silent treatment, which I dislike when my friends do it to me. Instead, if I am discouraged and want to be left alone, I will say; "I'm sorry; I don't feel like talking now: Can we talk later? I'm not mad. I just need to be alone.

**HUMILITY:** James 5:16 Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.

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- What is my goal for my teen in light of God's Word ? While living with my parents at home I need to learn to respond when I do something wrong and let you down. My response should be to apologize sincerely with words that you can hear. Something like, "Mom, I'm sorry I didn't pick up the pile of clothes."

**LOVING:** Romans 12:9ff (Message) Love from the center of who you are; don't fake it. Run for dear life from evil; hold on for dear life to good. Be good friends who love deeply; practice playing second fiddle. Don't burn out; keep yourselves fueled and aflame. Be alert servants of the Master, cheerfully expectant. Don't quit in hard times; pray all the harder. Help needy Christians; be inventive in hospitality. Bless your enemies; no cursing under your breath. Laugh with your happy friends when they're happy; share tears when they're down. Get along with each other; don't be stuck-up. Make friends with nobodies; don't be the great somebody. Don't hit back; discover beauty in everyone. If you've got it in you, get along with everybody.

- What is my goal for my teen in light of God's Word ? While living with my parents at home I need to learn to call you by affectionate family titles like "Mom," or "Dad." I won't let other kids pressure me into calling you nothing or calling you something disrespectful as though true affection were embarrassing or childish.

**THANKFULNESS:** Romans 1:21b "...neither were they thankful..."; 2 Timothy 3:2b "...unthankful, unholy..."; 1 Thessalonians 5:18 in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

- What is my goal for my teen in light of God's Word ? While living with my parents at home I need to learn to say thank you daily, again and again, for the ordinary things you do for me. I will not take them for granted as though you were my slave.

**TRANSPARENCY:** 1 John 1:7-8 But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. 8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

- What is my goal for my teen in light of God's Word ? While living with my parents at home I need to learn to express my feelings. Both the positive ones (like happiness, pity; excitement, and sympathy) and the negative ones (like anger, fear, loneliness, and discouragement). This is because I have learned that unshared feelings lead to estrangement, coldness, and even more loneliness and discouragement.

**HAPPINESS:** Proverbs 17:22 A cheerful heart does good like medicine, but a broken spirit makes one sick. Ephesians 4:32 And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.

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- What is my goal for my teen in light of God's Word ? While living with my parents at home I need to learn to laugh with the family and not at the family I will especially laugh when my little brother or sister tells a simple joke with expectant excitement.

**SALTINESS:** Colossians 4:6 Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.

- What is my goal for my teen in light of God's Word ? While I lived at home I learned to give two compliments for every criticism. And every criticism was aimed to help someone improve, not just belittle or cut them down.

**GROWINGNESS:** Deuteronomy 4:29 But from there you will seek the Lord your God, and you will find Him if you seek Him with all your heart and with all your soul. Isaiah 64:7 And there is no one who calls on Your name, Who stirs himself up to take hold of You; For You have hidden Your face from us, And have consumed us because of our iniquities., Isaiah 26:3 You will keep him in perfect peace, Whose mind is stayed on You, Because he trusts in You.

- What is my goal for my teen in light of God's Word ? While I lived at home I learned to enter into family devotions and treat Bible reading and prayer with respect and do my part to help others in the family enjoy God's Word : When I don't feel spiritually strong, I will pray about this as a personal need rather than pouring my spiritual problems on others as a glass of cold water. I will remember that confessed weakness knits hearts together.

**KINDNESS:** Romans 12:17-19 Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. Ephesians 4:32

- What is my goal for my teen in light of God's Word ? While I lived at home I learned to not return evil for evil or try to justify my meanness because somebody treated me meanly first.

**SPIRITUAL ROOTEDNESS:** Jeremiah 15:16 Your words were found, and I ate them, And Your word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart; For I am called by Your name, O Lord God of hosts. Jeremiah 17:5-8 Thus says the Lord: "Cursed is the man who trusts in man And makes flesh his strength, Whose heart departs from the Lord. 6 For he shall be like a shrub in the desert, And shall not see when good comes, But shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, In a salt land which is not inhabited. 7 "Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, And whose hope is the Lord. 8 For he shall be like a tree planted by the waters, Which spreads out its roots by the river, And will not fear when

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heat comes; But its leaf will be green, And will not be anxious in the year of drought, Nor will cease from yielding fruit.

- What is my goal for my teen in light of God's Word ? While I lived at home I learned to read my Bible and pray every day; even if it is only a verse and a brief call for help. I learned that teens cannot live by bread alone but only by every word that comes out of the mouth of God.

**TRUSTWORTHINESS:** Psalm 15:4 In whose eyes a vile person is despised, But he honors those who fear the Lord; He who swears to his own hurt and does not change; Matthew 5:37 But let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No.' For whatever is more than these is from the evil one.

- What is my goal for my teen in light of God's Word ? While I lived at home I learned to come home at the time we agreed on. If something happens to stop me, I learned I should call and explain and ask your guidance.

**GRACIOUSNESS:** Matthew 25:44-45 "Then they also will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to You?' 45 Then He will answer them, saying, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.'

- What is my goal for my teen in light of God's Word ? While I lived at home I learned to greet our guests with courtesy and respect and try to make them glad they came.

**TRUTHFULNESS:** Ephesians 4:25 Therefore, putting away lying, "Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor," for we are members of one another.

- What is my goal for my teen in light of God's Word ? While I lived at home I learned to always tell the truth so that you can trust me and give me more and more freedom as I get older.

**FOREVERNESS:** 1 Thessalonians 2:19 For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Is it not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming?

- What is my goal for my teen in light of God's Word ? While I lived at home I learned that I should pray for you as long as I live, that we will be united in faith and love, not only now in this world, but for all of eternity in the kingdom of God.

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## Three Keys to a Godward Home

WFF: Message Eleven (000911PM)

A Godward home is a peaceful home, thus we have the key to enjoying Life and Home schooling!

Loving God supremely, that was perhaps the greatest mandate God's Word has ever given to us as believers. In Matthew 22:37-39

*Jesus said to him, " 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' 38 "This is the first and great commandment.*

That was Christ's answer when someone asked Him what was the greatest commandment could be.

For a moment, look with me at the context of that portion of God's Word. It is found in Deuteronomy 6:5-8

*"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. 6 "And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. 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. 8 "You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes.*

There it is. There is our mandate as parents, as individuals, and as believers.

A Godward Life that gives to God the first place He deserves. How do we do it?

Over these past few weeks at Tulsa Bible Church I have shared some of the core beliefs that Bonnie and I share that are shaping our family. May I summarize them in three areas?

I believe there are three Keys To A Godward Home: **Solitude, Simplicity, And Surrender**

A Godward Home Is A Peaceful Home, Thus We Have The Key To Enjoying Life And Home schooling!

How do you plan, prepare, and pursue this kind of life and home?

- **Solitude is resting through a Sabbath cycle**
- **Simplicity is detaching from a worldly lifestyle**

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- **Surrender is denying our selves each day via fasting!**

❖ **SURRENDER:** the pathway of self denial through fasting

Finding and staying on the pathway of surrender is paramount for us because our culture[1] has reared around us a generation of strong-willed, belligerent, independent young men and women. Surrender is not a word in their vocabulary.

Too bad, since it is the key that unlocks the vault of God's best and deepest treasures. He patiently waits for us to yield, to quit fighting Him, to allow His plan to run its course, to turn to Him for our security and significance. As He witnesses our doing that, he begins to reveal Himself and His will in greater depth.

*Titus 2:11-13 For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, 12 teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, 13 looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ,*

God's Word says we must be Mastered only by Christ and nothing else. The evidence of being brought under the power of something is that we need it to make it through our day. What do you need to make it through a day? That will be a list of the items that have cast their influential mastering power across your life.

What pushes out your hunger for experiencing the intimacy of fellowship with the Lord in your life? Do you seek food first? Entertainment first? The latest news first? The status of your investments first? The web and your computer first? The television, radio, music first? Your collections, investments, shopping first? Your sports, body building, health needs first? All of these are alone good and worthy of time but not at God's expense, He is to be sought first and deepest of all!

Biblical Fasting uncovers and exposes what ever it is that has mastered our lives in place of Christ.

*1 Corinthians 6:12 All things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.*

The more we experience intimacy in fellowship with Jesus Christ the more we hunger for Him, and the greater our longings become to be with Him in Heaven. Then we see our focus in our lives begins to change, the more we long for our Great God and Savior:

- The Greater becomes our Looking for our Bridegroom's Return from Heaven
- The Greater becomes our Hating any beachhead of sin in our lives,
- The Greater becomes our Investing our time in Christ's Body, His Church,

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- The Greater becomes our seeking the Evangelizing of Lost People around the World,
  - The Greater becomes our Sensing of Satan's Lies in the Media and Culture of this World,
  - The Greater becomes our Asking for God's Kingdom to Come on Earth,
  - The Greater becomes our Walking each day Pleasing God,
  - The Greater becomes our desiring to be filled with the Knowledge of God's Will

And on and on it goes in our lives. Actually, anything less than this growing surrender to the Lord through spiritual hungering and thirsting after God, means that our appetite has been ruined through all the little things that have filled us up. It means we have neglected the greatest food - Our Father and His Kingdom for the lesser food of His gifts in life. That spells spiritual famine, weakness, and failure.

Jesus warned that a great enemy to His children would be "desires for other things" (Mark 4:19). Jesus left us with the only weapon that will lead us into a victorious deepening hunger for intimacy and daily fellowship with our Creator. That weapon is Biblical fasting and we can measure our hunger level for God by our hunger after those other things. God is only glorified by seeking Him first!

*Matthew 6:33 "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you."*

*Philippians 3:8 Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ*

Insightful author and pastor John Piper says, "The greatest enemy of hunger for God is not poison but apple pie. It is not the banquet of the wicked that dulls our appetite for Heaven, but endless nibbling at the table of the world. It is not the x-rated video, the prime time dribble of triviality we drink in every night. For all the evil Satan can do, when God describes what keeps us from the banquet of His love, it is a piece of land, a yoke of oxen, and a wife (Luke 14:18-20) The greatest adversary of love to God is not His enemies but His gifts. And the most deadly appetites are not for the poison of evil, but for the simple pleasures of earth. For when these replace an appetite for God Himself, the idolatry is scarcely recognizable, and almost incurable".[2]

Are you incurably hungering after God or this world? Are you incurably delighting in God's Word or trivial pursuits? The greatest destroyers of intimate hunger for God may be things that are good and right in their place like coffee and lawns and hobby and travel and retirement planning and mall walking and TV watching and computer mastering. But any that take God's first place, and become easier to turn to than God and His Word and His intimate communion, they are then deadly destroyers of our hungering and thirsting after God.

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❖ **SIMPLICITY:** the pathway of detaching from a worldly lifestyle

Jesus shared some revolutionizing words about this lifestyle of simplicity in Matthew 6:31-33

*Matthew 6:31-33 “Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’<sup>32</sup> “For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.<sup>33</sup> “But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.*

Tonight, if we are really honest, aren't most of our frustrations, fears, and troubles tied to things like cars, houses, bills, and so on? Let me draw from an old school of thought that has studied this concept. Listen to some ancient wisdom often unheard in our times. If what<sup>[3]</sup> we have we receive as a gift, and if what we have is to be cared for by God, and if what we have is available to others, then we will possess freedom from anxiety. Freedom from anxiety is characterized by three inner attitudes. This is the inward reality of simplicity.

1. To receive what we have as a gift from God is the first inner attitude of simplicity. We work but we know that it is not our work that gives us what we have. We live by grace even when it comes to “daily bread.”
  - We are dependent upon God for the simplest elements of life: air, water, sun.
  - What we have is not the result of our labor, but of the gracious care of God.
  - When we are tempted to think that what we own is the result of our personal efforts, it takes on a little drought or a small accident to show us once again how utterly dependent we are for everything.
2. To know that it is God's business, and not ours, to care for what we have is the second inner attitude of simplicity. God is able to protect what we possess. We can trust him. Does that mean that we should never take the keys out of the car or lock the door? Of course not. But we know that the lock on the door is not what protects the house. It is only common sense to take normal precautions, but if we believe that precaution itself protects us and our goods, we will be riddled with anxiety. There simply is no such thing as “burglar proof” precautions. Obviously, these matters are not restricted to possessions but include such things as our reputation and our employment. Simplicity means the freedom to trust God for these (and all) things.
3. To have our goods available to others marks the third inner attitude of simplicity. If our goods are not available to other believers when it is clearly right and good,

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then they are stolen goods. The reason we find such an idea so difficult is our fear of the future. We cling to our possessions rather than sharing them because we are anxious about tomorrow. But if we truly believe that God is who Jesus says he is, then we do not need to be afraid. When we come to see God as the almighty Creator and our loving Father, we can share because we know that he will care for us. If someone is in need, we are free to help them. Again, ordinary common sense will define the parameters of our sharing and save us from foolishness. When we are seeking first the kingdom of God, these three attitudes will characterize our lives. Taken together they define what Jesus means by “do not be anxious.” They comprise the inner reality of Christian simplicity. And we can be certain that when we live this way the “all these things” that are necessary to carry on human life adequately will be ours as well.

Now, what are the ways we cultivate this discipline of Simplicity? Here are the essentials that simplicity experts have gathered:

**First**, buy things for their usefulness rather than their status.

**Second**, reject anything that is producing an addiction in you.

**Third**, develop a habit of giving things away. De-accumulate! Masses of things that are not needed and they always complicate life. They must be sorted and stored and dusted and re-sorted and re-stored ad nauseam. Most of us could get rid of half our possessions without any serious sacrifice. We would do well to follow the counsel of Thoreau: “Simplify, simplify.”

**Fourth**, refuse to be propagandized by the custodians of modern gadgetry. Timesaving devices almost never save time.

**Fifth**, learn to enjoy things without owning them. Owning things is an obsession in our culture. If we own it, we feel it will give us more pleasure. The idea is an illusion. Many things in life can be enjoyed without possessing or controlling them. Share things. Enjoy the beach without feeling you have to buy a piece of it. Enjoy public parks and libraries.

**Sixth**, develop a deeper appreciation for the creation. Get close to the earth. Walk whenever you can. Listen to the birds. Enjoy the texture of grass and leaves. Smell the flowers. Marvel in the rich colors everywhere. Simplicity means to discover once again that “the earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof” (Ps. 24:1).

**Seventh**, look with a healthy skepticism at all “buy now, pay later” schemes. They are a trap and only deepen your bondage.

**Eighth**, shun anything that distracts you from seeking first the kingdom of God.

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❖ **SOLITUDE:** the pathway to resting through a Sabbath cycle

### Feasts of the Lord

Feast	Historical Aspect	Messianic Fulfillment	Spiritual Application (Halacha)
Passover (Pesach)	Israel's deliverance out of Egyptian bondage	Death of Yeshua on the tree	Repent(teshuvah) and trust by faith (emunah) in the shed blood of Yeshua.
Unleavened Bread (Hag HaMatzah)	The going out of Egypt	Burial of Yeshua	Sanctification and separation from evil represented by water immersion (mikvah).
First Fruits (Bikkurim)	Crossing the Red Sea	Resurrection of Yeshua	Walking (halacha) in newness of life.
Pentecost (Shavuot)	Giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai	Pouring out of the Holy Spirit(Ruach HaKodesh) on Shavuot	Immersion in the Holy Spirit(Ruach HaKodesh) and growing in faith(emunah) in The Lord (making spiritual aliyah).
Rosh HaShanah (Yom Teruah)	Blowing the shofar; Jewish New Year	The resurrection of the dead/rapture(Natzal) of believers	Hear(shema) the calling (shofar) of The Lord for our lives.
Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur)	Priest entered the Holy of Holies Cleansing of people's sins	The day of the Messiah's second coming	Yielding ourselves to The Lord so we may live (face to face) in His presence.
Tabernacles (Sukkot)	Entering the Promised Land Great rejoicing	The Messianic era /Millennium (Athid Lavo)	A daily rest (shabat) in the Messiah and having the rest (menuchah) of His Kingdom in our hearts.

The Bible[4] provides several powerful reasons for studying and understanding the seen festivals of the Messiah:

1. The feasts are in the Bible, and all the Bible is inspired by The Lord (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

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2. The feasts are a shadow of things to come that teach us about the Messiah (Colossians 2:16-17; Hebrews 10:1).
  3. The feasts are prophetic types and examples foreshadowing significant events in The Lord's plan of redemption (1 Corinthians 10:1-6, 11).
  4. The Lord gave the feasts so we could learn and understand God's plan of redemption for the world and our personal relationship to Him (Romans 15:4).
  5. The feasts, as part of the Torah (which means "instruction"), are as a schoolmaster or tutor that leads us to the Messiah (Galatians 3:24).
  6. The feasts will point to the Messiah and The Lord's plan for the world through the Messiah (Psalm [Tephillim] 40:6-8; Hebrews 10:7).
  7. Yeshua (Jesus) came to fulfill all that was written in the Old Testament (Tanach), which consists of three parts: the Torah, the prophets (Nevi'im), and the writings Ketuvim (personified by the Psalms) concerning Him (Luke 24:26-27, 44-45; John [Yochanan] 5:46-47).
  8. The feasts set forth the pattern of heavenly things on earth (Hebrews 8:1-2, 5; 9:8-9, 23; Exodus [Shemot] 25:8-9, 40; 26:30; Numbers [Bamidbar] 8:4; Ezekiel [Yechezkel] 43:1-6, 10-12).
  9. The Lord gives the natural to explain the spiritual (1 Corinthians 15:46-47).
  10. By studying the natural, we can understand the spiritual (1 Corinthians 2:9-13; 2 Corinthians 4:18).

Two ways we can share in some blessings of solitude: a Shabbat meal and Rosh Hashanah

### **What Is Rosh[5] Hashanah?**

The Hebrew word Rosh means "head" or "beginning." Hashanah means "the year." This name is used only once in the Old Testament. Ezekiel 40:1 says, "...at the beginning of the year..." The more common biblical name is "The Feast of Trumpets." This celebration of a new year is not in conflict with New Year's Day, January 1, which is our national holiday. Rather, it is intended to be a celebration marking a "spiritual" new year, a special time set apart for a new beginning with the Lord. It celebrates the Birthday of the World. Rosh Hashanah celebrates the birthday of the world - If you have young children, put candles on the Honey Cakes and let this be a birthday party for the world.

Talk about all of the ingredients it would take to make a proper cake. How big would it have to be? It would take all of the wheat from all of the wheat fields, all of the milk from all of the cows, all of the eggs from all of the chickens, etc. Don't forget the frosting! Let the stars be the candles on the giant birthday cake. Put on jackets and go outside together. Look up at all the little star candles and say "Happy Birthday" to the world. You will probably want to thank God together, for creation.

The Hebrew calendar is very old. It is believed that the counting of years originated with creation. There are a number of ways to count the months. One system begins the

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counting in the spring. Each month opens with the appearance of a new moon. Every time there is a new moon, a new month begins. Hebrew festivals are calculated on this lunar calendar. In keeping with tradition it is fitting that the seventh month is holy, just as the seventh day has always been honored. Therefore, the calendar begins with the seventh month.

In the Bible this day is called Yom Teruah, the Day of Sounding the Trumpet. “Speak to the sons of Israel, saying, ‘In the seventh month of the first of the month, you shall have a rest, a reminder by blowing of trumpets, a holy convocation” (Lev. 23:24). It is the beginning of ten days called the “High Holy Days,” or “Days of Awe.” Because of their meaning these days are also called Days of Repentance, Days of Admitting, Days of Returning. The observance concludes with Yom Kippur, the “Day of Atonement” (see Chapter 6).

**First**, it is a day to honor the kingship of God and His authority over creation.

**Secondly**, it is a Day of Remembrance.

The **third** thread refers to the revelation of God.

Preparation for Shabbat[6] actually begins early Friday afternoon. Since it is a holy day, the most festive linens and silverware decorate the dinner table. It is customary to serve the finest meal of the week on the evening of Shabbat to emphasize its special quality. Two candlesticks are set on the table, or in another prominent place. They symbolize the two-fold commandment to remember and sanctify. These candles are lit, according to rabbinic interpretation, eighteen minutes before sunset so that the act itself will not be considered work on the Sabbath. The Hebrew blessings are normally said by the woman of the house, though anyone may perform this duty. With a scarf covering her head, the woman lights the candles. She then circles her arms around in a motion as if to draw in the warmth of the light. Next she repeat the following blessings:

Barukh atah Adonai Elohenu melek ha-olam, asher  
kidshanu b'mitzvohtav v'tzi-vanu l'hadleek ner shel Shabbat.

Blessed art thou, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who  
has set us apart by your commandments and has  
commanded us to kindle the Sabbath lights.

At this point, the woman closes her eyes for a moment of silent prayer. With the candles lit, the family now says the blessing over the grape juice, which is in a special kiddush cup, a cup of sanctification. The fruit of the vine has always symbolized the joy of God's provisions in our everyday lives (Psalm 104:15). This may be a single cup or all those

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present at the table may have their own. As the cups are raised, the man of the house (if applicable) leads the group in the following blessing:

Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who  
brings forth bread from the earth.

The bread is usually broken by hand, not sliced with a knife. The idea is to symbolize the day when all weapons of war will be done away with at the coming of the Messiah (Isaiah 2:4). A portion of bread is shared with each member at the table. Some people salt the challah to symbolize the salt on the sacrifices in the Temple era. As the bread is shared by all, greetings of “Shabbat Shalom” (peaceful Sabbath) are given to one another, often with a kiss or hug. A final blessing is given before the actual meal the prayer over the children. The father places his hand on the head of his son and says:

May God make you like Ephraim and Manasseh (Genesis  
48:20).

The wife is also blessed, by reading aishet khayee the virtuous woman of Proverbs 31:10-31. Shabbat is meant to be a wonderful time of worship to the Lord God and a time of family sharing. The festival dinner is now served and leisurely table fellowship is enjoyed by all. For a change, no one is in a hurry. Even after dinner, many traditional z'mirot (songs) are sung, including the grace after dinner in Hebrew.

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## How to Be a Wonderful Dad

### WFF: Message Twelve (010617AM)

On my first Father's Day as I was serving on staff as a new pastor in California, someone passed out to all of us a Father's Day tract. I read it, thought about it, and finally taped it into the front cover of my Bible until it wore out. Now I have it typed and pasted there. Why? Because it is never too late to start doing what is right! And often listening to someone explain what they would do differently if they could helps us to start the same pathway ourselves. I listen carefully and try to learn from those ahead of me in their earthly pilgrimages. Do you know what? The changes they often share are so easy to implement even today. No matter where you are in the parenting process.

So here it is, let me read it to you:

"My family's all grown, and the kids are all gone. But, if I had to do it all over again, this is what I'd do:

I would **love my wife** more in front of my children.

I would **laugh with my children** more — at our mistakes and our joys.

I would **listen more**, even to the littlest child.

I would **be more honest** about my own weaknesses, never pretending perfection.

I would **pray differently** for my family — instead of focusing on them, I'd focus on me.

I would **do more things** together with my children.

I would **encourage them more** and bestow more praise.

I would **pay more attention** to little things, like deeds and words of thoughtfulness.

And then, finally, if I had to do it all over again, **I would share God more intimately** with my family; every ordinary thing that happened in every ordinary day I would use to direct them to God."<sup>[1]</sup>

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This explains why Charlie Shedd made one of his original promises to his tiny son, Peter:

I hope that I will be able to make knowing God natural to you. It is natural. In fact, I think this relationship with God is the only thing that is one hundred percent natural. We will pray together until it is easy for you to put your arms on the windowsill of heaven and look into the face of God. Before I put you back in your crib, I want to tell you something Philip said.

We had been out in the country for a ride. It was evening and we ran out of gas. We were walking along after we had been to the farmhouse, and I was carrying a can of gas. Philip was only four. He was playing along, throwing rocks at the telephone poles, picking flowers, and then, all of a sudden it got dark. Sometimes night comes all at once in the country. Philip came over, put his little hand in mine and said, "Take my hand, Daddy. I might get lost."

Peter, there is a hand reaching to you from the heart of the universe. If you will lay your hand in the hand of God and walk with Him, you will never ever get lost. [\[2\]](#)

Our text this morning is God's Word about a father He the Lord thought was WONDERFUL, not perfect, just wonderful!

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." (NKJV)

### **SO WHAT ARE WE MISSING TODAY?**

In a study conducted several years ago, sociologists Sheldon and Eleanor Glueck, of Harvard University, identified several crucial factors in the development of juvenile delinquents. They created a test that can, with about 90 percent accuracy, predict future delinquency of children five to six-years-old. They listed four necessary factors in preventing juvenile delinquency:

- The father's discipline must be firm, fair, and consistent.
- The mother must know where her children are and what they are doing at all times, and be with them as much as possible.
- The children need to see affection demonstrated between their parents, and from their parents to them.
- The family must spend time together as a unit.

In a similar report, but from a Christian perspective, Dr. Paul D. Meier, a Christian psychiatrist, wrote that the key to right parent-child relationships could be summed up in five things:

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1. Parents' love for each other and for the children;
  2. Discipline;
  3. Consistency;
  4. A good parental example; and
  5. A man at the head of the home.

Is that true? Listen to the world, they have taken note of it. Marion Levy in her societal critique has written,

“for the first time in the history of humankind the overwhelming majority of little boys and little girls continued under the direct domination and supervision of ladies until they reached maturity. This has never happened before in history. Crusades, wars, migrations, pestilence - nothing for a people as a whole ever before took so large a percentage of young adult and older adult males out of the family context for so much of the waking time of the children. Most of us have not even noticed the change, nor do we have any idea of its radicality.”<sup>[3]</sup>

## **WONDERFUL DADS:**

**KNOW** their job is important but their home is essential

**EXPRESS** deep love for their wives but always save some for their children

**PAY ATTENTION** and respond to their children but even more to God. How bad is it? U.S. News and World Report states these facts: 1 in 4 children born have no father to welcome them at birth. Only 40% of children grow up in 2 parent families. A million children each year go through divorce, 9 out of 10 will stay with their mothers. And when he is present a normal dad gives his children only 3 minutes of time to them with his undivided attention!

Often bouquets are thrown to moms on Mother's Day and dads get a shot between the eyes on Fathers Day. Amazingly every one of the 27 references to fathers in Proverbs is POSITIVE! And, when we get to the New Testament the pattern continues. Everything we see him do is right on.

If you are a dad, follow his lead.

If you want to be a dad, listen up and learn.

If your children are grown, listen and share. Let's all commit to be fathers of the Word!

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What are four landmarks of a wonderful father? What marks out the region we must guard? Let me briefly trace them:

1. **WONDERFUL FATHERS MUST BE FAIR** Ephesians 6:4 Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord. (NIV). How are we as dads unfair at times? The great reformed bible teacher William Hendriksen<sup>[4]</sup> suggests at least six ways fathers embitter their children:

**Beware of Overprotection.** Let the boys be boys, not little girls. They need to run, climb, get scraped and explore or they will not develop into the leader and protector they must become.

**Beware of Favoritism.** Look at Esau and Jacob's mom Rebecca, then Jacob and his doting on Joseph. It embittered those around.

**Beware of Discouragement.** If we always say they will never amount to anything, they might believe us. If we say you are a pain, they will feel it.

**Beware of destroying Individuality.** God has made and gifted each of his children uniquely, as spiritual snowflakes. Don't make clones of yourself, let God make them as He plans.

**Beware of Neglect.** Spend time with them. Instead of hustling off the kids to bed, put the work or TV to bed early and spend special and long times with those fast passing childhood days.

**Beware of Bitter Words and outright physical Cruelty.** Don't abuse them verbally or physically. That means do not correct them in anger. James 1:20 for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God. (NKJV)

2. **WONDERFUL FATHERS MUST BE TENDER.** Ephesians 6:4 And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up [ this word means<sup>[5]</sup> "to nourish, to provide for with tender care" ] in the training and admonition of the Lord. (NKJV). Here are a few practical application of this idea:

Listen to them before you spank them<sup>[6]</sup>, so they know their feeling are important.

Apologize to them when you have been wrong, harsh, angry or negligent.

Accept the concerns, constructive criticism and ideas your wife offers. And, put them in practice.

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Be a hugger, holder, encourager and friend. And, spread it onto mom to, not just the children.

Remember, neglect is the DANGER SIGN OF A BAD DAD

ELI NEGLECTED SELF-RESTRAINT AND GOD JUDGED HIM. **Personal discipline is vital to God.** Eli lacked self-restraint and God judges him.

"When he mentioned the ark of God, Eli fell backward off his chair by the side of the gate. His neck was broken and he died, for he was an old man and heavy. He had led Israel forty years" (1 Samuel 4:18).

ELI NEGLECTED DISCIPLINING OF HIS CHILDREN. **Disciplining our children is vital to God.** God said that Eli participated in his sons' sins because he did not rebuke them.

"Why do you scorn my sacrifice and offering that I prescribed for my dwelling? Why do you honor your sons more than me by fattening yourselves on the choice parts of every offering made by my people Israel?" (1 Samuel 2:29).

ELI NEGLECTED CONFRONTING SIN IN HIS HOME. **Confronting sin in our home is vital to God.** God rebukes Eli because he continued to resist confronting sin in his home.

"For I told him that I would judge his family forever because of the sin he knew about; his sons made themselves contemptible, and he failed to restrain them" (1 Samuel 3:13).

How can we summarize the danger signs of a bad dad? Like Eli, this involves:

- Preoccupation with an occupation to the exclusion of family needs.
  - Refusal to face the severity of his children's actions.
  - Failure to respond quickly and thoroughly to the warnings of others.
  - Rationalizing the wrong, thereby becoming part of the problem.
3. **WONDERFUL FATHERS MUST BE FIRM.** Ephesians 6:4 And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training [this word is neat <sup>[7]</sup>, it "may be described as training by means of rules and regulations, rewards, and when necessary, punishments. It refers primarily to what is done to the child."] and admonition [by contrast this word means "training by means of the spoken word, whether that be teaching, warning, or encouragement. It refers primarily to what is said to the child."]<sup>[8]</sup> of the Lord. (NKJV)

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Years back when members of Britain's Royal Family toured the US they were asked to share the most amazing thing they had observed in America. Without a moment of hesitation the reporter was told, "The Way the parents obey their children."<sup>[8]</sup>

Listen to Ken Taylor<sup>[9]</sup> whose Living Bible paraphrase has touched so many lives:

*A Father's task is many sided, but the most important part of his work is to fit himself and his family into God's plan of family authority. Children are to be encouraged by the fathers pat on the back. And, helped to better things when necessary by the application of the hand or stick to the seat of learning. of course there are other methods of discipline besides spanking, but whatever is called for must be used. To refuse to discipline a child is to refuse the clear command of God. A child who does not learn to obey both parents will find it much harder to learn to obey God."*

God said if your home is not in order you may not lead in the church 1 Timothy 3:4-5 one who rules his own house well, having [his] children in submission with all reverence 5 (for if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?); (NKJV)

ABRAHAM COMMANDED the direction of his family!

"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" (Genesis 18:19, NKJV).

What was it God admired about this man of faith? Abraham commanded his family to look beyond the passing fancies of this world system, beyond the materialism of the day (in Ur of the Chaldees). That meant for him to forsake gods of this world system (e.g., sun god, moon god). And it meant to obey the true and living and only God! God chose him to "command his family." How did he do that? Look at Hebrews 11:8-10.

- IF GOD SAID "GO" — HE WENT!

**"By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went,** even though he did not know where he was going. By faith he made his home in the Promised Land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God" (Hebrews 11:8-10).

- IF GOD SAID "LEAVE IT ALL" (Materialism) — HE DROPPED IT!

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- IF GOD SAID "WORSHIP ONLY ME" — HE DID!

"By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. By faith he made his home in the Promised Land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. **For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God**" (Hebrews 11:8-10).

4. **WONDERFUL FATHERS MUST BE CHRISTLIKE.** 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. (NKJV). We as dads need to lead the way in how to live among this sinful and fallen race in a godly way. Chuck Swindoll notes some temptations we as dads must by God's grace resist. These are great, you need to write them down:

**BEWARE OF THE DANGER OF MATERIAL POSSESSIONS.** We must provide for our family or as 1 Timothy 5:8 says "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." (NKJV) However the temptation is TO SUBSTITUTE WHAT YOU PURCHASE FOR YOUR FAMILY FOR YOUR PRESENCE WITH YOUR FAMILY. In other words, Toys instead of Time. That means nights at the office, endless travel, weekends working...no gift can replace your presence. Ask them what they remember about growing up. It won't be the label on their clothing. It will be father son or daughter breakfasts, trips to the zoo, park or games. It will be the nights you waited up for them, the games you cheered them and the hours you coached them in the back yard or workshop. Give them time with you. That's what they want and need.

**BEWARE OF THE DANGER OF EMOTIONAL STARVATION.** We are daily tempted to SAVE OUR BEST FOR THE WORKPLACE AND GIVE OUR FAMILIES THE LEFTOVERS. Are you like a jet at the airport? You exercise, refuel and taxi out of the hangar to fly to work full of energy and ideas all day, only to run low on fuel as you land and taxi into your recliner to shut down for the day? Where are you investing your life? In things that won't matter in a hundred years? Be careful.

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**BEWARE OF THE DANGER OF MISGUIDED COMMUNICATION.** We often fall into the trap as dads of starting to DELIVER LECTURES RATHER THAN EARNING THE RIGHT TO BE RESPECTED THROUGH LISTENING AND LEARNING. Remember James 1:19 So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; (NKJV)

**BEWARE OF THE DANGER OF PERFECTIONISM.** This is such a subtle temptation to some of us dads. We have fallen into the wrong pattern of DESIRING TO BE PERFECT AND DEMANDING THE SAME FROM THE REST OF OUR FAMILY. It is when nothing is ever good enough. Tom Eisenman<sup>[10]</sup> describes some of the tendencies of men who are perfectionists:

Perfectionists tend to think in **dichotomous categories**. Everything is either great or bad, perfect or worthless.

Perfectionists also engage in **minimizing or maximizing**. Failures are maximized and successes are minimized. The small thing that went wrong destroys or at least overshadows everything else.

Perfectionists set **unreasonable goals** for themselves and others.

Perfectionists judge their personal **worth by their performance**, and others by the same standard.

We must realize that God is a God of the second chance. We are sinners. All of us fail Him and others and we must get right with Him and them, and go on. Hebrews 4:15 For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all [points] tempted as [we are, yet] without sin. (NKJV)

**BEWARE OF THE DANGER OF UNDISCIPLINED DESIRES.** This is the fifth area of living in this wicked world we must guard. This is the temptation to SEEK INTIMATE SATISFACTION OUTSIDE THE BONDS OF MONOGAMY. Simply it means to seek and find sensual satisfaction in reading, seeking, listening, imagining or even experiencing any woman other than your wife. James 1:13-15 Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. 14 But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. 15 Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death. (NKJV).

Don't give in, even for a fleeting peek, a lustful glance, a quick peek in the magazine, a moment on the movie channel, or a meeting with a woman. Flee, say no and don't look back.

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It often helps to take reminders of your family with you to work. look at their smiling faces in pictures on business trips, put them around your office or work area, talk about your wife as your sweetheart and best friend to your coworkers, especially if they are women.

And most of all remember the lives of your family rest in your care.

**BEWARE OF THE DANGER OF NEGLECTING SPIRITUAL NURTURING.** The final area we are tempted in is TO UNDER-ESTIMATE THE IMPORTANCE OF CULTIVATING YOUR FAMILY'S SPIRITUAL APPETITE. You must lead the way to the Word, church, prayer meeting, verse memorization. the children should see dad praying, reading, witnessing, serving in the Lord's work, helping the helpless, sacrificing resources to invest in eternity, resisting worldliness and pride. All those area are caught more than taught.

The key to Joseph's parenting was that he led his family to worship God. Nothing spectacular, nothing superhuman, just regular and consistent. But the results were extraordinary. A modern illustration of this type of consistency can be found in the upbringing of John Paton<sup>[11]</sup>.

John Paton was a Scottish missionary to the New Hebrides, islands that are today called Vanuatu, located one thousand miles north of New Zealand and four hundred miles west of Fiji. Paton arrived November 4, 1858, on the island of Tanna at the age of thirty-four, with his wife, Mary Ann. A son was born February 12, 1859. "Our island exile filled with joy," Paton wrote in his autobiography<sup>[12]</sup> (page 79), but "the greatest of sorrows was treading hard upon the heels of that joy!" First came the fever, then diarrhea, then pneumonia and delirium. On March 3 Mary died. "To crown my sorrows, and complete my loneliness, the dear baby boy, whom we had named after her father, Peter Robert Robson, was taken from me after one week's sickness on the 20<sup>th</sup> of March (page 79).

Paton buried both of them with his own hands and "with ceaseless prayers and tears...claimed that land for God." He confessed, "But for Jesus, and the fellowship He vouchsafed me there, I must have gone mad and died beside that lonely grave! (page 80).

What kind of father prepared John G. Paton for that kind of perseverance -- another fifty years of rugged, faithful missionary labor?

Paton's father, James, was converted at seventeen and immediately convinced his mother and father that the family should have morning and evening prayer together. Paton writes about his father:

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"And so began in his seventeenth year that blessed custom of Family Prayer, morning and evening which my father practiced probably without one single avoidable omission till he lay on his deathbed at seventy-seven years of age...None of us can remember that any day ever passed unhallowed thus; no hurry for market, no rush to business, no arrival of friends or guests, no trouble or sorrow, no joy or excitement, ever prevented at least our kneeling around the family altar, while the High Priest led our prayers to God, and offered himself and his children there. (page 14)"

The place of the Lord's Day was just as crucial in shaping the children in their relation to God and the joy of his fellowship. Paton writes:

*"Our place of worship was the Reformed Presbyterian Church at Dumfries...four miles from our Torthorwald home; but the tradition is that during all these forty years my father was only three times prevented from attending the worship of God...Each of us, from very early days considered it no penalty, but a great joy, to go with our father to the church; the four miles were a treat to our young spirits, the company by the way was a fresh incitement... A few other pious men and women, of the best Evangelical type, went from the same parish...and when these God-fearing peasants 'foregathered' on the way to or from the House of God, we youngsters had sometimes rare glimpses of what Christian talk may be and ought to be. They went to church, full of beautiful expectancy of spirit -- their souls were on the outlook for God, and they returned from church, ready and even anxious to exchange ideas as to what they had heard and received of the things of life." (pages 15-16)*

*"There were eleven of us brought up in a home like that; and never one of the eleven, boy or girl, man or woman, has been heard, or ever will be heard, saying that Sabbath was dull or wearisome for us. " (page 17)*

Such was the father and the family that fit John G. Paton to suffer, to survive, and rejoice in the glorious work of the gospel among the cannibalistic tribes of the New Hebrides.

So today I ask you, and myself

Dad, Is your family altar established? Is there a place and a time for family focus on the Word and prayer that takes priority over less important things? Do you lead it when ever possible?

Dads, do you come to corporate worship here at our fellowship with a beautiful expectancy of spirit on the lookout for God?

A great secret of rearing children who endure for fifty years in the New Hebrides is to be a fair, firm, tender, disciplined, Bible-saturated, worshiping, Christlike, and joyful dad.

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- <sup>[1]</sup> From the Focus on the Family "Father's Day" tract.
  - <sup>[2]</sup> Letters to Phillip.
  - <sup>[3]</sup> Piper, Where's Dad, p. 9.
  - <sup>[4]</sup> NTC, Ephesians, p. 261.
  - <sup>[5]</sup> Reinecker, p.540.
  - <sup>[6]</sup> Farrar, p. 211.
  - <sup>[7]</sup> Hendriksen, p. 62.
  - <sup>[8]</sup> Farrar, p.216.
  - <sup>[9]</sup> Quotable Quotations, Victor, 1985.
  - <sup>[10]</sup> Temptations Men Face, IVP, 1990, pp. 168-70.
  - <sup>[11]</sup> Piper, A Godward Life, pp.284-286.
  - <sup>[12]</sup> John G. Paton, The Autobiography of John G. Paton (Edinburgh:Banner of Truth, 1965).

## **Wanted: Godly Men**

### **WFF: Message Thirteen (930523AM)**

#### **I Timothy 3:1**

There has probably been few times in the history of this planet when it has been harder to be a man of god than today ... The outlook is dismal when you examine the forces of the darkness of this world marshaled in array against this endangered species known as the godly man.

Sometime in the year AD 64, Paul the apostle looked out of the tiny grate that let in light to his subterranean dungeon. The mamertinum prison was only a stones throw from the epicenter of the world, the Roman Forum.

Outside could be heard the crowds surging to the circus maximus, the games and the great festivals. The mighty legions returned from victory after victory with dazzling displays of plunder and captives.

But in that solitary dungeon of dampness, deprivation and discomfort, once again the spirit overshadowed the great apostle and began to breathe through him the very Word of God.

What is amazing is that with a shamelessly professed homosexual emperor and a bloodthirsty mob of Romans behind him in self gratifying lust, Paul would write: "in the last days ... Men will..."he was saying, this is only the prelude. The fallen ego is evident but will come to full bloom in days ahead.

Then he lists the qualities of godlessness that well be embodied in the last days:

1. Philautos = self lovers, a life centered in self. The antithesis of the life god calls for which is death to self.
2. Philaguros = lovers of money, and Timothy as pastor of Ephesus was in the second most prosperous, materialistic center of the ancient world. All the trade routes dumped wealth here!

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3. Alazon = braggart, boastful. It was the word for the medicine peddling quack doctor who could cure anything. Then it just came to mean a boaster of empty words.
  4. Huperephanos = arrogant, to show ones self above, this is not an outward show, this is an inward condition of all consuming pride.
  5. Blasphemia = revilers is not the hot words of anger but the cold insult of an arrogant pride.
  6. Disobedient to parents = the loss of all submission to positions of authority over young people.
  7. Acharistos = ungrateful, thankless, a refusal to even acknowledge the debt of gratitude owed to god and man.
  8. Anosios = unholy is a refusal to even recognize decency in life, the unwritten ones like burial of the dead. But beyond cultural things, this is the base and shameless seeking of abnormal pleasures and thrills.
  9. Astorgos = unloving is to be without family or human affection. Storge is family love. A means without. This is a time when self prevails over even the closest ties of family.
  10. Aspondos = unreconcilable is either a person who can never be reconciled or, one who breaks all agreements for selfish purposes. thus an implacable or hateful person.
  11. Diabolos = malicious gossips is literally, devils or slanderers. Even worse than stealing property is to destroy anothers reputation, which is the wickedness of slander.
  12. Akrates = without self control is to be uncontrollable in their desires
  13. Anemeros = brutal is to be savage as in a wild beast.
  14. Aphilagathos = hater of good means no love for goodness of anything.
  15. Prodotes = treacherous is to be willing to betray for any reason.
  16. Propetes = reckless is literally "swept along" headlong and unthinkingly.
  17. Tetuphomenos = conceited, lit. Head swelled for their own importance
  18. Lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of god = the recreation worshipper and hedonists
  19. Holding to a form of godliness = outwardly somewhat religious.
  20. Although they have denied its power = they are not born from above as John 3 speaks of, but from beneath as James 3 describes.

Back to psalm 15

Against this gloomy backdrop of forces within our fallen, sinful flesh to sweep us away from God is the old path. God has the way of obedience and righteousness called holiness. Listen to God ask you and me, each of us men to his presence..

## **I. HE INTERNALIZES THE TRUTH v. 2**

### **A. "walks with integrity"**

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- B. "works righteousness"
- II. HE TALKS THE TRUTH. He is honest. v.2a -3a**
- A. "speaks truth in his heart"
  - B. "doesn't slander with his tongue"
- III. HE LIVES THE TRUTH v.3b he is a loyal friend**
- A. "nor does evil to his neighbor"
  - B. "nor takes up a reproach against a friend"
- IV. HE RESPECTS TRUTH. he has proper heroes. v. 4a**
- A. "in whose eyes a reprobate is despised"
  - B. "he honors those who fear the Lord"
- V. HE PROTECTS THE TRUTH. He can't be bought. v. 4b-5**
- A. "he swears to his own hurt" = a man of his word
  - B. "he doesn't put out his money at interest" = not take advantage of adversity in another's life.
  - C. "nor take a bribe against the innocent" = he can't be swayed from what is right.

Well, how are you doing men? Remember that even a tiny hole in the bag will tarnish the silver. Any exposure, no matter how small, is deadly!

God is vitally interested in you and me being of the kind of character that is drawn to his presence. Just two quick penetrating applications of this life of integrity. Usually we don't unravel all at once from integrity. There are some danger signs like those red lights on our instrument panel: oil pressure, door ajar and so on.

You see, in two basic arenas men usually fail. Two little things: lust and little disciplines.

What are some little things? How about the speed limit? Part of the spirit of this world is no one is going to pass me by. I will keep up or get ahead. How we are in our spiritual life is reflected sometimes in our impatience while driving, anger, pride, lack of love, lack of submission and lack of holiness.

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Paul (Romans 13) and Peter (I Peter 2:13) both say be subject to the rules of our government, even though it was Mr. Homosexual himself, Nero. I can distinctly remember the day, place and time when I gave up my rationalization and selfish impatience about driving and submitted joyfully to 55mph when its the state law. Its a small thing but it breeds an attitude of rationalizing, impatience, pride and guilt every time you step on the brake when you see the state trooper. Even worst, it can produce desensitization to laws if you buy a device to be beyond the reach of the law, like a fuzz buster radar detector. Little things do big damage in the life of a godly man.

One final little thing, how about where you place your relationship with God?

- Is it uncompromisable?
- Will you sacrifice for it?
- Do you seek first the kingdom of God as Christ in Mt. 6:33 commands?
- Do you read the paper more regularly, or watch the TV more often or listen to the radio more primarily in your life than God?
- When is the last time you worked on verse memory?
- Read the Word of God for an hour lately? (Have you watched a game for an hour lately?)

The world is marshaled against you making it as a man of God. Watch out for the little things. God wants you to be a psalm 15 man:

**I. HE INTERNALIZES THE TRUTH v. 2**

- A. "walks with integrity"
- B. "works righteousness"

**II. HE TALKS THE TRUTH. He is honest. v.2a -3a**

- A. "speaks truth in his heart"
- B. "doesn't slander with his tongue"

**III. HE LIVES THE TRUTH v.3b he is a loyal friend**

- A. "nor does evil to his neighbor"
- B. "nor takes up a reproach against a friend"

**IV. HE RESPECTS TRUTH. he has proper heroes. v. 4a**

- A. "in whose eyes a reprobate is despised"

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B. "he honors those who fear the Lord"

**V. HE PROTECTS THE TRUTH. He can't be bought. v. 4b-5**

A. "he swears to his own hurt" = a man of his word

B. "he doesn't put out his money at interest" = not take advantage of adversity in another's life.

C. "nor take a bribe against the innocent" = he can't be swayed from what is right.



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## Women Who Never Quit

### WFF: Message Fourteen (890514AM)

Mothers are quite a precious commodity, aren't they? Each of us owes our very existence to our Mom!

Scriptures are specific when we speak to the blessed theme of motherhood. In fact:

- God is interested in individuals - 2,930 individuals named.
- God is interested in women, 327 are women, nearly all mothers.

We know more specifics and good things about women from God's word than any other ancient document. Let's go to the starting or origin point - Gen. 2:18-25.

1. We see her as the crowning act of creation, its completion.
2. She is that which made good God's only bad report 'not good man to be alone'.

So, He made one to match, complete, correspond to Him - helpmate - woman.

Some have said that there are actually two ways to look at it.

- **Woman's view** = God saw man and immediately thought He could do better - so woman.
- **Man's view** = God made the universe and rested and then made woman - and no one has rested since!!!

Let's look back at Genesis to get to the heart of the matter of "Mothers of the Promise".

Genesis 3:15 God said about women's & mother's ministry after the fall of mankind into sin.

#### ❖ Supernatural Birth Coming

- ❖ "Enmity between her seed and your seed".

Women do not have seed they are the bearers of the seed of a man this = virgin birth.

#### ❖ Supernatural Conqueror's Coming

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*He shall bruise his head and you shall bruise his heel*

All women were aware of this event and wondered for centuries - would they be a part of this promised Supernatural Conqueror's coming - Messiah!

Well, turn to Matthew 1 a passage often used at Christmas and forgotten.

### **Christ's Line**

Look at those who were in the family tree of the Supernatural Conqueror known as Messiah. Who did God pick to do such monumental work? 46 specifically named folks. 41 men and 5 ladies. Let's look at these mothers of God, the promise that they were!!

They were in the line that brought , from the Garden of Eden , and the death knell of humanity the curse upon fallen man.

A ray of light  
A promised conqueror  
A supernatural birth  
A sunrise on sin's night  
A Savior - Christ the Lord

To be in that line was the realization of God's greatest promise to man - SALVATION!!!

So, Matthew 1:1 starts our introduction of these folks. Note how 5 of the 46 stick out.

❖ They were **women in a men's list.** Of 46 total listed 41 were men:

- ❖ V. 3      Tamar
- ❖ V. 5      Rahab and Ruth
- ❖ V. 6      Bathsheba
- ❖ V. 16     Mary

You can note that in the other list in Luke 3 no women are named. This is unusual.

❖ They are **women with a mark.**

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- ❖ When I say Tamar what to you think of? Incest.
  - ❖ When I say Rahab? Harlotry.
  - ❖ How about Ruth? Again, from the cursed, incestuously conceived nation of Moab.
  - ❖ Bathsheba? Synonymous with what? Adultery.
  - ❖ Mary? Virtuous to us! She was haunted for 33 ½ years with a shadow. Fornication!

Let's go to the central issue here:

God chose a plan to save fallen humanity.

His plan was to invade, and conquer this earth back!

His medium was a supernatural birth through woman.

Here's the list! And what do we find?

- A. Women
- B. Marked lives/stained women
- C. 60%+ unqualified women
- D. 2 Jewish at best - Mary, possibly Tamar
- E. 3 Gentile - Ruth/Moab, Rahab/Canaanite, Bathsheba/Hittite

That's astounding! God went outside the covenant! Only called one thing! Grace. This is most astonishing.

- So what do we have? 5 women -
- Tainted by sin or suspicion
- Barely qualified by 3/5 - at best 1 or 2 qualified
- All part of a grand plan

### **Women Who Were "Mothers of the Promise" to Bring Christ & to Portray Grace**

Let's meet each one personally!

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1. **TAMAR** - We can call her *defrauded*. Genesis 38 God kills her husband, she is forgotten, lied to, overlooked, takes law into own hands. Has a child out of wedlock through an incestuous affair. In all - defrauded.

- Defrauded of normal life.
- Defrauded out of a happy marriage.
- Defrauded out of a good name.
- Defrauded out of a sterling reputation

Robbed of it all by sin! Know anyone like this? But, God graciously places her here as a "Mother of the Promise" to bring Christ to portray grace.

2. **RAHAB** - We can call her defiled.

Joshua 2 finds her: A businesswoman in two ancient trades that often were interchanged - prostitution and inn keeping. So, a harlot,

- in a doomed city
- on a wall about to be demolished
- among a race God was exterminating

She was in every sense a most defiled woman.

- Sexual sinner
- Cursed race
- Doomed city dweller
- Sitting on a bomb!!!

Sound like anyone you know? What a picture of the lost sinners we are!

But, God reaches down pluck her out with her family of the inferno of Jericho's oblivion and plops her graciously . And, how the Word glows in her case!

God graciously puts this defiled woman in his plan as a "Mother of the Promise". To bring Christ to portray grace.

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3. **RUTH** - Such a pitiful case - we can call her despised .

Her distant forefather (Genesis 19 Lot) had sired her race in the midst of a drunken orgy with his own daughters. Yes, Lot (Abraham's nephew) and drunkenness, condemned in God's word (Genesis 19, and an unscrupulous daughter produced a tribe of people under God's judgment.

Here is a woman that because of God's (1406 B.C.) curse no Moabite could enter God's assembly to the 10<sup>th</sup> generation (Dt. 23:3-4)

So, despised though personally having done nothing to deserve it! Think of it!

- She is of the wrong race.
- She is out of the wrong family.
- She is tainted by the past.
- She is hounded by someone else's sin.
- She is scarred by a family scandal.
- She is plagued by a dark mark of stain.

And, after a short, sad marriage with her husband dead and famine about her God writes one of the sweetest Old Testament stories of grace. And she is a "Mother of the Promise" to bring Christ to portray grace.

4. **BATHSHEBA** - 2 Samuel 10, 11 - Wrong place, wrong time, we can call her defeated.

You know the story - she was unwise at best. Immodest in display.

She then -

- Listens to a grand suitor.
- Muffles her heart's warning.
- Stifles those virtuous vows.
- Ignores a wonderful husband.
- Throws herself to passion and sin.

And, sins - a monumental, public, shameful, sin.

Her husband lies murdered. The son conceived chokes away in death and all the world knows she is defeated!

But, God graciously lists her to be a "Mother of Promise" to bring Christ to portray

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grace.

5. **MARY** - We can call her determined.

Born a normal sinner, comes to faith in true God, she is quiet, knows God's Word, is willing to obey.

- Falls in love.
- Meets an angel.
- Receives a commission.
- Supernaturally conceives.
  - Her fiancée plans to dump her.
  - People scorn.
  - She bears public shame for 1/3 of a century!!
  - People falsely accuse her.
  - Jesus Christ puts her in her place.
  - Unbelieving sons sadden her!

But, through it all God has graciously reached down and made her a "Mother of the Promise". She bore Christ. She partook of grace. She rejoiced in "God my Savior" (Luke).

None of these five deserved it, all were sinners.

- Tamar: Defrauded
- Rahab: Defiled
- Ruth: Despised
- Bathsheba: Defeated
- Mary: Determined

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Do you see anyone you know? Could it be you? Have you ever been:

- Defrauded
- Defiled
- Despised
- Defeated

Today, Mother, will you be **DETERMINED** as Mary and each was, to be a "Mother of the Promise" to bring Christ, demonstrate his grace.

### **How Can I Be Like the Mothers of Promise?**

1 Tim 2:15 - Paul says women can be "saved through the bearing of children".  
What? Yes, saved, or better preserved - from what? Second Place by raising one to know Jesus Christ.

Today and onward you can join "Mothers of the Promise". Don't take second place in life. Be a Godly Mother who points to the promise God can use -

- Defrauded
- Defiled
- Despised
- Defeated

**God can use you if you will but determine by his grace to obey.**

1. By Williams, Williams and Jenkins, Revell, 1986, pp. 152-53.

2. Ideas found in Swindoll, You and Your Child, p. 90.

3. Ideas found in Swindoll, You and Your Child, p. 90.

4. Quoted from Israel my Glory , Feb/Mar 1993, p. 10.

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# Mile Markers on the Road of Godly Families

WFF: Message Fifteen (020512AM)

I once traveled on a 4,639-mile journey through 16 states in 16 days traveling from Tulsa to the East and back. As I sat for about 92 hours over these past few days behind the steering wheel, often moving at 102 feet per second, I started noticing how many details the Interstate Highway System has incorporated to keep the millions of us drivers on the right road.

May I remind you of just a few of the markers I saw along those thousands of miles I drove? Here are some of the more interesting and most frequent of all:

- There are painted white stripes between highway lanes that average 12 feet long with an unpainted space of about 20 feet between each one.
- There are reflectors attached down into the pavement between the white stripes every 100 feet that shine when your headlights hit them.
- There is an unbroken white line on the right of each road, and an unbroken yellow line on the left showing the outside boundaries of each side of the highway. Two feet beyond both of those lines are the continuous rumble strips cut into the edges to alert you (or often in my case – Bonnie, that I was writing notes and steering with my knees) that you have drifted off the road.
- Beyond that there are reflector stakes on the side of the road about every 200 feet that also are lighted by headlights.
- Then come those mile markers (the vertical green rectangles) that come at each mile. Many states have added 1/10th of a mile markers that say mile number and add a point one, point two and so on.
- Then come all the SIGNS. Have you ever really thought about how many there are? There are exit signs, mileage to next city signs, state borders, county borders, city borders, toll road signs, bridge identification signs, road names on bridges signs, lane change signs, conditions of fog and ice warning signs, speed limit signs, caution of lane and speed change signs, animal crossing signs, exit signs describing attractions, food, gas, and lodgings as well as several other signs I missed.
- In all we calculated we saw almost a half a million white lane stripes, 250,000 mid lane reflector bumps, 130,000 staked reflectors, plus we passed about 30,000 other signs when you add up the nearly 6 different signs mandated by the Interstate system per mile!

Now with all that in mind, if it takes that much reminding to keep us merely on a physical road to not stray off the path, don't you think the God of the Universe would similarly mark the pathway we need to stay on for raising our children?

Well the good news is that He has. And in the map book called God's Word is a clearly marked trail for Parenting and Grand parenting our Families in Godliness. May I just

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trace that map through the Bible with you today? You may want to mark some of these verses, or note them on paper so you can use them to see where you are or should be on the Road to Godly Parenting your Families and Homes!

### **MILE MARKERS ON THE ROAD OF GODLINESS IN PARENTING**

I have made the words “GODLINESS IN PARENTING” an acronym to help you remember these points. Each of the 18 letters that make up those two words Godliness and Parenting stand for one Biblical Mile Marker along this road we should be following. If you have children, grandchildren, nieces, nephews, brothers, and sisters – or ever plan to, this road map and each of these mile markers are for you!

First let me just list them. Here are the measurable and intentional areas of the personal spiritual life of our families we should be heading for:

<b>G</b> A GODLY LIFE	<b>IN</b>	<b>P</b> A PATIENT LIFE
<b>O</b> AN OUTREACHING LIFE		<b>A</b> AN AFFECTIONATE LIFE
<b>D</b> A DISCIPLINED LIFE		<b>R</b> A RESPECTFUL LIFE
<b>L</b> A LOVING LIFE		<b>E</b> AN EASILY-ENTREATED LIFE
<b>I</b> AN INTEGRITY LIFE		<b>N</b> A NURTURING LIFE
<b>N</b> A NOBLE LIFE		<b>T</b> A THANKFUL LIFE
<b>E</b> AN EXEMPLARY LIFE		<b>I</b> AN INIQUITY-HATING LIFE
<b>S</b> A SPIRIT-FILLED LIFE		<b>N</b> A NOT BEHAVING RUDELY LIFE
<b>S</b> A SACRIFICIAL LIFE		<b>G</b> A GENTLENESS LIFE

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NKJV (I WILL LEARN TO LIVE FOR GOD EACH DAY)

- **I WILL NOT CHOOSE TO LOOK AT WHAT GOD CALLS EVIL.** Psalm 101:3-4 I will set nothing wicked before my eyes; I hate the work of those who fall away; It shall not cling to me. 4 A perverse heart shall depart from me; I will not know wickedness. (*I will search God's Word to learn what He hates, and what He loves, and imitate those areas!*)
- **I WILL NOT USE MY MOUTH TO SAY WHAT GOD CALLS CORRUPT.** Ephesians 4:29 Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers.
- **I WILL SEEK TO PLEASE GOD IN ALL I DO.** 1 Corinthians 10:31 Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.
- **I WILL NOT CLING TO MY OLD HABITS, I WILL LOOK UP NOT DOWN.** Colossians 3:1 If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God.

We are like sheep, that's what God's Word says. And sheep[1] will blindly, habitually follow one another along the same little trails until they become ruts that erode into gigantic gullies, so we humans cling to the same habits that we have seen ruin other lives..

- The world we live in is full of such folk. Broken homes, broken hearts, derelict lives and twisted personalities remind us everywhere of men and women who have gone their own way. We have a sick society struggling to survive on beleaguered land. The greed and selfishness of mankind leaves behind a legacy of ruin and remorse.

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**O OUTREACHING** Matthew 28:18-20 And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Amen. (When you have an outreach directed life you get the authority of God, and the personal presence of Jesus in an especially promised way. Remember the context of these verses is outreach!)

- **I WILL SAY TO THE LORD ALL THROUGH MY LIFE – HERE AM I LORD SEND ME.** Isaiah 6:8 Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying: “Whom shall I send, And who will go for Us?” Then I said, “Here am I! Send me.”
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**D DISCIPLINED:** 1 Timothy 4:7 But have nothing to do with worldly fables fit only for old women. On the other hand, discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness; NASB (I WILL LEARN TO BE DISCIPLINED IN MY EVERY DAY LIVING)

- **I WILL BE ORDERLY:** 1 Corinthians 14:40 Let all things be done decently and in order.
- **I WILL BE LOVELY:** Philippians 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.
- **I WILL BE HARD WORKING:** 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12 that you also aspire to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you, 12 that you may walk properly toward those who are outside, and that you may lack nothing.
- **I WILL BE DEPENDABLE:** Psalm 15:4b ...He who swears to his own hurt and does not change;

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**L LOVING:** Colossians 3:14 But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection.

1. **LOVE** is the absence of selfishness. I want to be less selfish and self-seeking than I was last month.
2. **JOY** is the spiritual quality that releases us from circumstances. I want to be a joyful person.
3. **PEACE** is the internal serenity that only God can give. I want peace to become more and more a way of life for me.
4. **PATIENCE** is the absence of personal irritation at the actions of others. I want to be more patient than I was three months ago. If we are not increasing in patience it is only that we are not yielding and submitting to the Holy Spirit.
5. **KINDNESS** is a beautiful reflection of God in our lives by the absence of an abrasive manner in my dealings with people. I want an increasing tendency toward personal kindness in my way with others.
6. **GOODNESS** is being Godlike! It is the opposite of fallen humanity. I want to be doing good to all those around me.
7. **FAITHFULNESS** is a trustworthy and dependable life. The kind of person that keeps their own life in order so that you can count on them. I want to make and keep my word and be making strides in reliability and dependability.
8. **MEEKNESS** is the opposite of asserting yourself. I want my personal agenda and my rights to be in hopeless shape, crucified with Christ and fading.
9. **DISCIPLINE** is defined by the Greek Dictionary as “a virtue, which consists in mastery of the appetites and passions, especially the sensual ones.” The only force that can control our flesh is the Holy Spirit. When yielded to Him we become vessels that are worshipful sacrifices to Him no longer to self. Self cannot control self. Flesh is not able to harness flesh. Only the Spirit can discipline us. I want to be graciously under the control of God’s Spirit of Discipline. I want to be beating under and giving knockout blows to your flesh as Paul was in I Cor 9:27.

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# Mile Markers on the Road of Godly Parenting – Part 2

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2. **JOY** is the spiritual quality that releases us from circumstances. I want to be a joyful person.
3. **PEACE** is the internal serenity that only God can give. I want peace to become more and more a way of life for me.
4. **PATIENCE** is the absence of personal irritation at the actions of others. I want to be more patient than I was three months ago. If we are not increasing in patience it is only that we are not yielding and submitting to the Holy Spirit.
5. **KINDNESS** is a beautiful reflection of God in our lives by the absence of an abrasive manner in my dealings with people. I want an increasing tendency toward personal kindness in my way with others.
6. **GOODNESS** is being Godlike! It is the opposite of fallen humanity. I want to be doing good to all those around me.
7. **FAITHFULNESS** is a trustworthy and dependable life. The kind of person that keeps their own life in order so that you can count on them. I want to make and keep my word and be making strides in reliability and dependability.
8. **MEEKNESS** is the opposite of asserting yourself. I want my personal agenda and my rights to be in hopeless shape, crucified with Christ and fading.
9. **DISCIPLINE** is defined by the Greek Dictionary as “a virtue, which consists in mastery of the appetites and passions, especially the sensual ones.” The only force that can control our flesh is the Holy Spirit. When yielded to Him we become vessels that are worshipful sacrifices to Him no longer to self. Self cannot control self. Flesh is not able to harness flesh. Only the Spirit can discipline us. I want to be graciously under the control of God’s Spirit of Discipline. I want to be beating under and giving knockout blows to your flesh as Paul was in I Cor 9:27.

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**I** INTEGRITY: 1 John 1:5-7 This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that **God is light** and in Him is no darkness at all. 6 If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and **walk in darkness**, we lie and **do not practice the truth**. 7 But if we **walk in the light** as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and **the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin**. LIGHT-WALKING

- I WILL OBEY GOD EVEN WHEN IT LOOKS HOPELESS. Genesis 16:9,13 The Angel of the Lord said to her, “Return to your mistress, and submit yourself under her hand.” 13 Then she called the name of the Lord who spoke to her, You-Are- the-God-Who-Sees; for she said, “Have I also here seen Him who sees me?”
- I WILL OBEY THE LORD WHEN ALONE, FAR FROM HOME, AND EVEN WHEN NO ONE CAN EVER FIND OUT WHAT I DID – EXCEPT GOD. Genesis 39:9 There is no one greater in this house than I, nor has he kept back anything from me but you, because you are his wife. How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?”

**N** NOBLE: Philippians 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. I WILL SEEK WHAT IS - ... Isaiah 33.15-17

**E** EXEMPLARY LIVING: 1 Timothy 4:12 Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word (**what I say**), in conduct (**what I do**), in love (**what I give**), in spirit (**what I feel**), in faith (**what I believe**), in purity (**what I resist**).

- I WILL DEVOUR GOD’S WORD. 1 Timothy 4:13 Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.
- I WILL SERVE CHRIST’S CHURCH. 1 Timothy 4:14 Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the eldership.
- I WILL EXCEL IN SPIRITUAL THINGS NOT MERELY IN TEMPORAL THINGS LIKE SPORTS, THE ARTS OR ACADEMICS. 1 Timothy 4:15 Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all.
- I WILL RUN FROM SIN IN ANY FORM. 2 Timothy 2:22 Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.

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**S** SPIRIT-FILLED: Ephesians 5:18-21 And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, 19 speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, 20 giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, 21 submitting to one another in the fear of God.

Spirit-Filled living makes us submissive in every area of our lives:

- I WILL OBEY MY PARENTS EVERY DAY I LIVE IN THEIR HOME, AND HONOR THEM ALL OF MY DAYS ON EARTH. Ephesians 6:1-3 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.”
- I WILL HONOR MY BOSS AT WORK. Ephesians 6:5 Bondservants, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in sincerity of heart, as to Christ;
- I WILL KEEP THE LAWS OF MY COUNTRY AS A TESTIMONY TO MY LORD. 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. 2 Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves.
- I WILL HONOR MY LEADERS AT CHURCH ALL MY DAYS SO THAT I MAY SOMEDAY HAVE THE HIGH HONOR OF SERVING Christ's CHURCH. Hebrews 13:17 Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.

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**S** SACRIFICIAL: 2 Timothy 3:1-2 But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: 2 For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, Romans 12:1-2 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. 2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

All my heroes in the missionary biographies were weird to their own generations!

- I WILL PRESENT MY PAST HURTS TO THE LORD, AND ALL MY PRESENT TROUBLES. Genesis 41:51-52 Joseph called the name of the firstborn Manasseh: “For God has made me forget all my toil and all my father’s house.” 52 And the name of the second he called Ephraim: “For God has caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction.”
- I WILL GIVE THE LORD MY FUTURE PLANS TO MAKE SURE THEY FIT WITH HIS. Matthew 6:33 But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.
  - I PRESENT TO YOU O LORD – MY EYES, MY EARS, MY HANDS, MY FEET, MY DATING LIFE, AND MY SOCIAL LIFE. Romans 6:13 And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.
  - I WILL PRESENT MY FRIENDS TO THE LORD, AND ONLY HANG WITH THOSE WHO HANG WITH GOD! James 4:4-5 Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. 5 Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, “The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously”?
- I WILL PRESENT MY APPETITES TO THE LORD AND HUNGER FOR HIM AND HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS AND NOT THE WORLD. 1 John 2:15-17 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. 17 And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever. (We are defenseless but our Lord defends us. Our enemies surround us, they hover around us, and they slither beneath us. John the Apostle identifies our enemies as: **The World** system that governs the earth in greed, controlled by legions of demons, controlled by Satan. The world surrounds us always reminding us that we never quite have enough. **The Flesh** is our insatiable appetite inherited at birth and never completely gone until death. **The Devil** is that most powerful created angel that opposes all that is of God, and goes to any length to steal our affections and devotion away from God!)

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In brief, seven fresh attitudes have to be acquired. They are the equivalent of progressive forward movements onto new ground with God. If one follows them they will discover fresh pasturage, new abundant life; and increased health, wholesomeness and holiness, in their walk with God. Nothing will please Him more and most certainly no other activity on our part will or can result in as great

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# Character God Blesses in Moms and Dads

WFF: Message Seventeen (020623AM)

We just returned from a week of ministry at Camp Barakel where I have been going ever since I was born, and where I have been returning to minister for the past 10 years or so. I was placed in a room with 138 seven through ten-year olds for several hours each day. After they were through with me Bonnie would drag me out and resuscitate me!

No actually it was one of the greatest times of ministry I have ever had especially because I felt so unable to communicate with them and so as the Lord promised when we are weak – they He can be strong through us. Thanks so much for praying.

On the 2500-mile drive I did learn many things about how exciting it is to be a parent. Many of them follow those anonymous “Laws of Parenting” published many years ago:

## LAWS OF PARENTING

- The later you stay up, the earlier your child will wake up the next morning.
- For a child to become clean, something else must become dirty.
- Toys multiply to fill any space available.
- The longer it takes you to make a meal, the less your child will like it.
- Yours is always the only child who doesn't behave.
- If the shoe fits...it's expensive.
- The surest way to get something done is to tell a child not to do it.
- The gooier the food, the more likely it is to end up on the carpet.
- Backing the car out of the driveway causes your child to have to go to the bathroom.
- The more challenging the child, the more rewarding it is to be a parent...sometimes.

Now that was funny but this was not. I had the opportunity to get to know a cross section of young people from Michigan last week. Nearly 300 campers from over 90 different churches, over 20 different denominations but all at the same camp for that week. Probably the one verse that most summarizes what I saw is in Hosea 4:6:

*My people are destroyed from lack of knowledge. “Because you have rejected knowledge, I also reject you ...because you have ignored the law of your God, I also will ignore your children.*

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Those young people are growing up in churches where they are being mostly entertained. The Camp directors told me they couldn't compete at all with what the churches are doing to attract and hold the kids. But the tragic result is Biblical illiteracy and spiritual starvation. They are excited and bright and spiritually unprepared for knowing what they believe, what God has revealed in His Word, and how to appropriate that truth into their lives.

Has the God of the Universe marked the pathway we need to stay on for raising our children? The good news is that He has. And in the map book called God's Word is a clearly marked trail for Parenting and Grand parenting our Families in Godliness. May I just trace that map through the Bible with you today? You may want to mark some of these verses, or note them on paper so you can use them to see where you are or should be on the Road to Godly Parenting your Families and Homes!

### **MILE MARKERS ON THE ROAD OF GODLINESS IN PARENTING**

Last time we learned what some of our goals should be for us as we disciple our children. We want to cultivate in them by God's grace

- G**    *A GODLY LIFE*
- O**    AN OUTREACHING  
      LIFE
- D**    A DISCIPLINED LIFE
- L**    A LOVING LIFE
- I**    *AN INTEGRITY LIFE*
- N**    A NOBLE LIFE
- E**    AN EXEMPLARY LIFE
- S**    A SPIRIT-FILLED LIFE
- S**    A SACRIFICIAL LIFE

Today we look the other direction, what do we need to be as parents. Or what kind of character does God want in us to be His communicators of truth to our precious children? May I share these areas God looks at in:

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**P** A PATIENT LIFE  
**A** AN AFFECTIONATE LIFE  
**R** A RESPECTFUL LIFE  
**E** AN EASILY-ENTREATED LIFE  
**N** A NURTURING LIFE  
**T** A THANKFUL LIFE  
**I** AN INIQUITY-HATING LIFE  
**N** A NOT BEHAVING RUDELY  
LIFE  
**G** A GENTLENESS LIFE

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### **GODLY LIVING**

**G**

LEARN TO LIVE FOR GOD EACH DAY. Titus 2:11-13  
NOT CHOOSE TO LOOK AT WHAT GOD CALLS EVIL. Psalm 101:3-4  
NOT USE MY MOUTH TO SAY WHAT GOD CALLS CORRUPT. Ephesians 4:29  
SEEK TO PLEASE GOD IN ALL I DO. 1 Corinthians 10:31

**O**

### **OUTREACHING** Matthew 28:18-20

1. SAY TO THE LORD ALL THROUGH MY LIFE – HERE AM I LORD SEND ME. Isaiah 6:8

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**D DISCIPLINED:** is defined by the Greek Dictionary as “a virtue, which consists in mastery of the appetites and passions, especially the sensual ones.” The only force that can control our flesh is the Holy Spirit. When yielded to Him we become vessels that are worshipful sacrifices to Him no longer to self. I want to be graciously under the control of God’s Spirit of Discipline.

1. LEARN TO BE DISCIPLINED IN MY EVERY DAY LIVING. 1 Timothy 4:7
2. BE ORDERLY: 1 Corinthians 14:40
3. BE LOVELY: Philippians 4:8
4. BE HARD WORKING: 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12
5. BE DEPENDABLE: Psalm 15:4b

**L LOVING:** Colossians 3:14 But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection. **LOVE** is the absence of selfishness. I want to be less selfish and self-seeking than I was last month.

**I INTEGRITY:** 1 John 1:7 But if we walk in the light

1. OBEY GOD EVEN WHEN IT LOOKS HOPELESS. Genesis 16:9,13
2. OBEY THE LORD WHEN ALONE, FAR FROM HOME, AND EVEN WHEN NO ONE CAN EVER FIND OUT WHAT I DID – EXCEPT GOD. Genesis 39:9

**N NOBLE:** Philippians 4:8 SEEK WHAT IS - 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.

**E EXEMPLARY LIVING:** 1 Timothy 4:12 Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word (**what I say**), in conduct (**what I do**), in love (**what I give**), in spirit (**what I feel**), in faith (**what I believe**), in purity (**what I resist**).

- DEVOUR GOD’S WORD. 1 Timothy 4:13
- SERVE CHRIST’S CHURCH. 1 Timothy 4:
- EXCEL IN SPIRITUAL THINGS NOT MERELY IN TEMPORAL THINGS LIKE SPORTS, THE ARTS OR ACADEMICS. 1 Timothy 4:15
- RUN FROM SIN IN ANY FORM. 2 Timothy 2:22

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**S SPIRIT-FILLED:** Ephesians 5:18, 21 And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; **but be filled with the Spirit**, 21 **submitting to one another in the fear of God**. Spirit-Filled living makes us submissive in every area of our lives:

1. OBEY MY PARENTS EVERY DAY I LIVE IN THEIR HOME, AND HONOR THEM ALL OF MY DAYS ON EARTH. Ephesians 6:1-3
2. HONOR MY BOSS AT WORK. Ephesians 6:5
3. KEEP THE LAWS OF MY COUNTRY AS A TESTIMONY TO MY LORD. Romans 13:1-2
4. HONOR MY LEADERS AT CHURCH ALL MY DAYS SO THAT I MAY SOMEDAY HAVE THE HIGH HONOR OF SERVING Christ's CHURCH. Hebrews 13:17

**S SACRIFICIAL:** Romans 12:1-2

- **sacrifice self for Christ's sake** - Instead of loving myself most I am willing to love Christ best and others more than myself. The moment I deliberately do something definite either for God or others that costs me something, I am expressing love. Love is "selflessness" or "self-sacrifice" in contradistinction to "selfishness." Most of us know little of living like this or being "led" in this right way. But once a person discovers the delight of doing something for others, he has started through the gate being led into one of God's green pastures.

**I  
N**



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PATIENT: GO TO THE END OF THE LINE - Luke 14:7-11 So He told a parable to those who were invited, when He noted how they chose the best places, saying to them: 8 “When you are invited by anyone to a wedding feast, do not sit down in the best place, lest one more honorable than you be invited by him; 9 and he who invited you and him come and say to you, ‘Give place to this man,’ and then you begin with shame to take the lowest place. 10 But when you are invited, go and sit down in the lowest place, so that when he who invited you comes he may say to you, ‘Friend, go up higher.’ Then you will have glory in the presence of those who sit at the table with you. 11 For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”

**P**

2. Instead of being "boss" I am willing to be at the bottom of the heap. Or to use sheep terminology, instead of being "Top Ram" I'm willing to be a "tail-ender". When the desire for self-assertion, self-aggrandizement, self-pleasing gives way to the desire for simply pleasing God and others, much of the fret and strain is drained away from daily living. A hallmark of the serene soul is the absence of "drive," at least, "drive" for self-determination.
3. The person who is prepared to put his personal life and personal affairs in the Master's hands for His management and direction has found the place of rest in fresh energy to please others.
4. BE PATIENT so that I do not make the mistakes that I see in those who make hasty and unwise decisions like King Saul who couldn't wait long enough to obey God. Or Lot who wanted to make a fast buck and ended up losing his wife, his children, his honor, and all his possessions because of impatient and unwise decision making!

ATTITUDE: PRAISE INSTEAD OF POUT- 1 Thessalonians 5:18 in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

o Instead of finding fault with life and always asking "Why?" I am willing to accept every circumstance of life in an attitude of gratitude. Human beings, being what they are, somehow feel entitled to question the reasons for everything that happens to them.

**A**

o In many instances life itself becomes a continuous criticism and dissection of one's circumstances and acquaintances. We look for someone or something on which to pin the blame for our misfortunes. We are often quick to forget our blessings, slow to forget our misfortunes.

o But if one really believes his affairs are in God's hands, every event, no matter whether joyous or tragic, will be taken as part of God's plan. To know beyond doubt that He does all for our welfare is to be led into a wide area of peace and quietness and strength for every situation.

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RESPECTFULNESS: Leviticus 19:32 'You shall rise before the gray headed and honor the presence of an old man, and fear your God: I am the Lord.

**R** We are closing in on the era God says will be lawless and hard hearted. When children will be disrespectful, and society will be brutal. What a strategic time to capture the hearts of our children to reflect the submissive reverent heart God desires in us His children. 2 Timothy 3:1-3 But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. 2 People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, 3 without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, NIV

EMANCIPATION FROM SELF: seek JESUS-OTHERS-YOU = JOY - Philippians 2:4 Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.

- E**
1. Instead of insisting on my rights I am willing to forego them in favor of others. Basically this is what the Master meant by denying one's self. It is not easy, nor normal, nor natural to do this. Even in the loving atmosphere of the home, self-assertion is pretty evident and the powerful exercise of individual rights is always apparent.
  2. But the person who is willing to pocket his pride, to take a back seat, to play second fiddle without a feeling of being abused or put upon has gone a long way onto new ground with God.
  3. There is a tremendous emancipation from "self" in this attitude. One is set free from the shackles of personal pride. It's pretty hard to hurt such a person. He who has no sense of self-importance cannot be offended or deflated. Somehow such people enjoy a wholesome outlook of carefree abandon that makes their Christian lives contagious with contentment and gaiety.

NURTURING LIFESTYLE: 2 Peter 3:18 but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen.

- N**
- ❖ Job 23:12 I have not departed from the commandment of His lips; I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my necessary [food.] (NKJV)
  - ❖ Psalm 119:97, 165 Oh, how I love Your law! It [is] my meditation all the day. 165 Great peace have those who love Your law, And nothing causes them to stumble. (NKJV)
  - ❖ Jeremiah 15:16 Your words were found, and I ate them, And Your word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart; For I am called by Your name, O LORD God of hosts. (NKJV)
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## T

THANKFULNESS: Romans 1:21 For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. NIV

1 Thessalonians 5:18 give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. NIV

INIQUITY-HATING: Isaiah 33:15-17 He who walks righteously and speaks what is right, who rejects gain from extortion and keeps his hand from accepting bribes, who stops his ears against plots of murder and shuts his eyes against contemplating evil— 16 this is the man who will dwell on the heights, whose refuge will be the mountain fortress. His bread will be supplied, and water will not fail him. 17 Your eyes will see the king in his beauty and view a land that stretches afar. NIV

## I

1. Psalm 101:3 set before my eyes no vile thing. The deeds of faithless men I hate; they will not cling to me.
2. Psalm 106:34-37 They did not destroy the peoples as the LORD had commanded them, 35 but they mingled with the nations and adopted their customs. 36 They worshiped their idols, which became a snare to them. 37 They sacrificed their sons and their daughters to demons.

NOT I BUT CHRIST: LIVE THE CRUCIFIED LIFE - Galatians 2:20 I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

## N

1. Instead of exercising and asserting my will, I learn to cooperate with His wishes and comply with His will. It must be noted that all the steps outlined here involve the will.
2. The saints from earliest times have repeatedly pointed out that nine-tenths of Christianity, of becoming a true follower, a dedicated disciple, lies in the will.
3. When a man or woman allows his will to be crossed out, canceling the great I in their decisions, then indeed the Cross has been applied to that life. This is the meaning of taking up one's cross daily -to go to one's own death -no longer my will in the matter but His will be done.

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GENTLENESS: is a beautiful reflection of God in our lives by the absence of an abrasive manner in my dealings with people. I want an increasing tendency toward personal kindness in my way with others.

**G**

1. Matthew 11:28-30 Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and give you rest. 29 Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”
2. Galatians 5:22-25 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness (gentleness KJV), goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. 24 And those who are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. 25 If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.
3. 2 Timothy 2:24 And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient.

By now we are all asking the same thing aren’t we?

- How could we ever do anything of this magnitude?
- How can we penetrate the lives of our children with these truths?
- How can we see God unleashed in their lives?
- How can we every day be actively using God’s Word and seeing it touch those children and grandchildren we love so much?

The answer is in the most powerful tool in the arsenal of weaponry to win spiritual battles that God has given us. And parenting, and grand parenting is a spiritual battle, right? Well, tonight we will conclude our look at Parenting in Godliness with the key to raising, nurturing, and launching children that please the Lord as we learn How to Pray for our children.

When Jesus left Earth and went back to heaven, what did those who were closest to Him remember about Him? Remember, imitation is the highest form of compliment.

1. What did they imitate from His life?
2. What was it about Him they couldn’t get along without? Prayer, of course.
3. What do we need to do the most for our family? Pray, of course.

We as parents have a biblical obligation to PRAY FOR OUR CHILDREN. Note 1 Samuel 12:23 and Ephesians 6:18:

*1 Samuel 12:23 "Moreover, as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the LORD in ceasing to pray for you; but teach you the good and the right way. (NKJV)*

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*Ephesians 6:18 praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints -- (NKJV)*

And what are we watching for? God answering those prayers!

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# Marriages Empowered by Prayer

WFF: Message Eighteen (020623PM)

God of the Universe marked the pathway we need to stay on for raising our children? The good news is that He has. And in the map book called God's Word is a clearly marked trail for Parenting and Grand parenting our Families in Godliness.

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**G** *A GODLY LIFE*

**O** *AN OUTREACHING LIFE*

**D** *A DISCIPLINED LIFE*

**L** *A LOVING LIFE*

**I** *AN INTEGRITY LIFE*

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- N A NOBLE LIFE
  - E AN EXEMPLARY LIFE
  - S A SPIRIT-FILLED LIFE
  - S A SACRIFICIAL LIFE

Today we look the other direction, what do we need to be as parents. Or what kind of character does God want in us to be His communicators of truth to our precious children? May I share these areas God looks at in:

- P A PATIENT LIFE
- A AN AFFECTIONATE LIFE
- R A RESPECTFUL LIFE
- E AN EASILY-ENTREATED LIFE
- N A NURTURING LIFE
- T A THANKFUL LIFE
- I AN INIQUITY-HATING LIFE
- N A NOT BEHAVING RUDELY LIFE
- G A GENTLENESS LIFE

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## **GODLY LIVING**

**G**

LEARN TO LIVE FOR GOD EACH DAY. Titus 2:11-13

NOT CHOOSE TO LOOK AT WHAT GOD CALLS EVIL. Psalm 101:3-4

NOT USE MY MOUTH TO SAY WHAT GOD CALLS CORRUPT. Ephesians 4:29

SEEK TO PLEASE GOD IN ALL I DO. 1 Corinthians 10:31

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## **O** OUTREACHING Matthew 28:18-20

SAY TO THE LORD ALL THROUGH MY LIFE – HERE AM I LORD SEND ME. Isaiah 6:8

**D** **DISCIPLINED:** is defined by the Greek Dictionary as “a virtue, which consists in mastery of the appetites and passions, especially the sensual ones.” The only force that can control our flesh is the Holy Spirit. When yielded to Him we become vessels that are worshipful sacrifices to Him no longer to self. I want to be graciously under the control of God’s Spirit of Discipline.

LEARN TO BE DISCIPLINED IN MY EVERY DAY LIVING. 1 Timothy 4:7

BE ORDERLY: 1 Corinthians 14:40

BE LOVELY: Philippians 4:8

BE HARD WORKING: 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12

BE DEPENDABLE: Psalm 15:4b

**L** **LOVING:** Colossians 3:14 But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection. **LOVE** is the absence of selfishness. I want to be less selfish and self-seeking than I was last month.

**I** **INTEGRITY:** 1 John 1:7 But if we walk in the light

OBEY GOD EVEN WHEN IT LOOKS HOPELESS. Genesis 16:9,13

OBEY THE LORD WHEN ALONE, FAR FROM HOME, AND EVEN WHEN NO ONE CAN EVER FIND OUT WHAT I DID – EXCEPT GOD. Genesis 39:9

**N** **NOBLE:** Philippians 4:8 SEEK WHAT IS - 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.



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**E** **EXEMPLARY LIVING:** 1 Timothy 4:12 Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word (**what I say**), in conduct (**what I do**), in love (**what I give**), in spirit (**what I feel**), in faith (**what I believe**), in purity (**what I resist**).

DEVOUR GOD'S WORD. 1 Timothy 4:13

SERVE CHRIST'S CHURCH. 1 Timothy 4:

EXCEL IN SPIRITUAL THINGS NOT MERELY IN TEMPORAL THINGS LIKE SPORTS, THE ARTS OR ACADEMICS. 1 Timothy 4:15

RUN FROM SIN IN ANY FORM. 2 Timothy 2:22

**S** **SPIRIT-FILLED:** Ephesians 5:18, 21 And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; **but be filled with the Spirit**, 21 **submitting to one another in the fear of God**. Spirit-Filled living makes us submissive in every area of our lives:

OBEY MY PARENTS EVERY DAY I LIVE IN THEIR HOME, AND HONOR THEM ALL OF MY DAYS ON EARTH. Ephesians 6:1-3

HONOR MY BOSS AT WORK. Ephesians 6:5

KEEP THE LAWS OF MY COUNTRY AS A TESTIMONY TO MY LORD.  
Romans 13:1-2

HONOR MY LEADERS AT CHURCH ALL MY DAYS SO THAT I MAY  
SOMEDAY HAVE THE HIGH HONOR OF SERVING Christ's CHURCH.  
Hebrews 13:17

**S** **SACRIFICIAL:** Romans 12:1-2

**sacrifice self for Christ's sake** - Instead of loving myself most I am willing to love Christ best and others more than myself. The moment I deliberately do something definite either for God or others that costs me something, I am expressing love. Love is "selflessness" or "self-sacrifice" in contradistinction to "selfishness." Most of us know little of living like this or being "led" in this right way. But once a person discovers the delight of doing something for others, he has started through the gate being led into one of God's green pastures.

**IN**

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**P** **PATIENT:** GO TO THE END OF THE LINE - Luke 14:7-11 So He told a parable to those who were invited, when He noted how they chose the best places, saying to them: 8 "When you are invited by anyone to a wedding feast, do not sit down in the best place, lest one more honorable than you be invited by him; 9 and he who invited you and him come and say to you, 'Give place to this man,' and then you begin with shame to take the lowest place. 10 But when you are invited, go and sit down in the lowest place, so that when he who invited you comes he may say to you, 'Friend, go up higher.' Then you will have glory in the presence of those who sit at the table with you. 11 For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

Instead of being "boss" I am willing to be at the bottom of the heap. Or to use sheep terminology, instead of being "Top Ram" I'm willing to be a "tail-ender". When the desire for self-assertion, self-aggrandizement, self-pleasing gives way to the desire for simply pleasing God and others, much of the fret and strain is drained away from daily living. A hallmark of the serene soul is the absence of "drive," at least, "drive" for self-determination.

The person who is prepared to put his personal life and personal affairs in the Master's hands for His management and direction has found the place of rest in fresh energy to please others.

BE PATIENT so that I do not make the mistakes that I see in those who make hasty and unwise decisions like King Saul who couldn't wait long enough to obey God. Or Lot who wanted to make a fast buck and ended up losing his wife, his children, his honor, and all his possessions because of impatient and unwise decision making!

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**A ATTITUDE: PRAISE INSTEAD OF POUT-** 1 Thessalonians 5:18 in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

o Instead of finding fault with life and always asking "Why?" I am willing to accept every circumstance of life in an attitude of gratitude. Human beings, being what they are, somehow feel entitled to question the reasons for everything that happens to them.

o In many instances life itself becomes a continuous criticism and dissection of one's circumstances and acquaintances. We look for someone or something on which to pin the blame for our misfortunes. We are often quick to forget our blessings, slow to forget our misfortunes.

o But if one really believes his affairs are in God's hands, every event, no matter whether joyous or tragic, will be taken as part of God's plan. To know beyond doubt that He does all for our welfare is to be led into a wide area of peace and quietness and strength for every situation.

**R RESPECTFULNESS:** Leviticus 19:32 'You shall rise before the gray headed and honor the presence of an old man, and fear your God: I am the Lord. We are closing in on the era God says will be lawless and hard hearted. When children will be disrespectful, and society will be brutal. What a strategic time to capture the hearts of our children to reflect the submissive reverent heart God desires in us His children.

2 Timothy 3:1-3 But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. 2 People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, 3 **without love**, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, NIV

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**E EMANCIPATION FROM SELF:** seek JESUS-OTHERS-YOU = JOY - Philippians 2:4 Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.

Instead of insisting on my rights I am willing to forego them in favor of others. Basically this is what the Master meant by denying one's self. It is not easy, nor normal, nor natural to do this. Even in the loving atmosphere of the home, self-assertion is pretty evident and the powerful exercise of individual rights is always apparent.

But the person who is willing to pocket his pride, to take a back seat, to play second fiddle without a feeling of being abused or put upon has gone a long way onto new ground with God.

There is a tremendous emancipation from "self" in this attitude. One is set free from the shackles of personal pride. It's pretty hard to hurt such a person. He who has no sense of self-importance cannot be offended or deflated. Somehow such people enjoy a wholesome outlook of carefree abandon that makes their Christian lives contagious with contentment and gaiety.

**N NURTURING LIFESTYLE:** 2 Peter 3:18 but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen.

Job 23:12 I have not departed from the commandment of His lips; I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my necessary [food.] (NKJV)

Psalms 119:97, 165 Oh, how I love Your law! It [is] my meditation all the day.  
165 Great peace have those who love Your law, And nothing causes them to stumble. (NKJV)

Jeremiah 15:16 Your words were found, and I ate them, And Your word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart; For I am called by Your name, O LORD God of hosts. (NKJV)

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**T THANKFULNESS:** Romans 1:21 For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. NIV

1 Thessalonians 5:18 give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. NIV

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**I INIQUITY-HATING:** Isaiah 33:15-17 He who walks righteously and speaks what is right, who rejects gain from extortion and keeps his hand from accepting bribes, who stops his ears against plots of murder and shuts his eyes against contemplating evil— 16 this is the man who will dwell on the heights, whose refuge will be the mountain fortress. His bread will be supplied, and water will not fail him. 17 Your eyes will see the king in his beauty and view a land that stretches afar. NIV

Psalm 101:3 set before my eyes no vile thing. The deeds of faithless men I hate; they will not cling to me.

Psalm 106:34-37 They did not destroy the peoples as the LORD had commanded them, 35 but they mingled with the nations and adopted their customs. 36 They worshiped their idols, which became a snare to them. 37 They sacrificed their sons and their daughters to demons.

**N NOT I BUT CHRIST: LIVE THE CRUCIFIED LIFE** - Galatians 2:20 I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

Instead of exercising and asserting my will, I learn to cooperate with His wishes and comply with His will. It must be noted that all the steps outlined here involve the will.

The saints from earliest times have repeatedly pointed out that nine-tenths of Christianity, of becoming a true follower, a dedicated disciple, lies in the will.

When a man or woman allows his will to be crossed out, canceling the great I in their decisions, then indeed the Cross has been applied to that life. This is the meaning of taking up one's cross daily -to go to one's own death -no longer my will in the matter but His will be done.

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**G GENTLENESS:** is a beautiful reflection of God in our lives by the absence of an abrasive manner in my dealings with people. I want an increasing tendency toward personal kindness in my way with others.

Matthew 11:28-30 Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and give you rest. 29 Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for **I am gentle and lowly in heart**, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”

Galatians 5:22-25 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, **kindness (gentleness)** KJV), goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. 24 And those who are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. 25 If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.

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

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By now we are all asking the same thing aren’t we?

How could we ever do anything of this magnitude?

How can we penetrate the lives of our children with these truths?

How can we see God unleashed in their lives?

How can we every day be actively using God's Word and seeing it touch those children and grandchildren we love so much?

The answer is in the most powerful tool in the arsenal of weaponry to win spiritual battles that God has given us. And parenting, and grand parenting is a spiritual battle, right? Well, tonight we will conclude our look at Parenting in Godliness with the key to raising, nurturing, and launching children that please the Lord as we learn How to Pray for our children.

When Jesus left Earth and went back to heaven, what did those who were closest to Him remember about Him? Remember, imitation is the highest form of compliment.

What did they imitate from His life?

What as it about Him they couldn’t get along without? Prayer, of course.

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What do we need to do the most for our family? Pray, of course.

We as parents have a biblical obligation to PRAY FOR OUR CHILDREN. Note I Samuel 12:23 and Ephesians 6:18:

*1 Samuel 12:23 "Moreover, as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the LORD in ceasing to pray for you; but teach you the good and the right way. (NKJV)*

*Ephesians 6:18 praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints -- (NKJV)*

And what are we watching for? God answering those prayers!

*Colossians 4:12 Epaphras, who is one of you, a bondservant of Christ, greets you, always laboring fervently for you in prayers, that you may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.*

## **WE MUST PRAY FOR THEIR SPIRITUAL LIFE:**

### **To see them genuinely SAVED.**

1. 1 Timothy 2:4 who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. (NIV)
2. 2 Timothy 3:15 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. (NKJV)
3. **To see them loving God's Word.**
  1. Job 23:12 I have not departed from the commandment of His lips; I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my necessary [food.] (NKJV)
  2. Psalm 119:97, 165 Oh, how I love Your law! It [is] my meditation all the day. 165 Great peace have those who love Your law, And nothing causes them to stumble. (NKJV)
  3. Jeremiah 15:16 Your words were found, and I ate them, And Your word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart; For I am called by Your name, O LORD God of hosts. (NKJV)
4. **To see them living IN VICTORY.**
  1. John 8:36 "Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed. (NKJV)
  2. John 17:15 "I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one. (NKJV)
  3. 1 John 4:4 You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. (NKJV)
5. **To see them thinking of Heaven.**
  1. 2 Corinthians 4:16-17 Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by

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day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, (NKJV)

2. Colossians 3:1-2 If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. 2 Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.
3. 1 Thessalonians 2:19-20 For what [is] our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? [Is it] not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming? 20 For you are our glory and joy. (NKJV)
4. 1 Timothy 6:12 Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. (NKJV) [Funerals, mansions, ancient sites, Tuts' treasures]

**6. To see them FINDING SIN REPULSIVE.**

1. Proverbs 20:17 Bread gained by deceit is sweet to a man, But afterward his mouth will be filled with gravel.
2. Luke 15:17-18 "But when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! 18 'I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, (NKJV)
3. Hebrews 11:25 choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, (NKJV)

**7. To see them stay TENDER TOWARD GOD.**

1. Psalm 51:17 The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, A broken and a contrite heart -- These, O God, You will not despise. (NKJV) Invitations, Christian service, others needs...

Next time we'll see:

**3. WE MUST PRAY FOR THEIR PERSONAL LIFE:**

1. To see them MAINTAINING A CLEAR CONSCIENCE.
2. To see them learning to STAND ALONE
3. To see them seeking to STAY PURE.
4. To see them KEEP A SERVANT'S HEART.
5. To see them NEVER BECOMING BITTER IN TRIALS.

**4. WE MUST PRAY FOR THEIR FAMILY LIFE:**

1. To see them cultivating a LOVE for their BROTHERS AND SISTERS.
2. To see them learning to TRUST GOD WITH hard situations AND NOT to REBEL.
3. To see them each loving the way God made them as men and women.
4. To see them waiting to MEET GOD'S CHOSEN LIFE PARTNER for them.

**5. WE MUST PRAY FOR THEIR MINISTRY LIFE:**

1. To see them CHOOSING to NOT LOVE MONEY.
2. To see them choosing a life of PERSONALLY KNOWING, SERVING, LOVING and OBEYING the Lord.

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# Powerful Parental Prayers

## WFF: Message Nineteen (020630AM)

*A church that doesn't pray is on a spiritual treadmill, lots of action and no progressi[1].*

*Prayer catapults us to the frontiers of what ever God is doing around the earth.*

*The keys to prayer: express deepest thoughts to God, trust no matter what, influence others for God;*

What kind of father prepared John G. Paton for that kind of perseverancei[2] — another fifty years of rugged, faithful missionary labor? Paton's father, James, was converted at seventeen and immediately convinced his mother and father that the family should have morning and evening prayer together. Paton writes about his father:

"And so began in his seventeenth year that blessed custom of Family Prayer, morning and evening which my father practiced probably without one single avoidable omission till he lay on his deathbed at seventy-seven years of age. None of us can remember that any day ever passed unhallowed thus; no hurry for market, no rush to business, no arrival of friends or guests, no trouble or sorrow, no joy or excitement, ever prevented at least our kneeling around the family altar, while the High Priest led our prayers to God, and offered himself and his children there."i[3]

By now we are all asking the same thing aren't we?

1. How could we ever do anything of this magnitude?
2. How can we penetrate the lives of our children with these truths?
3. How can we see God unleashed in their lives?
4. How can we every day be actively using God's Word and seeing it touch those children and grandchildren we love so much?

The answer is in the most powerful tool in the arsenal of weaponry to win spiritual battles that God has given us. And parenting, and grand parenting is a spiritual battle, right? Well, tonight we will conclude our look at Parenting in Godliness with the key to raising, nurturing, and launching children that please the Lord as we learn How to Pray for our children.

When Jesus left Earth and went back to heaven, what did those who were closest to Him remember about Him? Remember, imitation is the highest form of compliment.

5. What did they imitate from His life? Check Acts 6:4!

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6. What as it about Him they couldn't get along without? Prayer, of course.
  7. What do we need to do the most for our family? Pray, of course.

1. We as parents have a biblical obligation to PRAY FOR OUR CHILDREN. Note I Samuel 12:23 and Ephesians 6:18:
2. 1 Samuel 12:23 "Moreover, as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the LORD in ceasing to pray for you; but I will teach you the good and the right way. (NKJV)
3. Galatians 4:19 My little children, for whom I labor in birth again until Christ is formed in you,
4. Ephesians 6:18 praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints -- (NKJV) And what are we watching for? God answering those prayers!
5. Colossians 4:12 Epaphras, who is one of you, a bondservant of Christ, greets you, always laboring fervently for you in prayers, that you may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.

#### **WE MUST PRAY FOR THEIR SPIRITUAL LIFE:**

##### **4. TO SEE THEM GENUINELY SAVED.**

6. 1 Timothy 2:4 who **wants all men to be saved** and to come to a knowledge of the truth. (NIV)
7. 2 Timothy 3:15 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. (NKJV)

##### **5. TO SEE THEM LOVING GOD'S WORD.**

8. Job 23:12 I have not departed from the commandment of His lips; I have **treasured the words of His mouth** more than my necessary [food.] (NKJV)
9. Psalm 119:97, 165 Oh, how I **love Your law!** It [is] **my meditation all the day.** 165 Great peace have those who love Your law, And nothing causes them to stumble. (NKJV)
10. Jeremiah 15:16 Your **words were found, and I ate them**, And Your word was to me the **joy and rejoicing of my heart**; For I am **called by Your name**, O LORD God of hosts. (NKJV)

##### **6. TO SEE THEM LIVING IN VICTORY.**

11. John 8:36 "Therefore if the **Son makes you free**, you shall be free indeed. (NKJV)

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12. John 17:15 "I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You **should keep them from the evil one**. (NKJV)

13. 1 John 4:4 You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because **He who is in you is greater** than he who is in the world. (NKJV)

- **TO SEE THEM THINKING OF HEAVEN.**

14. 2 Corinthians 4:16-17 Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and **eternal weight of glory**, (NKJV)

15. Colossians 3:1-2 If ye then be risen with Christ, **seek those things which are above**, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. 2 Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.

16. 1 Thessalonians 2:19-20 For what [is] our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? [Is it] not even **you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming?** 20 For you are our glory and joy. (NKJV)

17. 1 Timothy 6:12 Fight the good fight of faith, **lay hold on eternal life**, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. (NKJV) [Funerals, mansions, ancient sites, tuts treasures]

- **TO SEE THEM FINDING SIN REPULSIVE.**

18. Proverbs 20:17 Bread gained by deceit is sweet to a man, But **afterward his mouth will be filled with gravel**.

19. Luke 15:17-18 "But when **he came to himself**, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! 18 'I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, (NKJV)

20. Hebrews 11:25 choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy **the passing pleasures of sin**, (NKJV)

- **TO SEE THEM STAY TENDER TOWARD GOD.**

21. Psalm 51:17 The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, **A broken and a contrite heart** -- These, O God, You will not despise. (NKJV) Invitations, Christian service, others needs...

## **WE MUST PRAY FOR THEIR PERSONAL LIFE:**

### **1. TO SEE THEM MAINTAINING A CLEAR CONSCIENCE.**

22. Acts 24:16 "This [being] so, I myself **always strive** to have a **conscience without offense toward God and men**. (NKJV)

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23. 1 Timothy 1:5 Now the purpose of the commandment is love from a pure heart, [from] **a good conscience**, and [from] sincere faith, (NKJV)
24. 1 Timothy 1:19 having faith and a **good conscience**, which some having rejected, concerning the faith have suffered shipwreck, (NKJV)
2. **TO SEE THEM LEARNING TO STAND ALONE** (which means a conviction that their character is more important than their popularity).
25. Daniel 1:8 But Daniel **purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself** with the portion of the king's delicacies, nor with the wine which he drank; therefore he requested of the chief of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself. (NKJV)
26. Daniel 3:16-18 Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego answered and said to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. "If that [is the case,] our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver [us] from your hand, O king. "But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that **we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship** the gold image which you have set up." (NKJV)
27. 2 Peter 1:3 as His divine power has given to us **all things that pertain to life and godliness**, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, (NKJV)
3. **TO SEE THEM SEEKING TO STAY PURE.**
28. Genesis 39:9 "[There is] no one greater in this house than I, nor has he kept back anything from me but you, because you [are] his wife. How then can I do this **great wickedness, and sin against God?**" (NKJV)
29. 1 Thessalonians 4:3-7 For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should **abstain from sexual immorality**; that each of you should **know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification** and honor, not in passion of lust, like the Gentiles who do not know God; that no one should take advantage of and defraud his brother in this matter, because the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also forewarned you and testified. For **God did not call us to uncleanness**, but in holiness. (NKJV)
4. **TO SEE THEM KEEP A SERVANT'S HEART.**
30. Mark 10:45 "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, **but to serve**, and to give His life a ransom for many." (NKJV)
31. Philippians 2:5-7 **Let this mind be in you** which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, **taking the form of a bondservant**, and coming in the likeness of men. (NKJV)

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## 5. TO SEE THEM NEVER BECOMING BITTER IN TRIALS.

32. II Samuel 16:11 "... Let him alone, and let him curse; for **so the Lord has ordered him.**"
33. 1 Kings 11:14 Now **the Lord raised up an adversary** against Solomon, Hadad the Edomite; he was a descendant of the king in Edom.
34. Job 2:10 But he said to her, "You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. Shall we indeed accept good from God, and shall we not **accept adversity?**" In all this Job did not sin with his lips. (NKJV)
35. Hebrews 12:15 Looking diligently lest any man **fail of the grace of God**; lest any root of **bitterness springing up trouble** [you], and thereby many be defiled; (KJV)

## WE MUST PRAY FOR THEIR FAMILY LIFE:

- TO SEE THEM CULTIVATING A LOVE FOR THEIR BROTHERS AND SISTERS.

36. John 13:35 By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you **have love for one another.**"
37. 1 John 3:11 For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that **we should love one another**, (NKJV);
38. 1 John 4:11 Beloved, if God so loved us, **we also ought to love one another.** (NKJV);
39. 1 John 4:20 If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for **he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?** (NKJV)

- TO SEE THEM LEARNING TO TRUST GOD WITH HARD SITUATIONS AND NOT TO REBEL.

40. Proverbs 3:5-6 **Trust** in the LORD with all your heart, And **lean not** on your own understanding; In all **your ways acknowledge Him**, And **He shall direct** your paths. (NKJV);
41. 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. 2 Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and **those who resist will bring judgment on themselves.** (NKJV)

- TO SEE THEM EACH LOVING THE WAY GOD MADE THEM AS MEN AND WOMEN.

42. Psalm 139:13-18 For **You formed** my inward parts; You covered me in my mother's womb. 14 **I will praise You**, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made;

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Marvelous are Your works, And that my soul knows very well. 15 My frame was not hidden from You, When I was made in secret, And skillfully wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. 16 Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. And in Your book they all were written, **The days fashioned for me**, When as yet there were none of them. 17 How precious also are Your thoughts to me, O God! How great is the sum of them! 18 If I should count them, they would be more in number than the sand; When I awake, I am still with You. (NKJV)

43. 1 Timothy 4:12 Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but **set an example for the believers** in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity. (NIV) The Message says: Get the word out. Teach all these things. And don't let anyone put you down because you're young. **Teach believers with your life: by word, by demeanor, by love, by faith, by integrity.** ... Cultivate these things. Immerse yourself in them...Keep a firm grasp on both your character and your teaching. Don't be diverted. Just keep at it.
44. Titus 2:4-5 that they admonish **the young women to** love their husbands, to love their children, 5 to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed.
45. 1 Peter 3:1-7 **Wives**, in the same way be submissive to your husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives, 2 when they see the purity and reverence of your lives. 3 **Your beauty should not come from outward adornment**, such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewelry and fine clothes. 4 Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight. 5 For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to make themselves beautiful. They were submissive to their own husbands, 6 like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her master. You are her daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear. 7 Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers. **The Message paraphrases this passage as:** The same goes for you wives: Be good wives to your husbands, responsive to their needs. There are husbands who, indifferent as they are to any words about God, will be **captivated by your life of holy beauty.** **What matters is not your outer appearance**—the styling of your hair, the jewelry you wear, the cut of your clothes—but **your inner disposition.** **Cultivate inner beauty, the gentle, gracious kind that God delights in.** The holy women of old were beautiful before God that way, and were good, loyal wives to their husbands. Sarah, for instance, taking care of Abraham, would address him as "my dear husband." You'll be true daughters of Sarah if you do the same, unanxious and unintimidated. The same goes for you husbands: Be good husbands to your wives. Honor them, delight in them.

1. **TO SEE THEM WAITING TO MEET GOD'S CHOSEN LIFE PARTNER FOR THEM.**

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1. Proverbs 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 All the days of her life. (NKJV)
  2. Proverbs 18:22 He who finds a **wife finds what is good and receives favor from the LORD**. (NIV)
  3. Proverbs 19:13-14 A foolish son is the ruin of his father, And the contentions of a wife are a continual dripping. 14 Houses and riches are an inheritance from fathers, But **a prudent wife is from the LORD**.
  4. 2 Corinthians 6:14 **Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers**: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?

### **WE MUST PRAY FOR THEIR MINISTRY LIFE:**

1. **TO SEE THEM CHOOSING TO NOT LOVE MONEY.**
  5. 1 Timothy 6:9-12 But **those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare**, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But you, O man of God, **flee these things and pursue** righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, and gentleness. Fight the good fight of faith, **lay hold on eternal life**, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. (NKJV)
  6. Philippians 4:11 Not that I speak in respect of want: for **I have learned**, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. (KJV)
2. **TO SEE THEM CHOOSING A LIFE OF PERSONALLY KNOWING, SERVING, LOVING AND OBEYING THE LORD.**
  7. 1 Chronicles 28:9 "As for you, my son Solomon, **know the God of your father**, and **serve Him with a loyal heart and with a willing mind**; for the LORD searches all hearts and understands all the intent of the thoughts. **If you seek Him, He will be found by you**; but if you forsake Him, He will cast you off forever. (NKJV)
  8. 1 Chronicles 29:19 "And **give my son Solomon a loyal heart** to keep Your commandments and Your testimonies and Your statutes, to do all these things, and to build the temple for which I have made provision." (NKJV)
  9. 3 John 4 **I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth**. (KJV)

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# What Happens When Couples Pray?

## WFF: Message Twenty (020707AM)

One of my great heroes of the faith is a missionary who lived from 1824-1907. His name was John Paton, and he was born in a "farm cottage not far from Dumfries, Scotland, May 24, 1824. He was the eldest of eleven children. After some snatches of elementary education, he set out to learn the trade of his father -- the manufacture of stockings. For fourteen hours a day he manipulated one of the six "stocking frames" in his father's workshop, using for study most of the two hours allotted each day for the eating of his meals".

To learn the secret of his life as a pioneer missionary is to learn of the power of his parent's prayers for him. Remember that prayer catapults us to the frontiers of what ever God is doing around the earth, and that is exactly what John Paton had been taught by example.

"It was New Year's Day, 1861, on the island of Tanna, in the New Hebrides. The missionaries had spent the day taking medicine, food, and water to the villagers, hundreds of whom were smitten down with a virulent type of measles. In the evening, the missionaries knelt in the mission house in a fervent prayer of consecration of their all to Christ and of petition for the salvation of the cannibals among whom they lived. They solemnly committed themselves to the protecting presence of their Lord, not knowing that even then the house was surrounded by fierce savages, armed with clubs, killing-stones and muskets, determined to slay and eat the foreigners whose God, they believed, had brought disease, hurricanes, and other troubles upon them.

After the worship, the younger missionary stepped out of the door to go to his own house close by. Instantly he was attacked and fell to the ground screaming, "Look out! They are trying to kill us!" Rushing to the door the older missionary shouted to the savages, "Yahweh God sees you and will punish you for trying to murder His servants." Two cannibals swung their ponderous clubs and struck at him, but missed, whereupon the entire company fled into the bush.

The younger missionary was in such a state of excitement that for days he was unable to sleep. In fact, his nervous system was unhinged by the shock of the attack, his mind gave way under the apprehension of being killed and eaten by savages, and in three weeks he died. The older missionary had already survived many such attacks on his life and was destined to survive many more. John G. Paton -- for such was his name -- found in the presence of his Lord the antidote to fear and the assurance that his life was immortal until his work was accomplished. "During the crisis," he says in his Autobiography, "I felt calm and firm of soul, standing unafraid and with my whole weight on the promise, *'Lo, I am with you always.'*"

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What prepared John G. Paton for that kind of perseverance<sup>[2]</sup> — another fifty years of rugged, faithful missionary labor? His parent's prayers. Paton's father, James, was converted at seventeen and immediately convinced his mother and father that the family should have morning and evening prayer together. Paton writes about his father:

"And so began in his seventeenth year that blessed custom of Family Prayer, morning and evening which my father practiced probably without one single avoidable omission till he lay on his deathbed at seventy-seven years of age. None of us can remember that any day ever passed unhallowed thus; no hurry for market, no rush to business, no arrival of friends or guests, no trouble or sorrow, no joy or excitement, ever prevented at least our kneeling around the family altar, while the High Priest led our prayers to God, and offered himself and his children there."<sup>[3]</sup>

How could we ever see our children do anything of this magnitude? How can we penetrate the lives of our children with these truths? How can we see God unleashed in their lives? How can we every day be actively using God's Word and seeing it touch those children and grandchildren we love so much?

The answer is in the most powerful tool in the arsenal of weaponry to win spiritual battles that God has given us. The key to raising, nurturing, and launching children that please the Lord is learning how to pray for our children.

That is why Jesus prayed so much and His apostles commanded us to follow that example! To feel the heart of Jesus on prayer, please open with me to Luke 11 and follow along as I read the first 13 verses.

So we as parents have a biblical opportunity and obligation to PRAY FOR OUR CHILDREN.

- 1 Samuel 12:23 "Moreover, as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the LORD in ceasing to pray for you; but I will teach you the good and the right way. (NKJV)
- Ephesians 6:18 praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints -- (NKJV) And what are we watching for? God answering those prayers!

## **WE MUST PRAY FOR THEIR SPIRITUAL LIFE:**

### **1. TO SEE THEM GENUINELY SAVED.**

- 1 Timothy 2:4 who **wants all men to be saved** and to come to a knowledge of the truth. (NIV)

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- 2 Timothy 3:15

#### 1. TO SEE THEM LOVING GOD'S WORD.

- Job 23:12
- Psalm 119:97, 165
- Jeremiah 15:16 Your **words were found, and I ate them**, And Your word was to me the **joy and rejoicing of my heart**; For I am **called by Your name**, O LORD God of hosts. (NKJV)

#### 1. TO SEE THEM LIVING IN VICTORY.

- John 8:36
- John 17:15 "I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You **should keep them from the evil one**. (NKJV)

#### 1. TO SEE THEM THINKING OF HEAVEN.

- 2 Corinthians 4:16-17
- Colossians 3:1-2
- 1 Thessalonians 2:19-20
- 1 Timothy 6:12 Fight the good fight of faith, **lay hold on eternal life**, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. (NKJV) [Funerals, mansions, ancient sites, tuts treasures]

#### 1. TO SEE THEM FINDING SIN REPULSIVE.

- Proverbs 20:17 .
- Luke 15:17-18
- Hebrews 11:25 choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy **the passing pleasures of sin**, (NKJV)

#### 1. TO SEE THEM STAY TENDER TOWARD GOD.

- Psalm 51:17 The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, **A broken and a contrite heart** -- These, O God, You will not despise. (NKJV)

### WE MUST PRAY FOR THEIR PERSONAL LIFE:

#### 1. TO SEE THEM MAINTAINING A CLEAR CONSCIENCE.

What is conscience and how can we pray for our children's conscience? This week two [planes collided in mid air over Germany. The investigation found that the sensor that warns of a collision was switched off. That system is very similar to what God has

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designed as our conscience. It is an automatic warning system that tells us, “Pull up! Pull up!” before we crash and burn.

Our conscience is a part of our personhood as being made in God’s image, and is an innate ability to sense right and wrong. Everyone, even the most uncivilized heathen, has a conscience (Rom. 2:14–15). Our conscience begs us to do what we believe is right and hinders us from doing what we believe is wrong. If we violate our conscience, it condemns us, triggering feelings of disgrace, torment, penitence, dismay, apprehension, dishonor, and even fear. When we follow our conscience, it praises us, bringing joy, tranquility, self-confidence, security, and cheerfulness.

- So in God’s Word a tender heart (Josiah in 2 Chr. 34:27), refers to a responsive conscience.
- The “upright in heart” (Ps. 7:10) are those with pure consciences.
- And when David prayed, “Create in me a clean heart, O God” (Ps. 51:10), he was seeking to have his life and his conscience cleansed.
- A troubled conscience should spur us to seek the spiritual growth that would bring our conscience more in harmony with God’s Word. Psalm 139:23-24
- Our goal should be to “master biblical truth so that our conscience is completely informed and judges right because it is responding to God’s Word. A regular diet of Scripture will strengthen a weak conscience or restrain an overactive one.
- Conversely[i][4], error, human wisdom, and wrong moral influences filling the mind will corrupt or cripple the conscience. Our conscience is like the nerve endings in our fingertips. Its sensitivity to external stimuli can be damaged by the buildup of calluses or even wounded so badly as to be virtually impervious to any feeling. Paul also wrote of the dangers of a calloused conscience (1 Cor. 8:10), a wounded conscience (v. 12), and a seared conscience (1 Tim. 4:2). The word *seared* means[i][5] “cauterized.” Just as a person’s flesh can be “branded” so that it becomes hard and without feeling, so a person’s conscience can be deadened. Whenever we affirm with our lips something that we deny with our lives (whether people know it or not), we deaden our consciences just a little more.

Effective Christian warriors have a conscience bound with God’s truth. “Charles Colson believes that our American society’s constant, mindless engagement with the media, where trash is heaped upon trash and the bizarre is commonplace, has left us morally exhausted and without discernment.

“The inability to make moral distinctions is the AIDS of the intellectuals: an acquired immune deficiency syndrome ... moral blindness of this caliber requires practice. It has to be learned.” In a culture infected with moral AIDS, words lose all meaning; or, they are manipulated to obscure meaning. Thus taxes become “revenue assessment enhancements”; perversion is “gay”; murder of unborn children is “freedom of choice”; Marxism in the church is called “liberation theology.” These are all good words (in the Nazi era “the final

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solution” had a nice ring to it also). And everyone just nods unquestioningly. But when words lose their meaning, it is nearly impossible for the Word of God to be received. If sin and repentance mean nothing, then God’s grace is irrelevant. Our preaching falls on deaf ears. This moral deafness leads to disaster. The Scriptures tell us it was when people accepted King Ahab’s gross evils as “trivial” that fearsome judgment befell ancient Israel.

The tragic result is spiritual impotence. The opposite is true of those who walk in truth. When you are filled with God’s truth and living it, you will have a good conscience, and having that you can face anything. A truthful life is never an accident.i[6]

## **WE MUST PRAY FOR THEIR PERSONAL LIFE:**

### **1. TO SEE THEM MAINTAINING A CLEAR CONSCIENCE.**

- So how do we pray this for our children? Start in Ephesians 6:14 as Paul says, “Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist” (v. 14a). When a soldier tightened his belt he was ready for combat, because in the process of tightening he drew up his tunic and cinched it so it could not impede him as he charged into battle. So also a man of integrity, with a clear conscience, can face the enemy without fear. Without cinching ourselves tightly with the truth of Scripture, the other weapons of our warfare will clatter in disarray. Those who have stood firm as great warriors for Christ have been men and women of the Word and so were filled with the eternal truth of Scripture. The belt also held the sword. Unless we practice the truth, we cannot use the Word of truth. Once a lie gets into the life of a believer, everything begins to fall apart. For over a year, King David lied about his sin with Bathsheba, and nothing went right. Psalms 32 and 51 tell of the price he paid.i[7]
- Acts 24:16 “This [being] so, I myself **always strive** to have a **conscience without offense toward God and men**. (NKJV)
- 1 Timothy 1:5 Now the purpose of the commandment is love from a pure heart, [from] **a good conscience**, and [from] sincere faith, (NKJV)
- 1 Timothy 1:19 having faith and a **good conscience**, which some having rejected, concerning the faith have suffered shipwreck, (NKJV)

You can have a clear conscience if you want one, and the offer is for anyone. If you have not yet come to Christ, the offer stands, as it always has. If you are wondering how to come, perhaps the following story will help. Charles Simeon, one of the greatest preachers of the Church of England, explained his coming to Christ like this:

As I was reading Bishop Wilson on the Lord’s supper, I met with an expression to this effect—“That the Jews knew what they did, when they transferred their sin to the head of their offering.” The thought came into my mind, “What, may I transfer all my guilt to another? Has God provided an

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Offering for me, that I may lay my sins on His head? Then, God willing, I will not bear them on my own soul one moment longer.” Accordingly I sought to lay my sins upon the sacred head of Jesus.

If you want access to Christ and forgiveness of your sins and a new conscience, prayerfully imagine Christ standing before you. Now extend your hands humbly and lay your sins on the head of Jesus.

*I lay my sins on Jesus*

*The spotless Lamb of God;*

*He bears them all, and frees us*

*From the accursed load:*

*I bring my guilt to Jesus.*

*To wash my crimson stains*

*White in His blood most precious,*

*Till not a stain remains.*

(Horatius Bonar, 1843)

What glorious benefits come from the New Covenant. What more could we ask for than forgiveness of our sins and a clear conscience? And we have exactly that in Christ!![8]

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## Lord, Teach ME to Pray

### WFF: Message Twenty-One (020714AM)

*Jesus never taught His disciples how to preach—only how to pray.*

How are you doing this morning in the most wonderful and available ministries available to all of us as believers?

Prayer is one to the few things we are asked to unceasingly be involved with. If prayer is something we are to do unceasingly, then we better know how to do it properly!

When God's Word teaches us how to pray, it is very profitable to notice what God doesn't teach us about prayer

First we can quickly see from the Scriptures that **the Lord doesn't teach us about just one posture of prayer – because any posture will do**. In the Bible, people pray in all different positions:

- Abraham's servant prayed while standing in Genesis 24:12-14 Then **he said, "O Lord God** of my master Abraham, please give me success this day, and show kindness to my master Abraham. 13 **Behold, here I stand** by the well of water, and the daughters of the men of the city are coming out to draw water. 14 Now let it be that the young woman to whom I say, 'Please let down your pitcher that I may drink,' and she says, 'Drink, and I will also give your camels a drink'—let her be the one You have appointed for Your servant Isaac. And by this I will know that You have shown kindness to my master."
- Moses prayed while bowing down in Exodus 34:8 So Moses made haste and **bowed his head toward the earth**, and worshiped.
- The Israelites prayed in sorrow for their sins as they were sitting in Judges 20:26 Then all the children of Israel, that is, all the people, went up and came to the house of God and wept. They **sat there before the Lord** and fasted that day until evening; and they offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the Lord.
- Elijah prayed for rain on top of Mount Carmel with his head between knees in 1 Kings 18:42 So Ahab went up to eat and drink. And Elijah **went up to the top of Carmel; then he bowed down on the ground, and put his face between his knees**,
- In Babylon Daniel stopped to go home and pray out a window in his home facing Jerusalem's temple in Daniel 6:10 Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went home. And in his upper room, **with his windows open toward Jerusalem, he knelt down on his knees three times that day, and prayed** and gave thanks before his God, as was his custom since early days.

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- Jesus was praying on His knees face down in Matthew 26:39 He went a little farther and **fell on His face, and prayed**, saying, “O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will.”
  - When the leper approached Jesus with his deep need he did so kneeling in prayer in Mark 1:40 **Now a leper came to Him, imploring Him, kneeling down to Him and saying to Him**, “If You are willing, You can make me clean.”
  - The Publican Jesus commended prayed to the Lord while smiting his breast in Luke 18:13 And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, **but beat his breast, saying, ‘God**, be merciful to me a sinner!’
  - Jesus prayed for us as He walked from the Last Supper with uplifted eyes in John 17:1 Jesus spoke these words, lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said: “Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You,
  - Paul encourages men to pray as they lift holy hands in 1 Timothy 2:8 I desire therefore that the **men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands**, without wrath and doubting;

Secondly **God's Word never teaches us about just one the place of prayer – because we are to pray everywhere.** In the Bible, people prayed in all different places:

- David testifies that he prayed while he was in bed Psalm 63:6 When **I remember You on my bed**, I meditate on You in the night watches.
- Solomon notes that God hears those who pray around His dwelling place in 1 Kings 8:27-30 “But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain You. How much less this temple which I have built! 28 Yet regard the prayer of Your servant and his supplication, O Lord my God, and listen to the cry and the prayer which Your servant is praying before You today: 29 **that Your eyes may be open toward this temple night and day**, toward the place of which You said, ‘My name shall be there,’ that You may hear the prayer which Your servant makes toward this place. 30 And may You hear the supplication of Your servant and of Your people Israel, when **they pray toward this place**. Hear in heaven Your dwelling place; and when You hear, forgive.
- Elijah had some powerful prayers while waiting in a cave in 1 Kings 19:9-10 And there he **went into a cave**, and spent the night in that place; and behold, the word of the Lord came to him, and He said to him, “What are you doing here, Elijah?” 10 So he said, “I have been very zealous for the Lord God of hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars, and killed Your prophets with the sword. I alone am left; and they seek to take my life.”
- The Israelites prayed while in battle in 2 Chronicles 13:14-15 And when Judah looked around, to their surprise **the battle line** was at both front and rear; and **they cried out to the Lord**, and the priests sounded the trumpets. 15 Then the men of Judah gave a shout; and as the men of Judah shouted, it happened that God struck Jeroboam and all Israel before Abijah and Judah.

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- Jonah found he could get a hold of God through prayer while in a fish in Jonah 2:1 Then **Jonah prayed to the Lord his God from the fish's belly.**
  - Jesus says to be humble about our praying we can go in a closet in Matthew 6:6 But you, when you pray, **go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father** who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.
  - Of course how well we know that Jesus prayed for us in a garden in Matthew 26:36 Then Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane, and said to the disciples, "Sit here **while I go and pray over there.**"
  - Jesus found it good to pray in solitude as Mark notes in Mark 1:35 Now in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a **solitary place; and there He prayed.**
  - Jesus also prayed often outdoors in the wilderness in Luke 5:16 So He Himself **often withdrew into the wilderness and prayed.**
  - Jesus often prayed on a mountain in Luke 6:12 Now it came to pass in those days that **He went out to the mountain to pray**, and continued all night in prayer to God.
  - Jesus was praying on a cross in Luke 23:33-34 And when they had come to the place called Calvary, **there they crucified Him**, and the criminals, one on the right hand and the other on the left. 34 **Then Jesus said**, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do." And they divided His garments and cast lots.
  - Peter knelt to pray in someone else's home in Acts 9:39-40 Then Peter arose and went with them. When he had come, they brought him to the upper room. And all the widows stood by him weeping, showing the tunics and garments which Dorcas had made while she was with them. 40 But Peter put them all out, and **knelt down and prayed.** And turning to the body he said, "Tabitha, arise." And she opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter she sat up.
  - Peter found a spot to pray on a house top in Acts 10:9 The next day, as they went on their journey and drew near the city, **Peter went up on the housetop to pray**, about the sixth hour.
  - Paul joined a ladies group who prayed by a river in Acts 16:13 And on the Sabbath day we went out of the city **to the riverside, where prayer was customarily made;** and we sat down and spoke to the women who met there.
  - Paul practiced prayer even in prison in Acts 16:23-25 And when they had laid many stripes on them, they **threw them into prison**, commanding the jailer to keep them securely. 24 Having received such a charge, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks. 25 **But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying** and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them.
  - Paul knelt to pray on the shore of the sea in Acts 21:5-6 When we had come to the end of those days, we departed and went on our way; and they all accompanied us, with wives and children, till we were out of the city. And we **knelt down on the shore and prayed.** 6 When we had taken our leave of one another, we boarded the ship, and they returned home.

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- Jesus prays for us in heaven in Romans 8:34 Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, **who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.**
  - Paul said to pray everywhere in 1 Timothy 2:8 I desire therefore that the men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting;

Thirdly, **God's Word does not promote only one time of prayer – because we are to pray at all times.** In the Bible, people prayed at all different times:

- The Lord invites us to pray also after meals Deuteronomy 8:10 **When you have eaten and are full, then you shall bless the Lord** your God for the good land which He has given you.
- Elijah prayed in the evening in 1 Kings 18:36 And it came to pass, at the time of the offering of **the evening sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came near and said,** “Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that You are God in Israel and I am Your servant, and that I have done all these things at Your word.
- The Lord appointed Levites at the Temple to pray every morning in 1 Chronicles 23:30 to **stand every morning to thank and praise the Lord,** and likewise at evening;
- David says pray at bedtime in Psalm 4:4 Be angry, and do not sin. **Meditate within your heart on your bed,** and be still.
- We should pray like the Psalmist all day long in Psalm 86:3 Be merciful to me, O Lord, **For I cry to You all day long.**
- Jeremiah records that the Lord wants us to call to Him in our youth in Jeremiah 3:4 Will you not **from this time cry to Me, ‘My Father, You are the guide of my youth?**
- Daniel was in a habit of praying three times a day in Daniel 6:10 Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went home. And in his upper room, with his windows open toward Jerusalem, he knelt down on his knees **three times that day, and prayed** and gave thanks before his God, as was his custom since early days.
  - Jesus models praying before meals in Matthew 14:19 Then He commanded the multitudes to sit down on the grass. And He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, **He blessed and broke and gave the loaves** to the disciples; and the disciples gave to the multitudes. Jesus often went out to pray early in the morning as recorded in Mark 1:35 Now in the morning, **having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed.**
  - Jesus spoke of believers who prayed day and night in Luke 18:7 And shall God not avenge **His own elect who cry out day and night to Him,** though He bears long with them?
  - The New Testament saints went to the Temple at the Jewish prayer time of the ninth hour in Acts 3:1 Now Peter and John went up together to the temple **at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour.**

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- Paul learned that he could be in touch with the Lord even at midnight in Acts 16:25 But **at midnight** Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them.
  - The conclusion Paul makes is to just pray always in 1 Thessalonians 5:17 **pray without ceasing,**

The Lord **doesn't teach us to pray in any one circumstance in our lives – because any circumstance will do.** In the Bible, people prayed in all kinds of circumstances:

- Moses sought the Lord after fasting in Deuteronomy 9:18 And I fell down before the Lord, as at the first, forty days and forty nights; **I neither ate bread nor drank** water, because of all your sin which you committed in doing wickedly in the sight of the Lord, to provoke Him to anger.
- Joshua and the elders prayed after applying dust to their heads in Joshua 7:6 Then Joshua tore his clothes, and fell to the earth on his face before the ark of the Lord until evening, he and the elders of Israel; and **they put dust on their heads.**
- David prayed even though he was groaning in Psalm 6:4-6 Return, **O Lord,** deliver me! Oh, save me for Your mercies' sake! 5 For in death there is no remembrance of You; In the grave who will give You thanks? 6 I am weary with **my groaning**; All night I make my bed swim; I drench my couch with my tears.
- God was listening to the prayers of His people making sacrifices in Psalm 20:1-3 **May the Lord answer you** in the day of trouble; May the name of the God of Jacob defend you; 2 May He send you help from the sanctuary, And strengthen you out of Zion; 3 May He **remember all your offerings**, And accept your burnt sacrifice.
- David prayed when he had a broken heart in Psalm 34:18 The **Lord is near to those who have a broken heart**, And saves such as have a contrite spirit.
- David prayed while wearing sackcloth in Psalm 35:13 But as for me, when they were sick, **My clothing was sackcloth**; I humbled myself with fasting; And **my prayer** would return to my own heart.
- David prayed by pouring out his heart in Psalm 62:8 Trust in Him at all times, you people; **Pour out your heart before Him**; God is a refuge for us.
- The Lord listened to sinful Ahab pray because he was humbly rending garments as he prayed in 1 Kings 21:27-29 So it was, when Ahab heard those words, that he tore his clothes and put sackcloth on his body, and fasted and lay in sackcloth, and went about mourning. 28 And the word of the Lord came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, 29 "See how Ahab has humbled himself before Me? **Because he has humbled himself before Me**, I will not bring the calamity in his days. In the days of his son I will bring the calamity on his house."
- God heard the prayers of those who were sighing in Ezekiel 9:4 and the Lord said to him, "Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem,

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- and put a mark on the foreheads of the **men who sigh and cry over all the abominations** that are done within it.”
- The Publican prayed while he was smiting his breast in Luke 18:13 And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but **beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me a sinner!’**
  - Jesus prayed even though He was in agony sweating blood in Luke 22:44 And **being in agony, He prayed** more earnestly. Then His sweat became like great **drops of blood** falling down to the ground.
  - In the Garden Jesus prayed with loud crying as recorded in Hebrews 5:7 who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, **with vehement cries and tears** to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear,

The posture, place, time or circumstance is not the issue of prayer. Prayer is to be a total way of life – an open communication with God which goes on all the time. And if prayer is a way of life, then we unleash the most powerful tool in the arsenal of weaponry to win spiritual battles that God has given us.

Prayer is the key to raising, nurturing, and launching children that please the Lord is learning how to pray for our children.

## **WE MUST PRAY FOR REALITY IN THEIR SPIRITUAL LIFE:**

### **SPIRITUAL REALITY MEANS SEEING THEM GENUINELY SAVED.**

- 1 Timothy 2:4 who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. (NIV)
- 2 Timothy 3:15 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. (NKJV)

### **SPIRITUAL REALITY MEANS SEEING THEM LOVING GOD'S WORD.**

- Job 23:12 I have not departed from the commandment of His lips; I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my necessary [food.] (NKJV)
- Psalm 119:97, 165 Oh, how I love Your law! It [is] my meditation all the day. 165 Great peace have those who love Your law, And nothing causes them to stumble. (NKJV)
- Jeremiah 15:16 Your words were found, and I ate them, And Your word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart; For I am called by Your name, O LORD God of hosts. (NKJV)

### **SPIRITUAL REALITY MEANS SEEING THEM LIVING IN VICTORY.**

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- John 8:36 "Therefore if the **Son makes you free**, you shall be free indeed. (NKJV)
  - John 17:15 "I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You **should keep them from the evil one**. (NKJV)
  - 1 John 4:4 You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because **He who is in you is greater** than he who is in the world. (NKJV)

### **SPIRITUAL REALITY MEANS SEEING THEM THINKING OF HEAVEN.**

- 2 Corinthians 4:16-17 Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and **eternal weight of glory**, (NKJV)
- Colossians 3:1-2 If ye then be risen with Christ, **seek those things which are above**, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. 2 Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.
- 1 Thessalonians 2:19-20 For what [is] our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? [Is it] not even **you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming**? 20 For you are our glory and joy. (NKJV)
- 1 Timothy 6:12 Fight the good fight of faith, **lay hold on eternal life**, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. (NKJV) [Funerals, mansions, ancient sites, tuts treasures]

### **SPIRITUAL REALITY MEANS SEEING THEM FINDING SIN REPULSIVE.**

- Proverbs 20:17 Bread gained by deceit is sweet to a man, But **afterward his mouth will be filled with gravel**.
- Luke 15:17-18 "But when **he came to himself**, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! 18 'I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, (NKJV)
- Hebrews 11:25 choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy **the passing pleasures of sin**, (NKJV)

### **6. SPIRITUAL REALITY MEANS SEEING THEM STAY TENDER TOWARD GOD.**

- Psalm 51:17 The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, **A broken and a contrite heart** -- These, O God, You will not despise. (NKJV) Invitations, Christian service, others needs...

### **WE MUST PRAY FOR INTEGRITY IN THEIR PERSONAL LIFE:**

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## 1. PERSONAL INTEGRITY MEANS SEEING THEM MAINTAINING A CLEAR CONSCIENCE.

- 2 Chronicles 34:27 because your heart was tender, and you humbled yourself before God when you heard His words against this place and against its inhabitants, and you humbled yourself before Me, and you tore your clothes and wept before Me, I also have heard you," says the Lord.
- Psalm 139:23-24 Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me, and know my anxieties; 24 And see if there is any wicked way in me, And lead me in the way everlasting.
- Acts 24:16 "This [being] so, I myself **always strive** to have a **conscience without offense toward God and men**. (NKJV)
- 1 Timothy 1:5 Now the purpose of the commandment is love from a pure heart, [from] **a good conscience**, and [from] sincere faith, (NKJV)
- 1 Timothy 1:19 having faith and a **good conscience**, which some having rejected, concerning the faith have suffered shipwreck, (NKJV)

## 2. PERSONAL INTEGRITY MEANS SEEING THEM LEARNING TO STAND ALONE (which means a conviction that their character is more important than their popularity).

- Daniel 1:8 But Daniel **purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself** with the portion of the king's delicacies, nor with the wine which he drank; therefore he requested of the chief of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself. (NKJV)
- Daniel 3:16-18 Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego answered and said to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. "If that [is the case,] our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver [us] from your hand, O king. "But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that **we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship** the gold image which you have set up." (NKJV)
- 2 Peter 1:3 as His divine power has given to us **all things that pertain to life and godliness**, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, (NKJV)

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# Graduating from Home with Honors

WFF: Message Twenty-Two (010521AM)

Parents, have you checked your spiritual transcript for those precious children housed in your home? Are they getting closer to fulfilling the requirements for graduating from your home in a condition of preparedness that honors God? This study is a brief exhortation to checking and tuning up our home preparations for graduating the greatest earthly treasures we will ever be given – our children.

This past year 2.7 million young people graduated from High School and most of them were launched into their adult life of college and their following career.

They graduated because they finished a set of scholastic requirements. But for those in Christian homes, did they pass the spiritual requirements for graduation from home?

The Oxford American Dictionary defines the word graduate as “the successful completion of a recognized course”. And graduation as the “ceremony for a successful completion of a recognized course or a mark of measurement”.

Of course we graduate because there is a set of requirements that have been laid down by others for the courses needed to finish what we call High School. This is just another step that started in Preschool, then Elementary School, Grade School, Middle School, then High School, and leading toward Vocational School, Junior College, University, Graduate School, and finally Post-Graduate School. Right?

**Here is the current Oklahoma Requirements for High School Graduation By the State Board of Education Regulations, for students who will graduate from high school in the 2000-2001 school year.**

2 Science

2 Social Studies (Includes American History and Oklahoma History)

2 The Arts (Includes Visual Art and General Music)

8 Electives

**21 Total**

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<p><b>4 Language Arts:</b> 1 Grammar and Composition, <b>and</b> 3 which may include, but are not limited to, the following courses: American Literature, English Literature, World Literature, Advanced English Courses, or other English courses with content and/or rigor equal to or above grammar and composition.</p>
<p><b>3 Mathematics:</b> 1 Algebra I or Algebra I taught in a contextual methodology, <b>and</b> 2 which may include, but are not limited to the following courses: Algebra II, Geometry or Geometry taught in a contextual methodology, Trigonometry, Math Analysis or Precalculus, Calculus, Statistics and/or Probability, Computer Science, or other mathematics courses with content and/or rigor equal to or above Algebra I.</p>
<p><b>2 Science:</b> 1 Biology I or Biology I taught in a contextual methodology, <b>and</b> 1 in the areas of life, physical, or earth science or technology which may include, but are not limited to the following courses: Chemistry I, Physics, Biology II, Chemistry II, Physical Science, Earth Science, Botany, Zoology, Physiology, Astronomy, Applied Physics, Principles of Technology, qualified agricultural education courses (including but not limited to Horticulture, Plant and Soil Science, Natural Resources and Environmental Science, and Animal Science), or other science courses with content and/or rigor equal to or above Biology I.</p>
<p><b>3 Social Studies:</b> 1 United States History, 1/2 to 1 United States Government, 1/2 Oklahoma History, and 1/2 to 1 which may include, but are not limited to the following courses: World History, Geography, Economics, Anthropology, or other social studies courses with content and/or rigor equal to or above United States History, United States Government, and Oklahoma History.</p>
<p><b>2 The Arts:</b> 2 which may include, but are not limited to, courses in Visual Arts and General Music.</p>
<p><b>8 Electives</b></p>
<p><b>21 Total</b></p>

To meet graduation requirements, local school district options may include, but shall not be limited to, courses taken by concurrent enrollment, advanced placement, or correspondence, or courses bearing different titles. School districts shall strongly encourage students to complete two units or sets of competencies of foreign languages as part of the core curriculum for high school graduation. Local school district requirements may exceed state graduation requirements.

Credit may be granted for Applied Biology/Chemistry, Physics, Principles of Technology, and Applied Mathematics I and II and Computer Science whether taught at the comprehensive high school or a Career and Technology Education center. • Students may be eligible for the Oklahoma Tuition Scholarship Program.

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A *Carnegie Unit* of credit is given for the successful completion of a course that meets 40 minutes a day, five days per week, for at least 36 weeks, or the equivalent of 120 clock hours within the school year.

*Sets of competencies* are the skills and competencies specified in the *Priority Academic Student Skills*, or other skills and competencies adopted by the State Board of Education. *Rigor* means a level of difficulty that is appropriate for the grade level and that meets state and national standards. Contextual methodology means academic content and skills taught by utilizing real-world problems and projects in such a way that helps students understand the application of knowledge.

But have you been careful to check and fulfill all the requirements God has for you to graduate to the next level in your lives?

Here are the unchanging Requirements by your Heavenly Father for High School Graduation, By the Heavenly Board of Education Regulations, recorded forever in His Word, for students who will graduate from high school in the 2000-2001 school year. GRADUATION RESOLUTIONS IN HONOR OF the school of MOM AND DAD in your home!

1. **GROWINGNESS:** Deuteronomy 4:29 *But from there you will seek the Lord your God, and you will find Him if you seek Him with all your heart and with all your soul. Isaiah 64:7 And there is no one who calls on Your name, Who stirs himself up to take hold of You; For You have hidden Your face from us, And have consumed us because of our iniquities. Isaiah 26:3 You will keep him in perfect peace, Whose mind is stayed on You, Because he trusts in You. SPIRITUAL*  
**COURSE TO PASS:** While I lived at home I learned to enter into family devotions and treat Bible reading and prayer with respect and do my part to help others in the family enjoy God's Word: When I don't feel spiritually strong, I will pray about this as a personal need rather than pouring my spiritual problems on others as a glass of cold water. I will remember that confessed weakness knits hearts together

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2. **TRUSTWORTHINESS:** Psalm 15:4 *In whose eyes a vile person is despised, But he honors those who fear the Lord; He who swears to his own hurt and does not change; Matthew 5:37 But let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No.' For whatever is more than these is from the evil one.* **SPIRITUAL COURSE TO PASS:** While I lived at home I learned to come home at the time we agreed on. If something happens to stop me, I learned I should call and explain and ask your guidance.
3. **SUBMISSIVENESS:** Psalm 32:8-9 *I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will guide you with My eye.*9 *Do not be like the horse or like the mule, Which have no understanding, Which must be harnessed with bit and bridle, Else they will not come near you.* What should we be learning while at home? **SPIRITUAL COURSE TO PASS:** While living with my parents at home I need to learn to obey their instructions and do what I know they expect of me, even when it is not mentioned<sup>[1]</sup>. This helped me to not force you into repeated reminders, which I sometimes call nagging.
4. **HAPPINESS:** Proverbs 17:22 *A cheerful heart does well like medicine, but a broken spirit makes one sick. Ephesians 4:32 And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.* **SPIRITUAL COURSE TO PASS:** While living with my parents at home I need to learn to laugh with the family and not at the family I will especially laugh when my little brother or sister tells a simple joke with expectant excitement.

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5. **PEACEMAKING:** Isaiah 32:17 *The work of righteousness will be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance forever.* **SPIRITUAL COURSE**

**TO PASS:** While living with my parents at home I need to learn to not stonewall you and give you the silent treatment, which I dislike when my friends do it to me. Instead, if I am discouraged and want to be left alone, I will say; "I'm sorry; I don't feel like talking now: Can we talk later? I'm not mad. I just need to be alone.

6. **SPIRITUAL ROOTEDNESS:** Jeremiah 15:16 *Your words were found, and I ate them, And Your word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart; For I am called by Your name, O Lord God of hosts.* Jeremiah 17:5-8 *Thus says the Lord:*

*"Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength, whose heart departs from the Lord. 6 For he shall be like a shrub in the desert, and shall not see when good comes, but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land which is not inhabited. 7 "Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, and whose hope is the Lord. 8 For he shall be like a tree planted by the waters, Which spreads out its roots by the river, And will not fear when heat comes; But its leaf will be green, And will not be anxious in the year of drought, Nor will cease from yielding fruit.* **SPIRITUAL COURSE TO PASS:** While I lived at home

I learned to read my Bible and pray every day; even if it is only a verse and a brief call for help. I learned that teens couldn't live by bread alone but only by every word that comes out of the mouth of God.

7. **GRACIOUSNESS:** Matthew 25:44-45 *"Then they also will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in*

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*prison, and did not minister to You?’ 45 Then He will answer them, saying, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.’* **SPIRITUAL COURSE TO PASS:** While I lived at home I learned to greet our guests with courtesy and respect and try to make them glad they came.

8. **LOVING:** Romans 12:9ff (Message) Love from the center of who you are; don’t fake it. Run for dear life from evil; hold on for dear life to good. Be good friends who love deeply; practice playing second fiddle. Don’t burn out; keep yourselves fueled and aflame. Be alert servants of the Master, cheerfully expectant. Don’t quit in hard times; pray all the harder. Help needy Christians; be inventive in hospitality. Bless your enemies; no cursing under your breath. Laugh with your happy friends when they’re happy; share tears when they’re down. Get along with each other; don’t be stuck-up. Make friends with nobodies; don’t be the great somebody. Don’t hit back; discover beauty in everyone. If you’ve got it in you, get along with everybody. Don’t insist on getting even; that’s not for you to do. “I’ll do the judging,” says God. “I’ll take care of it.” Our Scriptures tell us that if you see your enemy hungry, go buy that person lunch, or if he’s thirsty, get him a drink. Your generosity will surprise him with goodness. Don’t let evil get the best of you; get the best of evil by doing good. **SPIRITUAL COURSE TO PASS:** While living with my parents at home I need to learn to call you by affectionate family titles like “Mom,” or “Dad.” I won’t let other kids pressure me into calling you nothing or calling you something disrespectful as though true affection were embarrassing or childish.
9. **KINDNESS:** Romans 12:17-19 *Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. 18 If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. 19 Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,” says the Lord.* **SPIRITUAL COURSE TO PASS:** While I lived at home I learned to not return evil for evil or try to justify my meanness because somebody treated me meanly first.

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10. **TRUTHFULNESS:** Ephesians 4:25 *Therefore, putting away lying, “Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor,” for we are members of one another.*

**SPIRITUAL COURSE TO PASS:** While I lived at home I learned to always tell the truth so that you can trust me and give me more and more freedom, as I get older.

11. **TONGUE GUARDING:** Philippians 2:14 *Do all things without complaining and disputing,* **SPIRITUAL COURSE TO PASS:** While living with my parents at home I need to learn to not grumble or complain when I participate in my share of the duties because I will remind myself of what a great thing it is to have a family a home, clothes, food, running water, electric lights, and central heating in a world where millions of teenagers have none of these.

12. **SALTINESS:** Colossians 4:6 *Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.* **SPIRITUAL COURSE TO PASS:** While I lived at home I learned to give two compliments for every criticism. And every criticism was aimed to help someone improve, not just belittle or cut them down.

13. **FOREVERNESS:** 1 Thessalonians 2:19 *For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Is it not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming?* **SPIRITUAL COURSE TO PASS:** While I lived at home I learned that I should pray for you as long as I live, that we will be united in faith and love, not only now in this world, but also for all of eternity in the kingdom of God.

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14. **THANKFULNESS:** 1 Thessalonians 5:18 *in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.* **SPIRITUAL COURSE TO PASS:** While living with my parents at home I need to learn to say thank you daily, again and again, for the ordinary things you do for me. I will not take them for granted as though you were my slave.
15. **HUMILITY:** James 5:16 *Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.* **SPIRITUAL COURSE TO PASS:** While living with my parents at home I need to learn to respond when I do something wrong and let you down. My response should be to apologize sincerely with words that you can hear. Something like, "Mom, I'm sorry I didn't pick up the pile of clothes."
16. **SERVANTHEARTEDNESS:** 1 Peter 2:21-24 *For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: 22 "Who committed no sin, Nor was deceit found in His mouth"; 23 who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously; 24 who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness— by whose stripes you were healed.* **SPIRITUAL COURSE TO PASS:** While living with my parents at home I need to learn to stop when I think your demands are unfair, and choose to move forward to do them first, and after showing an obedient attitude, I will ask if we can talk. Then I will explain my side and try to understand yours.

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17. **TRANSPARENCY:** 1 John 1:7-8 *But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. 8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.* **SPIRITUAL COURSE TO PASS:** While living with my

parents at home I need to learn to express my feelings. Both the positive ones (like happiness, pity; excitement, and sympathy) and the negative ones (like anger, fear, loneliness, and discouragement). This is because I have learned that unshared feelings lead to estrangement, coldness, and even more loneliness and discouragement.

What should we do if things are right on target? Thank the Lord and watch out, our Adversary doesn't want us to launch them as godly men and women.

What if things aren't well? Start anew and afresh today. The victorious Christian life is nothing less than a series of new beginnings. Let the Lord renew and refresh you as you humbling start where ever you are.

What is the best place to go? Start by leading your homes to Jesus in the reading of God's Word regularly as a family. For some great tips, encouragements and ideas look at our Growing Dads God's Way site at: <http://new.discoverthebook.org/>

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## How to Pray for Purity

### WFF: Message Twenty-Three (020721AM)

Did you know what Jesus prayed for you and me as He walked towards Gethsemane, with His eyes lifted toward His Father in Heaven? He was praying for our sanctification. Jesus was praying that the Word of God, through the Spirit of God, would transform the daily lives of the Children of God. That's us folks. Listen to His prayer -

*John 17:17 Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.*

Jesus prayed for holy living in us who would live in the future. He knew how bad it would be. Jesus spoke of terrible days ahead for this world. He sent His beloved John on a journey ahead in time to see that Tribulation. The character of that world is stated in Revelation as dark and sinful. The entire world is given over to materialism, drugs, murders and interestingly fornications.

This is the world that is coming. This is the world that is forming before our eyes, in the daily news and as we speak. It is a world totally given over to five clear areas of sin.

*Revelation 9:20-21 But the rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands, that they should not worship demons, and idols of gold, silver, brass, stone, and wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk. 21 And they did not repent of their murders or their sorceries or their sexual immorality or their thefts.*

Peter warned the early saints to flee and forsake the lust inducing activities that war against our souls. Listen to these pleas from the heart of the Apostle Peter to his beloved fellow believers:

*1 Peter 1:14-15 as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance; 15 but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct,*

*1 Peter 2:11 Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul,*

Parents this is perhaps the most difficult of all the areas to pray about. Purity of heart is usually reflected by modesty of life. And modesty is most often reflected in our clothing. Praying for purity in our children involves their minds, and also involves their clothing. Are you praying for purity in your children? Pray for godliness in mind and body.

We saw last time that our position when we pray, the place or time or circumstance is not the issue of prayer. Prayer is to be for us a total way of life – an open communication with God which goes on all the time which unleashes the most powerful

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tool to raising, nurturing, and launching children that please the Lord is learning how to pray for our children.

## **WE MUST PRAY FOR REALITY IN THEIR SPIRITUAL LIFE:**

### **1. SPIRITUAL REALITY MEANS SEEING THEM GENUINELY SAVED.**

- 1 Timothy 2:4 who wants all men to be saved and to come to knowledge of the truth. (NIV)
- 2 Timothy 3:15 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. (NKJV)

### **8. SPIRITUAL REALITY MEANS SEEING THEM LOVING GOD'S WORD.**

- Job 23:12 I have not departed from the commandment of His lips; I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my necessary [food.] (NKJV)
- Psalm 119:97, 165 Oh, how I love Your law! It [is] my meditation all the day. 165 Great peace have those who love Your law, And nothing causes them to stumble. (NKJV)
- Jeremiah 15:16 Your words were found, and I ate them, And Your word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart; For I am called by Your name, O LORD God of hosts. (NKJV)

### **6. SPIRITUAL REALITY MEANS SEEING THEM LIVING IN VICTORY.**

- John 8:36 "Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed. (NKJV)
- John 17:15 "I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one. (NKJV)
- 1 John 4:4 You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. (NKJV)

### **5. SPIRITUAL REALITY MEANS SEEING THEM THINKING OF HEAVEN.**

- 2 Corinthians 4:16-17 Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, (NKJV)

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- Colossians 3:1-2 If ye then be risen with Christ, **seek those things which are above**, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. 2 Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.
  - 1 Thessalonians 2:19-20 For what [is] our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? [Is it] not even **you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming**? 20 For you are our glory and joy. (NKJV)
  - 1 Timothy 6:12 Fight the good fight of faith, **lay hold on eternal life**, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. (NKJV) [Funerals, mansions, ancient sites, tuts treasures]

## 6. SPIRITUAL REALITY MEANS SEEING THEM FINDING SIN REPULSIVE.

- Proverbs 20:17 Bread gained by deceit is sweet to a man, But **afterward his mouth will be filled with gravel**.
- Luke 15:17-18 "But when **he came to himself**, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! 18 'I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, (NKJV)
- Hebrews 11:25 choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy **the passing pleasures of sin**, (NKJV)

## 7. SPIRITUAL REALITY MEANS SEEING THEM STAY TENDER TOWARD GOD.

- Psalm 51:17 The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, **A broken and a contrite heart** -- These, O God, You will not despise. (NKJV) Invitations, Christian service, others needs...

## WE MUST PRAY FOR INTEGRITY IN THEIR PERSONAL LIFE:

### 1. PERSONAL INTEGRITY MEANS SEEING THEM MAINTAINING A CLEAR CONSCIENCE.

- 2 Chronicles 34:27 because your heart was tender, and you humbled yourself before God when you heard His words against this place and against its inhabitants, and you humbled yourself before Me, and you tore your clothes and wept before Me, I also have heard you," says the Lord.
- Psalm 139:23-24 Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me, and know my anxieties; 24 And see if there is any wicked way in me, And lead me in the way everlasting.
- Acts 24:16 "This [being] so, I myself **always strive** to have a **conscience without offense toward God and men**. (NKJV)
- 1 Timothy 1:5 Now the purpose of the commandment is love from a pure heart, [from] **a good conscience**, and [from] sincere faith, (NKJV)

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- 1 Timothy 1:19 having faith and a good conscience, which some having rejected, concerning the faith have suffered shipwreck, (NKJV)

## 2. **PERSONAL INTEGRITY MEANS SEEING THEM LEARNING TO STAND ALONE** (which means a conviction that their character is more important than their popularity).

- Daniel 1:8 But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's delicacies, nor with the wine which he drank; therefore he requested of the chief of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself. (NKJV)
- Daniel 3:16-18 Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego answered and said to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. "If that [is the case,] our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver [us] from your hand, O king. "But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up." (NKJV)
- 2 Peter 1:3 as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, (NKJV)

## 3. **PERSONAL INTEGRITY MEANS SEEING THEM SEEKING TO STAY PURE.**

- Genesis 39:9 "[There is] no one greater in this house than I, nor has he kept back anything from me but you, because you [are] his wife. How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" (NKJV)
- 1 Thessalonians 4:3-7 For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality; that each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, not in passion of lust, like the Gentiles who do not know God; that no one should take advantage of and defraud his brother in this matter, because the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also forewarned you and testified. For God did not call us to uncleanness, but in holiness. (NKJV)
- 1 Peter 2:11 Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul,
- WE MUST PRAY THAT OUR CHILDREN WEAR THEIR TRUE CLOTHING – OUR DRESS IS TO REFLECT JESUS. Romans 13:13-14 Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. 14 But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof. (KJV)

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First what might we teach our children about dress that reflects Jesus? Well to start, we get some clues. Whenever we see someone in heaven or coming from the presence of God what do they look like? What characterizes them?

- LOOK WHAT GOD EXPECTS US TO WEAR - THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD  
Isaiah 61:10 I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels. (KJV)
- LOOK WHAT GOD'S SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVES WEAR Mark 16:5 And entering into the sepulchre, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment; and they were affrighted. (KJV)
- LOOK WHAT GOD OFFERS US TO WEAR - CHRIST Romans 13:12-14 The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. 13 Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. 14 But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof. (KJV)
- LOOK WHAT JESUS WEARS Revelation 1:13 And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle. (KJV)
- LOOK WHAT WE ARE GOING TO WEAR Revelation 7:9 After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; (KJV)

**What do the Scriptures present as the wardrobe we should wear? Clothes that reflect three timeless principles:**

1. We need to pray that our children understand that in the Garden of Eden God introduces clothing to be a COVERING FOR HIS CREATURES (remember God invented clothing.).

- Before the fall no shame Genesis 2:25 The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame. (NIV)

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- After the fall shame and a desire to be covered Genesis 3:7 Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves. (NIV)
  - Because of the fallen, lustful human heart God said don't allow yourself by a lack of modesty to become a wicked picture in an evil person's heart! 2 Peter 2:14 With eyes full of adultery, they never stop sinning; they seduce the unstable; they are experts in greed -- an accursed brood! (NIV)

2. We need to pray that our children understand that in the New Testament God expects clothing to be a reflection of HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS AND OUR MODESTY AS HIS TEMPLE! 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? 20 For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's. (KJV) Because of the Fall we must be on guard at all times. The Flesh wants to rise up.

- Beware of the pride of life: CLOTHING MUST NOT BE OSTENTATIOUS. Luke 20:46 "Beware of the teachers of the law. They like to walk around in flowing robes and love to be greeted in the marketplaces and have the most important seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at banquets. (NIV)
- o Beware of the lusts of the flesh: CLOTHING MUST NOT BE SENSUSOUS. 1 Timothy 2:9 I also want women to dress modestly, with decency and propriety, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or expensive clothes, (NIV);
- o Beware of the lust of the eyes: CLOTHING MUST NOT BE CONSPICUOUS. 1 Peter 3:3-5 Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewelry and fine clothes. 4 Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight. 5 For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to make themselves beautiful. They were submissive to their own husbands, (NIV); James 2:1-2 My brothers, as believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ, don't show favoritism. 2 Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in shabby clothes also comes in. (NIV)

3. We need to pray that our children understand that in the Old Testament God regulates clothing to be a TESTIMONY OF HIS OWNERSHIP!

- Clothing was to show SEPARATION.
- 1. Leviticus 19:2 "Speak to the entire assembly of Israel and say to them: `Be holy because I, the LORD your God, am holy. 19:19 ""Keep my decrees. ""Do not mate different kinds of animals. ""Do not plant your field with two kinds of seed. ""Do not wear clothing woven of two kinds of material. (NIV)
- Deuteronomy 22:11 Do not wear clothes of wool and linen woven together. (NIV)

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- Clothing was to prevent CONFUSION. Deuteronomy 22:5 A woman must not wear men's clothing, nor a man wear women's clothing, for the LORD your God detests anyone who does this. (NIV)
  - Clothing was to demonstrate HUMILITY. Isaiah 3:16-24 The LORD says, "The women of Zion are haughty, walking along with outstretched necks, flirting with their eyes, tripping along with mincing steps, with ornaments jingling on their ankles. 17 Therefore the Lord will bring sores on the heads of the women of Zion; the LORD will make their scalps bald." 18 In that day the Lord will snatch away their finery: the bangles and headbands and crescent necklaces, 19 the earrings and bracelets and veils, 20 the headdresses and ankle chains and sashes, the perfume bottles and charms, 21 the signet rings and nose rings, 22 the fine robes and the capes and cloaks, the purses 23 and mirrors, and the linen garments and tiaras and shawls. 24 Instead of fragrance there will be a stench; instead of a sash, a rope; instead of well-dressed hair, baldness; instead of fine clothing, sackcloth; instead of beauty, branding. (NIV)
  - Clothing was to be Beautiful not lustful Proverbs 31:22 She makes coverings for her bed; she is clothed in fine linen and purple. (NIV) Proverbs 7:10 Then out came a woman to meet him, **dressed like a prostitute** and with crafty intent. (NIV)

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## How to be a Servant at Heart

### WFF: Message Twenty-Four (020728AM)

- Jesus said, I did not come to be served but to **serve**.
- And the last shall be **first**.
- I did not come to do my own **will**.

The greatest goal we have spiritually as parents is to raise children that are useful to God. Usefulness in Christ's kingdom is defined by one very precious quality – SERVANTHOOD. The words servants and servants and bondservants are used over 1000 times in the New Testament, that is about once every seven verses. That is very frequent! We are to be Christ's servants, and He is called a servant.

- Acts 3:13 The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified His Servant Jesus, whom you delivered up and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let Him go.
- Acts 3:26 To you first, God, having raised up His Servant Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from your iniquities.”
- Acts 4:27 “For truly against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together
- Acts 4:30 by stretching out Your hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus.”
- Revelation 22:3 And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him.

It has been estimated by historians that at the time of Paul there were as many as 60 million slaves owned by masters in the Roman Empire. So slaves and slavery were well known themes to the New Testament world. That is why Paul's testimony to the church at Corinth is so powerful. They knew what he meant when he declared that he and his companions wanted to be regarded as "servants". Let's turn to I Corinthians 4:1. The word servant in this verse communicated a vision of humility and absolute servility.

The word in the original language was HUPERETES, literally "under rowers." That hardly means anything to us. But for the Corinthians of the first century it was a loathsome term. Corinth sat astride the isthmus that joined the southern peninsula to mainland Greece. In Paul's time it was the wealthiest and most prominent of all Greek cities.

One of the most common sights to the people of Corinth was the ship tramway that moved vessels overland to the opposite shore. Like the Panama Canal today, that overland transport system was in constant use and saved days of travel time for all who used it.

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The most numerous boats were the triremes or galley slave ships, each with three banks of oars in three levels, one above another. The slaves who sat chained to the bottom oars were called HUPERETES, the "under rowers".

### **LIFE AT THE BOTTOM OF THE SHIP**

The huperetes' life at the bottom of the ship was tough and always busy -- and it was permanent. Most died in service, the chains about their ankles grim reminders of their bondage. And there were five aspects of their work that Paul and his companions could identify with in calling themselves "servants" of Christ.

- First, the galley slave had to ROW TO THE CAPTAIN'S BEAT. To keep as many as 150 oars together, the captain beat a rhythmic tempo on a drum. Each slave had to row with the beat.
- Second, the slaves had to ROW TOGETHER. Often two or three rowers moved their thirty- foot-long oars. They quickly learned that one could not lean on the oar, another push, and another pull! They had to work as a team.
- Third, they had to TRUST THE CAPTAIN. In the gloomy depths of the boat a slave had no idea where he was, where he was going, or when he would arrive. His was a labor of total faith and obedience. As the captain's beat grew more and more rapid it could signal an enemy attack or a storm to be avoided or a hurried schedule -- but the slave could not question which. He could only obey.
- Fourth, the galley slave was COMMITTED FOR LIFE. His was always a one-way trip. The damp, hard benches were no relief to his weary bones after a day's labor. The lack of sunshine and fresh air, combined with the leg chains, meant repeated illness during service, binding every slave to the ship with deadly certainty. And if the ship went down in a storm or in conflict, the slaves had no way of escape.
- Finally, the slave RECEIVED NO HONOR. ONLY THE CAPTAIN WAS VISIBLE to the outer world. Although there were dozens of men who gave their lives and very breath to keep the ship going, they were never seen. They rowed on and on, day in and day out, invisible to and unrewarded by the world. If an under rower were seen, it was because he was not doing his job.

So what was Paul's goal in his life? To be Christ's servant. What should be our personal goal? The same. WE MUST BECOME BY HABIT, LIKE THOSE GALLEY SLAVES OR UNDER-ROWERS FOR CHRIST! And our prayer for our children? No less. Read ! Corinthians 4.1 and pray.

Prayer is the key to raising, nurturing, and launching children that please the Lord is learning how to pray for our children.

### **WE MUST PRAY FOR REALITY IN THEIR SPIRITUAL LIFE:**

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1. SPIRITUAL REALITY MEANS SEEING THEM GENUINELY SAVED.
  2. SPIRITUAL REALITY MEANS SEEING THEM LOVING GOD'S WORD.
  3. SPIRITUAL REALITY MEANS SEEING THEM LIVING IN VICTORY.
  4. SPIRITUAL REALITY MEANS SEEING THEM THINKING OF HEAVEN.
  5. SPIRITUAL REALITY MEANS SEEING THEM FINDING SIN REPULSIVE.
  6. SPIRITUAL REALITY MEANS SEEING THEM STAY TENDER TOWARD GOD.

### **WE MUST PRAY FOR INTEGRITY IN THEIR PERSONAL LIFE:**

1. PERSONAL INTEGRITY MEANS SEEING THEM MAINTAINING A CLEAR CONSCIENCE.
2. PERSONAL INTEGRITY MEANS SEEING THEM LEARNING TO STAND ALONE (which means a conviction that their character is more important than their popularity).
3. PERSONAL INTEGRITY MEANS SEEING THEM SEEKING TO STAY PURE.
4. PERSONAL INTEGRITY MEANS SEEING THEM CULTIVATING A SERVANT'S HEART.
  - Mark 10:45 "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, **but to serve**, and to give His life a ransom for many." (NKJV)
  - Philippians 2:5-7 **Let this mind be in you** which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, **taking the form of a bondservant**, and coming in the likeness of men. (NKJV)

**Servant and Slave.** In the New Testament *douleuo* indicates submission of the will, as in slavery. We Christians are slaves of Jesus, for we submit to Him. But *diakoneo* means serving by giving personal help to another. Christian servanthood means willingly submitting to the will of God, and freely offering help to others. [1]

Now let's look into the Life of the greatest servant of all and examine the heart of a servant. Jesus was the Ultimate Servant. He is our example. His life overflows with servant heartedness.

1. **Cultivating a servants heart means praying for God's ruling over each of my days.** Matthew 6:10 Your kingdom come. Your will be done On earth as [it is] in heaven. (NKJV) Which shows salvation Matthew 7:21 " Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. (NKJV) Which shows relationship Matthew 12:50 "For whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister and mother." (NKJV)
2. **Cultivating a servants heart means staying loyal to the Lord as their master.** This kind of heart is EXCLUSIVE, its Him first or nothing! Matthew 6:24 "No one

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can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon." (NKJV) Luke 16:13 "No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon." (NKJV) James 4:4-5 Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God. 5 Do ye think that the scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy? (KJV)

3. **Cultivating a servants heart means seeking to serve others.** Matthew 20:28 just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."
4. **Cultivating a servants heart means a growing attitude of willingness to go to the end of the line.** Mark 9:35 And He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, "If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all." (NKJV) Mark 10:44 "And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all. (NKJV)
5. **Cultivating a servants heart means following Christ's example daily.** Luke 9:23 Then He said to [them] all, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. (NKJV) Luke 14:27 "And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple. (NKJV)
6. **Cultivating a servants heart means seeking to do God's will.** John 5:30 I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me. (KJV)
7. **Cultivating a servants heart means not being a people pleaser but a God pleaser.** Galatians 1:10 For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ.
8. **Cultivating a servants heart means seeking to deny my selfish desires.** Philippians 2:7-11 but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, [and] coming in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to [the point of] death, even the death of the cross. (NKJV)
9. **Cultivating a servants heart means staying in touch at all times with your Master.** Colossians 4:12 Epaphras, who is one of you, a bondservant of Christ, greets you, always laboring fervently for you in prayers, that you may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.
10. **Cultivating a servants heart means not being argumentative and pushy.** 2 Timothy 2:24 And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, In a practical sense, patience is the ability to remember good and forget evil. You don't keep a record of wrongs people have committed against you (cf. 1 Cor. 13:5). [\[2\]](#)
11. **Cultivating a servants heart means delighting in doing the will of God.** Hebrews 10:5-7 Therefore, when He came into the world, He said: "Sacrifice and

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offering You did not desire, But a body You have prepared for Me. 6 In burnt offerings and [sacrifices] for sin You had no pleasure. 7 Then I said, 'Behold, I have come -- In the volume of the book it is written of Me -- To do Your will, O God.' " (NKJV) Psalm 40:6-8 Sacrifice and offering You did not desire; My ears You have opened. Burnt offering and sin offering You did not require. 7 Then I said, "Behold, I come; In the scroll of the book [it is] written of me. 8 I delight to do Your will, O my God, And Your law [is] within my heart." (NKJV)

12. **Cultivating a servants heart means willing to suffer for God's Glory.** 1 Peter 2:21 For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: (KJV)

With a few strokes of a pen on parchment Paul painted a portrait that was horribly vivid for his readers. And he said it was a portrait of himself and his companions in ministry. Paul wanted to be known and remembered for five things:

- That he rowed to the Captain's beat and so was SUBMISSIVE;
- That he worked in harmony with those about him and so was SENSITIVE;
- That he didn't care where he labored for the Captain, and so was TRUSTING;
- That he would die at his post, and so was DEDICATED;
- And that he wanted none of the glory to go to himself, but all to the Captain, and so was HUMBLE.

Our motivation for serving Christ differs from those ancient galley slaves, of course, even if our situation is similar. Like galley slaves, we need to obey our Master, cooperate with our fellow servants, and trust the Lord to take us where we need to go, remain in service for a lifetime, and give Christ all the glory.

- But while galley slaves did these things out of fear, we can do them in confident trust in a loving Captain whose plans for us are good. "'For I know the plans I have for you,' declares the Lord, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future'" (Jer. 29:11)
- Like galley slaves, we belong to someone else. "You are not your own," wrote Paul; "you were bought at a price" (1 Cor. 6:19c,20a).
- But while iron chains held them, we are held in Christ's service by a different kind of chain: "For Christ's love compels us..." (2 Cor. 5:14).
- So, the piercing examination that must be done this morning is -- are we living our life each day as bondservants of Christ?
- Are you truly **SUBMISSIVE**, rowing to the beat of your Captain?
- Saying with Jesus Matthew 26:39 "Not my will but Thine be done";
- Presenting your self to Him today as a living sacrifice Romans 12:1-2
- HOW? By being in the Word! **By Needing the Word!**

Are you **SENSITIVE** pulling together with your fellow servants in Christ?

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- “Look not every man on his own things but on the things of others” Philippians 2:4
  - “Others’ Booth;
  - HOW? By being regularly, faithfully, weekly, committedly in the Assembly with the saints! Hebrews 10:24-25. **By Needing the Saints!**
  - Are you truly **TRUSTING** Christ so you willingly go wherever He leads?
  - Psalm 48:14 For this [is] God, Our God forever and ever; He will be our guide [Even] to death. (NKJV)
  - John 15:5 “I am the vine, you [are] the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. (NKJV)
  - HOW? By being in a Christ dependence relationship to Jesus! You know what chemical dependence is, the cigarette, bottle, needle or pill. The craving and total focus. That is what Jesus wants in a positive spiritual relationship! **By Needing the Lord!**
  - Are you truly **DEDICATED** as one committed to Him for life?
  - “I have finished the course” Paul said in II Timothy 4:7
  - “I do always things that please the Father” Jesus said in John 8:29
  - HOW? By being marked as belonging to Him! Citizens of Heaven as Paul said in Philippians 3:20. **By Needing His Well Done good and Faithful servant!**

And are you truly **HUMBLE** making sure to take none of the glory but to pass it all on to Him?

- The Psalmist [115:1] cried “not unto us, not unto us, but to Your name give glory
- God calls Himself a Jealous God no less than 9x in the OT. Deuteronomy 4:24 “For the LORD your God [is] a consuming fire, a jealous God. (NKJV). He also says He is jealous over His people atleast 4x.
- HOW? **By Needing only God to get all the GLORY!**

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[1] Richards, Lawrence O., The Teacher’s Commentary, (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books) 1987.

[2] MacArthur, John, Jr., *The Master’s Plan for the Church*, (Chicago: Moody Press) 1998.

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# How to Avoid Bitterness in Your Life

WFF: Message Twenty-Five (020804AM)

Are you ready for some troubles? I am amazed as a pastor for the past twenty-five years how few of us really are.

Will you be taken off guard when troubles hit home? When unexpectedly you lose your health, lose your wealth, lose a family member, lose your mobility, lose your independence...or any other of a million unexpected losses we all face each day.

This morning God's Word challenges each of us to get ready and stay ready. Troublesome times are coming!

We are looking at how to disciple our children through prayer and the Scriptures. This week we are focusing on preparing our children for troubles they inevitable will face. God's Word teaches us how to see our children avoiding bitterness when they go through deep and painful trials. Troubles are one of the surest things in life. As Job said, "Man is born for adversity as sparks fly upward." (Job 5.7) From birth life is an uphill climb against physical obstacles, socio-economic prejudices, relational jealousies, academic challenges and spiritual adversities. From the challenges of relating to people to the physical exertions of everyday life there is nothing easy about daily existence.

But as life goes on and we pick up speed we soon find that there is never enough time when we need it, never quite enough money to pay for all we want, and then comes not enough strength to do what is always coming at us. But then the worst part comes upon us, our health begins to erode, our bodies begin to show their frailties and we experience many different types of pain and discomforts.

*"When God permits suffering to come to our lives, there are several ways we can deal with it. Some people become bitter and blame God for robbing them of freedom and pleasure. Others just "give up" and fail to get any blessing out of the experience because they will not put any courage into the experience. Still others grit their teeth and put on a brave front, determined to "endure to the very end." While this is a courageous response, it usually drains them of the strength needed for daily living; and after a time, they may collapse." [1]*

Remember, God wants troubles to push us towards Him. He wants to refine us, purge us, build us up, and overflow our lives with blessings. And all that only comes through TRIALS! So troubles are coming and without any disasters or tragedies -- just life is very hard. Most people do not make it through life without long or short seasons of anger and bitterness at someone or something. Knowing that, it is of utmost priority that we prepare our children to avoid bitterness in the trials that WILL COME.

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So how do we prepare our children for emotional, spiritual, and physical troubles? The answer is of course in God's Word. Prayer is the key to raising, nurturing, and launching children that please the Lord is learning how to pray for our children. The Apostles said, "We will give ourselves continually to prayer and the ministry of the Word." As parents are we doing the same? Are we praying and ministering the Word to our children and grandchildren? How do we do that? We are in our seventh week of exploring how to give ourselves to prayer and the ministry of the Word and this is what we have found:

### **WE MUST PRAY FOR REALITY IN THEIR SPIRITUAL LIFE:**

2. SEEING THEM GENUINELY SAVED.
3. SEEING THEM LOVING GOD'S WORD.
4. SEEING THEM LIVING IN VICTORY.
5. SEEING THEM THINKING OF HEAVEN.
6. SEEING THEM FINDING SIN REPULSIVE.
7. SEEING THEM STAY TENDER TOWARD GOD.

### **WE MUST PRAY FOR INTEGRITY IN THEIR PERSONAL LIFE:**

8. SEEING THEM MAINTAINING A CLEAR CONSCIENCE.
9. SEEING THEM LEARNING TO STAND ALONE.
10. SEEING THEM SEEKING TO STAY PURE.
11. SEEING THEM CULTIVATING A SERVANT'S HEART.
12. PERSONAL INTEGRITY MEANS SEEING THEM NEVER BECOMING BITTER IN TRIALS.

Why would we pray for our children to never resist trials and become embittered by them? Because God uses trials as one of His three very special tools to shape our lives into Christ likeness. The other two tools are God's Word and prayer. We love the Word and prayer but we don't like the trials.

If we resist the troubles and trials of life, becoming angry at our circumstances and those who hurt us, we miss one of the greatest tools God uses in our lives. And if we stay angry about life and unforgiving of those who hurt us there is a dangerous weed that begins to choke our lives called bitterness. So this morning we need to embrace our ministry of praying that trials never embitter us or our children.

Paul writes to the church at Ephesus that bitterness travels in bad company. He notes the evil companions that hang out with the attitude of bitterness. We should be praying that we and our families beware of bitterness and all his evil buddies. So, to focus your

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heart, read Ephesians 4:30-32. For those we love, here is what we should be praying that they will avoid in their lives to be able to please the Lord:

46. **Bitterness** (*pikria*) is <sup>[2]</sup>like a smoldering fire. The Greeks defined this word as long-standing resentment, and as the person who refuses to be reconciled. So many of us have a way of nursing our wrath to keep it warm, of brooding over the insults and the injuries we have received. This brooding grudge-filled attitude of Simon the Sorcerer in Acts 8:23 and Esau in Heb. 12:15 is characteristic of pagans and not Christ's children. It is the spirit of irritability that keeps a person in continual acrimony, making him tart and poisonous. Every Christian might well pray that God would teach him how to forget like God taught Joseph in Genesis 41:51-52.
47. **Wrath** (*thumos*) are the outbreaks of passion and has to do with wild rage, the passion of the moment. The Greeks defined *thumos* as the kind of anger like the flame which comes from straw; it quickly blazes up and just as quickly subsides.
48. **Anger** (*orge*) is long-lived anger, a more internal smoldering, a subtle and deep feeling. Unlike *thumos*, they described *orge* as anger which has become habitual. To the Christian the burst of temper and the long-lived anger are both alike forbidden.
49. **Clamor** (*krauge*) is the shout or outcry of strife and reflects the public outburst that reveals loss of control.
50. **Slander** (*blasphemia*, from which we get blasphemy) is the ongoing defamation of someone that rises from a bitter heart.
51. **Malice** (*kakia*), the general term for evil that is the root of all vices. All of these, he says, must be

What was the solution? Paul gets very practical, he says **put away from you**. The word the Spirit guides him to pen is from *apotitheumi*, a word that is used for taking off clothes (cf. Acts 7:58; 1 Pet. 2:1). Just as after a long day of hard labor the workman takes off his dirty work clothes, so we as believers must discard the filthy, tattered rags of their old life. Paul may be reflecting one of the applications of baptism in the early church. Those being baptized would lay aside their old outer clothes before their baptism and be given a new white robe afterwards.

So God is saying bitterness and its buddies are part of the old life, so put aside these rags of our old life. When there is an accident the rescue people come and quickly clean up the stained pavement. When there is contamination of an area the crews quickly isolate and rid the area of the dangerous materials. So bitterness and its buddies must be avoided or its poison will spread. Then he tells us to put on our new clothes of *kindness* (*chrestos*). The Greeks defined this quality as the disposition of mind which thinks as much of its neighbour's affairs as it does of its own. Kindness has learned the secret of looking outwards all the time, and not inwards. He tells us to forgive others as God forgave us. So, in one sentence, Paul lays down the law of personal relationships—that we should treat others as Jesus Christ has treated us.

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Paul the Apostle who experiences so much hardship and pain in his life tells us why we must avoid and prayerfully protect ourselves and those we love from bitterness. The key is that bitterness *grieves the Holy Spirit* who lives within us as Christians. When bitterness is allowed to take root and grow our heart is filled with bitterness and anger that grieves God's Spirit. Just as a home is ruined by anger and fighting so God's Spirit is only at home when the climate is hospitable for His love, joy, and peace which He then produces in our lives as we obey Him. God has explained that His Spirit cannot leave us; we are sealed until that day when Christ returns to take us home. We are still saved even if we have these sinful attitudes, but our salvation is emptied of joy and blessing.

But bitterness also is a sin that:

*"grieves<sup>[3]</sup> God the Father who forgave us when we trusted Christ. Here Paul put his finger on the basic cause of a bitter attitude: We cannot forgive people. An unforgiving spirit is the devil's playground, and before long it becomes the Christian's battleground. If somebody hurts us, either deliberately or unintentionally, and we do not forgive him, then we begin to develop bitterness within, which hardens the heart. We should be tenderhearted and kind, but instead we are hardhearted and bitter. Actually, we are not hurting the person who hurt us; we are only hurting ourselves. Bitterness in the heart makes us treat others the way Satan treats them, when we should treat others the way God has treated us. In His gracious kindness, God has forgiven us, and we should forgive others. We do not forgive for our sake (though we do get a blessing from it) or even for their sake, but for Jesus' sake. Learning how to forgive and forget is one of the secrets of a happy Christian life".*

So what do we need to teach them and pray for them? Just four timeless truths:

**10. SEEING THEM NEVER BECOMING BITTER IN TRIALS comes as we teach them that adversaries are placed in life by God.** • II Samuel 16:11 "... Let him alone, and let him curse; for so the Lord has ordered him."

• 1 Kings 11:14 Now the Lord raised up an adversary against Solomon, Hadad the Edomite; he was a descendant of the king in Edom.

**11. SEEING THEM NEVER BECOMING BITTER IN TRIALS comes as we teach them that BITTERNESS IS DEADLY.**

• Hebrews 12:15 Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble [you], and thereby many be defiled; (KJV)

**12. SEEING THEM NEVER BECOMING BITTER IN TRIALS comes as we teach them that TRIALS ARE VITAL. "**

• James 1:4 But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing. That<sup>[4]</sup> is the end result of trials: maturity,

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completeness, not lacking in anything of spiritual importance and value. • “After you have suffered for a little while,” Peter assures us, “the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you” (1 Pet. 5:10). • Moab was a pagan nation southeast of Israel, of whom Jeremiah wrote: “Moab has been at ease since his youth; he has also been undisturbed on his lees, neither has he been emptied from vessel to vessel, nor has he gone into exile. Therefore he retains his flavor, and his aroma has not changed” (Jer. 48:11). Good wine had to be repeatedly “emptied from vessel to vessel” in order for it to become sweet and drinkable. In that process, the lees, or dregs, would remain in the bottom of each vessel, until, after several pourings and settlings, the wine was pure and clear. Jeremiah’s point was that Moab’s undisturbed, untested life had left its people unpurified. • That was also Esau’s problem. He cared nothing for the things of God, being content with satisfying only his physical appetites. He was immoral and godless, selling “his own birthright for a single meal” (Heb. 12:16).

13. **Finally, SEEING THEM NEVER BECOMING BITTER IN TRIALS comes as we teach them Joseph’s secret.** Turn over to Genesis 50:19-21 – Meet Joseph, because Joseph, shows God’s cure to self-pity and bitterness. So how do we pray and minister the Word so that they avoid bitterness? The key is not to let it root and spread. Remember God’s plan:

1. Rejected by dad and brothers.
2. Abused and exiled by his own country.
3. Unrecognized for tremendous service.
4. Accused falsely of moral laxity.
5. Imprisoned unjustly for revenge.
6. Injured and forgotten by co-workers and employers and friends.
7. All the makings of basket case!

Joseph reminds us that the Lord **IS ORDERING LIFE’S EVENTS**. Psalm 105:16-20 Moreover he called for a famine upon the land: he brake the whole staff of bread. 17 He sent a man before them, [even] Joseph, [who] was sold for a servant: 18 Whose feet they hurt with fetters: he was laid in iron: 19 Until the time that his word came: the word of the LORD tried him. 20 The king sent and loosed him; [even] the ruler of the people, and let him go free. (KJV)

Joseph reminds us that the Lord **IS WORKING ALL THINGS TOGETHER FOR HIS GOOD** [Resist self pity] Genesis 50:19-20 And Joseph said unto them, Fear not: for [am] I in the place of God? 20 But as for you, ye thought evil against me; [but] God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as [it is] this day, to save much people alive. (KJV) How? Genesis 41:51-52

1. BE FORGETFUL. Intentionally forgot past hurts – not nursing them! Genesis 41:51 And Joseph called the name of the firstborn Manasseh: For God, [said he], hath made me forget all my toil, and all my father's house.

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(KJV)

2. BE FRUITFUL. Purposefully looked for God's hand guiding and blessing. Genesis 41:52 And the name of the second called he Ephraim: For God hath caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction. (KJV)

• Joseph reminds us that the Lord **IS WANTING US TO USE THE WEED KILLER PROVIDED BY GOD**. Hebrews 9:14 How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? (KJV) Hebrews 10:22 Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. (KJV) Respond God's way, THE CHOICE IS COMPLETELY YOURS THIS MORNING:

*"We can <sup>[5]</sup> allow bitterness to destroy us, or we can allow God to develop us into the persons He wants us to be. We must choose to view our circumstances and hurts as tools to be used by God to further develop our spiritual lives.*

*Why not pray: I repent of my bitterness. You never withhold forgiveness, so I, too, cannot withhold it. Lord, help me view those who hurt me as tools in Your hands to shape my life for Your GLORY."*

Peter is preeminently the apostle of *hope*, as Paul is the apostle of *faith* and John of *love*. As believers, we have a "living hope" because we trust a living Christ (1 Peter 1:3). This hope enables us to keep our minds under control and "hope to the end" (1 Peter 1:13) when Jesus shall return. We must not be ashamed of our hope but be ready to explain and defend it (1 Peter 3:15). Like Sarah, Christian wives can hope in God (1 Peter 3:5, where "trusted" should be translated "hoped").

It is only when we depend on the grace of God that we can glorify God in times of suffering. Peter also emphasized God's grace in this letter. "I have written to you briefly, encouraging you and testifying that this is the true grace of God. Stand fast in it" (1 Peter 5:12, niv).

The word "grace" is used in every chapter of 1 Peter: 1:2, 10, 13; 2:19 ("thankworthy"), 20 ("acceptable"); 3:7; 4:10; 5:5, 10, 12. Grace is God's generous favor to undeserving sinners and needy saints. When we depend on God's grace, we can endure suffering and turn trials into triumphs. It is grace alone that saves us (Eph. 2:8–10). God's grace can give us strength in times of trial (2 Cor. 12:1–10). Grace enables us to serve God in spite of difficulties (1 Cor. 15:9–10). Whatever begins with God's grace will always lead to glory (Ps. 84:11; 1 Peter 5:10). <sup>[6]</sup>

### **Christians Are Being Prepared for Glory (1 Peter 1:6–7)**

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We must keep in mind that all God plans and performs here is preparation for what He has in store for us in heaven. He is preparing us for the life and service yet to come. Nobody yet knows all that is in store for us in heaven; but this we do know: life today is a school in which God trains us for our future ministry in eternity. This explains the presence of trials in our lives: they are some of God's tools and textbooks in the school of Christian experience. Peter used the word "trials" rather than "tribulations" or "persecutions," because he was dealing with the *general* problems that Christians face as they are surrounded by unbelievers. He shared several facts about trials.. [7]

The Word of God, prayer, and suffering are the three "tools" that God uses in our lives. Just as electricity must run through a conductor, so the Holy Spirit must work through the means God has provided. As the Christian reads the Word and prays, he becomes more like Christ; and the more he becomes like Christ, the more the unsaved world opposes him. This daily "fellowship of His sufferings" (Phil. 3:10) drives the believer back to the Word and prayer, so that all three "tools" work together to provide the spiritual power he needs to glorify Christ. [8]

The important thing for us to know about these "scattered strangers" is that they were going through a time of trials, through much suffering and many persecutions. At least fifteen times in this letter, Peter referred to suffering; and he used eight different Greek words to do so.

- Some of these Christians were suffering because they were living godly lives and doing what was good and right (1 Peter 2:19–23; 3:14–18; 4:1–4, 15–19).
- Others were suffering reproach for the name of Christ (1 Peter 4:14) and being railed at by unsaved people (1 Peter 3:9–10).

Peter wrote to encourage them to be good witnesses to their persecutors, and to remember that their suffering would lead to glory (1 Peter 1:6–7; 4:13–14; 5:10). [9]

Hear Paul's advice to Timothy: "In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted" (2 Timothy 3:12). Paul warned the Thessalonians, "You know quite well that we were destined for [trials]. In fact, when we were with you, we kept telling you that we would be persecuted" (1 Thessalonians 3:3, 4). He told the Christians in Antioch the same thing: "We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22). "Dear friends," said Peter, "do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed" (1 Peter 4:12, 13).

In Acts 5:41, the apostles "went on their way from the presence of the Council, rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for His name." To the Philippians Paul wrote, "To you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but

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also to suffer for His sake” (Phil. 1:29). Why was suffering a cause for joy? The New Testament suggests at least five reasons.

1. First, **trials can push us closer to Christ**. Paul wrote, “That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings” (Phil. 3:10). Suffering in the cause of Christ yields the fruit of better understanding of what Jesus went through in His suffering.
2. Second, **trials can assure us that we belong to Christ**. Jesus said, “If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you” (John 15:18). Because “a disciple is not above his teacher, nor a slave above his master” (Matt. 10:24), we will suffer. Paul warned Timothy, “Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted” (2 Tim. 3:12). Peter tells suffering Christians, “If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you” (1 Pet. 4:14). Suffering causes believers to sense the presence of the Holy Spirit in their lives, which gives assurance of salvation.
3. Third, **trials can earn us a future reward**. “If indeed we suffer with [Christ] in order that we may also be glorified with Him. For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us” (Rom. 8:17-18). “For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison” (2 Cor. 4:17).
4. Fourth, **trials can help us lead others to Christ**. Church history is filled with accounts of those who came to Christ after watching other Christians endure suffering. [10]

Finally, Peter speaks of the law of Christian suffering. He says that, after the Christian has gone through suffering, God will restore, establish, strengthen and settle him. Every one of the words which Peter uses has behind it a vivid picture. Each tells us something about what suffering is designed by God to do for a man.

1. **Through enduring trials God will restore us**. The word for *restore* is difficult in this case to translate. It is *kartarizein*, the word commonly used for setting a fracture, the word used in Mark 1:19 for mending nets. It means to supply that which is missing, to mend that which is broken. So suffering, if accepted in humility and trust and love, can repair the weaknesses of a man’s character and add the greatness which so far is not there. Suffering is meant by God to add the grace notes to life.
2. **Through enduring trials God will establish us**. The word is *sterixein*, which means to make as solid as granite. Suffering of body and sorrow of heart do one of two things to a man. They either make him collapse or they leave him with a solidity of character which he could never have gained anywhere else. If he meets them with continuing trust in Christ, he emerges like toughened steel that has been tempered in the fire.

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3. **Through enduring trials God will *strengthen* us.** The Greek is *sthenoun*, which means *to fill with strength*. Here is the same sense again. A life with no effort and no discipline almost inevitably becomes a flabby life. No one really knows what his faith means to him until it has been tried in the furnace of affliction. There is something doubly precious about a faith which has come victoriously through pain and sorrow and disappointment. The wind will extinguish a weak flame; but it will fan a strong flame into a still greater blaze. So it is with faith.
  4. **Through enduring trials God will *settle* us.** The Greek is *themelioun*, which means *to lay the foundations*. When we have to meet sorrow and suffering we are driven down to the very bedrock of faith. It is then that we discover what are the things which cannot be shaken. It is in time of trial that we discover the great truths on which real life is founded.

Suffering is very far from doing these precious things for every man. It may well drive a man to bitterness and despair; and may well take away such faith as he has. But if it is accepted in the trusting certainty that a father's hand will never cause his child a needless tear, then out of suffering come things which the easy way may never bring.

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[1] Wiersbe, Warren W., *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books) 1997.

[2] These definitions paraphrased from Barclay, William, *Daily Study Bible Series: The Letters to the Galatians and Ephesians (Revised Edition)*, (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press) 2000, c1976. And MacArthur, John F., *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Ephesians 4:30-32*, (Chicago: Moody Press) 1983.

[3] Quoted from Wiersbe, Warren W., *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books) 1997.

[4] MacArthur, John, Jr., *James: The MacArthur New Testament Commentary*, (Chicago: Moody Press, Publisher) 1998.

[5] Stanley, Charles, *In Touch With God*, (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson) c1997.

[6] Wiersbe, Warren W., *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books) 1997.

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[8] Wiersbe, Warren W., *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books) 1997.

[9] Wiersbe, Warren W., *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books) 1997.

[10] MacArthur, John F., *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary*, (Chicago: Moody Press) 1983.

[11] Barclay, William, *Daily Study Bible Series: The Letters of James and Peter (Revised Edition)*, (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press) 2000, c1976.

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## How to Really Love Someone

WFF: Message Twenty-Six (020818AM)

Are you wearing your ID Tag this morning? Jesus said in John 13 that each of His children have an ID badge. "By this shall all men know that YOU are My disciples..." What is that ID? By the what? THE LOVE we are to have. Are you wearing that badge in your marriage? In your home? In your family? It is of utmost importance that we do!

### Young Gandhi with a Christian Family <sup>[1]</sup>

While attending a university in London, Mahatma Gandhi the future leader who would sway the hearts of hundreds of millions of his own people in India, became almost convinced that the Christian religion was the one true, supernatural religion in the world. Upon graduation, and still seeking evidence that would make him a committed Christian, young Gandhi accepted employment in East Africa and for seven months lived in the home of a family who were members of an evangelical Christian church. As soon as he discovered that fact he decided that here would be the place to find the evidence he sought.

But as the months passed and he saw the casualness of their attitude toward the cause of God, heard them complain when they were called upon to make sacrifice for the kingdom of God and sensed their general religious apathy, Gandhi's interest turned to disappointment. He said in his heart, "No, it is not the one true, supernatural religion I had hoped to find. A good religion, but just one more of the many religions in the world."

Loving one another is not optional, it is the way that all the world will know that we are Christ's disciples! Gandhi's conclusion is a sad but shockingly true reminder of the neglected power of a Christian family. This morning in a very real way the way you live, the way you talk, and the way you respond to your brothers and sisters reflects who you really are as a believer. Do you really love your brothers and sisters that God has placed all around your life?

God's Plan for brothers and sisters is loving one another.

God's Method for brothers and sisters to love one another is His Spirit.

God's Word tells us what it means for brothers and sisters to love each other and that love must start in our homes. This is most clearly laid down in 1<sup>st</sup> John. Let us turn there and survey what John says this morning.

In the widest sense of God's Word, 1<sup>st</sup> John is a message to all believers - that is the meaning of brethren, little children, and brothers and sisters.

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But in a strictly literal sense Christians are in God's Family and are brothers and sisters LIKE A CHRISTIAN FAMILY SHOULD BE! So in a most powerful way we are looking this morning at what God expects from us as members of individual families.

In fact God says if you can't love your very own flesh and blood brother He can't dwell within you! Pretty strong stuff from the Lord, and we need to be aware and praying that our families be geared towards loving one another!

What does John say God expects from us? Here is a quick survey:

2. **In God's family we are all His children.** 1 John 2:1 My little children (this word occurs 20 times in the Bible and NINE of them are here in 1<sup>st</sup> John), these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.
3. **Hatred towards our brothers or sisters disqualifies us for membership in God's Family.** 1 John 2:9 He who says he is in the light, and hates his brother, is in darkness until now.
4. **Loving our brothers and sisters demonstrates that we are in God's Family.** 1 John 2:10 He who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him.
5. **Hatred blinds us to God's Word and His will.** 1 John 2:11 But he who hates his brother is in darkness and walks in darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.
6. **Not loving our brothers and sisters is un-GODly.** 1 John 3:10 In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest: Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is he who does not love his brother.
7. **We are to LOVE ONE ANOTHER.** 1 John 3:11 For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another,
8. **Not loving our brothers and sisters is like being attached to a corpse.** 1 John 3:14 We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love his brother abides in death. (Romans often punished murderers by tying them face to face, body to body with the corpse of the person they murdered until the death of the corpse permeated their living body and killed them. So an unloving member of the family is a living, walking poisonous corpse that deadens those around them.)
9. **An unloving person that hates their brother or sister is like a MURDERER in God's sight.** 1 John 3:15 Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.
10. **Love means we are willing to die to our plans, our desires, our agenda – an serve our brother or sister.** 1 John 3:16 By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.
11. **A loving family member responds to the needs of their brother or sister.** 1 John 3:17 But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him?

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12. **Really loving our brothers and sisters is an action and a way of life.** 1 John 3:18 My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.
  13. **We are to LOVE ONE ANOTHER.** 1 John 3:23 And this is His commandment: that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another, as He gave us commandment.
  14. **We are to LOVE ONE ANOTHER.** 1 John 4:7 Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.
  15. **We are to LOVE ONE ANOTHER.** 1 John 4:11 Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.
  16. **We are to LOVE ONE ANOTHER.** 1 John 4:12 No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us.
  17. **The test of genuine Christianity is in whether you genuinely love your brothers and sisters.** 1 John 4:20 If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?
  18. **Loving our brothers and sisters is not optional, it is commanded.** 1 John 4:21 And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also.
  19. **Loving our brothers and sisters is just obeying God.** 1 John 5:2 By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments.
  20. **We are to LOVE ONE ANOTHER.** 2 John 5 And now I plead with you, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment to you, but that which we have had from the beginning: that we love one another.

Prayer is the key to raising, nurturing, and launching children that please the Lord is learning how to pray for our children.

#### **WE MUST PRAY FOR REALITY IN THEIR SPIRITUAL LIFE:**

2. SEEING THEM GENUINELY SAVED.
3. SEEING THEM LOVING GOD'S WORD.
4. SEEING THEM LIVING IN VICTORY.
5. SEEING THEM THINKING OF HEAVEN.
6. SEEING THEM FINDING SIN REPULSIVE.
7. SEEING THEM STAY TENDER TOWARD GOD.

#### **WE MUST PRAY FOR INTEGRITY IN THEIR PERSONAL LIFE:**

2. SEEING THEM MAINTAINING A CLEAR CONSCIENCE.

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3. SEEING THEM LEARNING TO STAND ALONE.
  4. SEEING THEM SEEKING TO STAY PURE.
  5. SEEING THEM CULTIVATING A SERVANT'S HEART.
  6. PERSONAL INTEGRITY MEANS SEEING THEM NEVER BECOMING BITTER IN TRIALS.

## **WE MUST PRAY FOR STABILITY IN THEIR RELATIONAL LIFE**

### **RELATIONAL STABILITY MEANS SEEING THEM CULTIVATING A LOVE FOR THEIR BROTHERS AND SISTERS.**

- John 13:35 By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you **have love for one another.**
- 1 John 3:11 For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that **we should love one another,** (NKJV);
- 1 John 4:11 Beloved, if God so loved us, **we also ought to love one another.** (NKJV);
- 1 John 4:20 If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for **he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?** (NKJV)

This is the "eleventh commandment," that we love one another. Certainly the Christian who abides in Christ ought to get along with other believers! Love for the brethren is a mark of a disciple. How is it possible for Jesus to command us to love one another? Can true love be commanded? You must keep in mind that Christian love is not basically a "feeling"; it is an act of the will. The proof of our love is not in our feelings but in our actions, even to the extent of laying down our lives for Christ and for one another (1 John 3:16). Jesus laid down His life for both His friends and His enemies! (Rom. 5:10) While the emotions are certainly involved, real Christian love is an act of the will. It means treating others the way God treats us. [2]

So God wants me to love the people I live with, bump into, and have to sacrifice for all the time? Sounds impossible! In fact, when you and I sit and read these New Testament passages we are often overwhelmed at what amazing things those saints lived and did for God. In fact as I read over some of the more vivid parts of the New Testament some of the words that came to my mind were unbelievable, incredible and unattainable. Isn't that where most of us get to after a while? Unbelievable, incredible, but alas, unattainable for me!

Yes, the answer to the question of how to live an unbelievable, incredible life is found in our text this morning. In fact, one word sums up Peter's life, Paul's life and John's life. This same word summarizes how the galaxy of 1<sup>st</sup> through 20<sup>th</sup> century saints has stood alone triumphantly for Christ. In fact, one word tells all there is about walking in the Spirit this morning.

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**Please turn with me to Ephesians 5:18-19, and as we stand and read, may we find the secret they knew and followed and like them, do the same!** So God Almighty commands all of us to let His Spirit continuously be filling you!

To illustrate this joy, Paul used the familiar image of drunkenness: “Be not drunk with wine... but be filled with the Spirit” (Eph. 5:18). When the believers at Pentecost were filled with the Spirit, the crowd accused them of being drunk with new wine (Acts 2:13–15). There was such a joyfulness about them that the unbelievers could think of no better comparison. But some practical lessons can be learned from the contrasts. To begin with, the drunk is under the control of another force, since alcohol is actually a depressant. He feels a great sense of release—all his troubles are gone. He can “lick anybody in the house!” The drunk is not ashamed to express himself (though what he says and does is shameful), nor can he hide what is going on in his life. Transfer this picture to the believer who is filled with the Spirit. God controls his life, and he experiences a deep joy he is not afraid to express to the glory of God. [3]

It is certainly not difficult to live or work with someone who is filled with the Spirit and joyful. He has a song in his heart and on his lips. The drunk often sings, but his songs only reveal the corruption in his heart. The Spirit-filled Christian’s song comes from God, a song he could never sing apart from the Spirit’s power. Christians who are filled with the Holy Spirit enjoy being together and experience a sense of joyful oneness in the Lord. They do not need the false stimulants of the world. They have the Spirit of God—and He is all they need. [4]

Being filled with the Spirit is living in the conscious presence of the Lord Jesus Christ, letting His mind, through the Word, dominate everything that is thought and done. Being filled with the Spirit is the same as walking LIKE Jesus did on earth!

There are 15 manifestations of the flesh in Galatians 5:19-21. Of these 8 are dealing with interpersonal problems. It is not enough to say that we have always struggled in these areas. Or, to say I sinned and go on. The Scriptures show us that a truly spiritual person will be growing in a visible way in each of these areas.

1. LOVE is the absence of selfishness. It is the product of the Holy Spirit present in our lives Rom. 5:5 says. And it even “flowers in the presence of the unlovely and hostile”. [5] The word *agape*, is the love of choice, referring not to an emotional affection, physical attraction, or a familial bond, but to respect, devotion, and affection that leads to willing, self-sacrificial service (John 15:13; Rom. 5:8; 1 John 3:16, 17).

· Can others trace my progress in expressing God’s love? Am I less selfish and self-seeking than I was last month?

2. JOY is the spiritual quality that releases us from circumstances. A happiness based on unchanging divine promises and eternal spiritual realities. Christian joy is not

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a shallow emotion that, like a thermometer, rises and falls with the changing atmosphere of the home. Rather, Christian joy is a deep experience of adequacy and confidence in spite of the circumstances around us. The Christian can be joyful even in the midst of pain and suffering. This kind of joy is not a thermometer but a thermostat. Instead of rising and falling with the circumstances, it determines the spiritual temperature of the circumstances. Paul put it beautifully when he wrote, "I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content" (Phil. 4:11). Joy is a gift from God, and as such, believers are not to manufacture it but to delight in the blessing they already possess (Rom. 14:17; Phil. 4:4).

- Do those that know me and watch my life see me as a joyful person?

3. PEACE is the internal serenity that only God can give. "Peace is love in repose, with no borrowing of tomorrows troubles today." [6] Troubles are not absent. Rather, God is present! "When the Holy Spirit is not grieved the dove of peace is able to alight on the heart." peace. The inner calm that results from confidence in one's saving relationship with Christ. The verb form denotes binding together and is reflected in the expression "having it all together." Like joy, peace is not related to one's circumstances (John 14:27; Rom. 8:28; Phil. 4:6, 7, 9). Has peace become more and more a way of life for you this year?

4. PATIENCE (KJV longsuffering) is the absence of personal irritation at the actions of others. It is that bearing long with people that Paul spoke of in I Corinthians. Patience is also one of the Supreme attributes of God. It is His character that is revealed as being gracious and longsuffering. See Exod 34:6; Num 14:18; II Peter 3:9. This is patience or the ability to endure injuries inflicted by others and the willingness to accept irritating or painful situations (Eph. 4:2; Col. 3:12; 1 Tim. 1:15, 16).

- Ask yourself, am I more patient than I was three months ago? or less? If we are not increasing in patience it is only that we are not yielding and submitting to the Holy Spirit.

5. KINDNESS is a beautiful reflection of God in our lives. It is the absence of an abrasive manner in my dealings with people. It is a chosen reflection of Ephesians 2:8 and 4:32 in my life. "Kindness is seen as that sensitivity toward others that issues into deeds of self sacrifice and love even toward the unlovely and undeserving ones. Kindness will soften any word or act that might hurt another.

- Is my character showing an increasing tendency toward personal kindness in my way with others?

6. GOODNESS is being Godlike! It is the opposite of fallen humanity. Look at Jesus in Acts 10:38. When the Holy Spirit anointed His life, what came out? As one author wrote -- "Ecstatic utterances? Spectacular Miracles? Flamboyant Sermons? No! He

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simply went about doing good. " Believers are commanded to exemplify goodness (6:10; 2 Thess. 1:11).

- Am I a visibly better person than last year? Do people see me doing good to all those around me?

7. FAITHFULNESS is the idea here. A trustworthy and dependable life. The kind of person that keeps their own life in order so that you can count on them. Like Psalm 15 speaks of, they make and keep their word. faithfulness. Loyalty and trustworthiness (Lam. 3:22; Phil. 2:7–9; 1 Thess. 5:24; Rev. 2:10).

- Am I making strides in reliability and dependability?

8. MEEKNESS is the opposite of asserting ourselves. gentleness. Better translated "meekness." The Lord said that the Meek were the ultimate winners. [Matthew 5:5] Those who are Servants of the Lord must not strive II Timothy 2:24. They resist selfish ambition [James 3:16] because it is a reflection of Satan not God.

- What shape is my personal agenda in? Is it intact and my rights being defended? Or, is it in hopeless shape, crucified with Christ and fading?

9. DISCIPLINE (KJV self-control). This refers to restraining passions and appetites (1 Cor. 9:25; 2 Pet. 1:5, 6) and is defined by the Greek Dictionary as "a virtue, which consists in mastery of the appetites and passions, especially the sensual ones." The only force that can control or flesh is the Holy Spirit. When yielded to Him we become vessels that are worshipful sacrifices to Him no longer to self. Self cannot control self. Flesh is not able to harness flesh. Only the Spirit can discipline us.

- Do others see me as graciously under the control of God's Spirit of Discipline? Are you beating under and giving knockout blows to your flesh? Paul was in I Cor 9:27. Can we do any less?

There is every reason why we should love one another. We trust the same Savior. We will one day enjoy the same heaven! We belong to the same Father and seek to do the same work of witnessing to a lost world that Jesus Christ alone saves from sin. We believe the same truth, even though we may have different views of minor doctrinal matters; and we follow the same example that Jesus set for His people, to live a holy life. Yes, believers do have their differences; but we have much more in common, and this should encourage us to love one another and promote true spiritual unity. [7]

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<sup>[1]</sup> Evangelical Illustrations as quoted by Tan, Paul Lee, *Encyclopedia of 7,700 Illustrations*, (Garland, Texas: Bible Communications, Inc.) 1996.

<sup>[2]</sup> Wiersbe, Warren W., *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books) 1997.

<sup>[3]</sup> Wiersbe, Warren W., *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books) 1997.

<sup>[4]</sup> Wiersbe, Warren W., *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books) 1997.

<sup>[5]</sup> J. Oswald Sanders, *Spiritual Discipleship* p. 118.

<sup>[6]</sup> Ibid.

<sup>[7]</sup> Wiersbe, Warren W., *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books) 1997.

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# Learning to Always be Submissive to God

## WFF: Message Twenty-Seven (020825AM)

Every day of our lives we make choices. Those choices will often involve a response to an authority God has placed around us. For a moment look at I Peter 2:13 with me:

**Submit** in the New Testament world this word often speaks a soldier's absolute obedience to his superior officer.

**Romans 13:1 reminds us there is no authority except from God.** Since He alone is the sovereign ruler of the universe (Ps. 62:11; 103:19; 1 Tim. 6:15), The Lord has placed no less than four different levels of authority on earth:

- 1) Political: the government over all citizens;
- 2) Spiritual: the church over all believers;
- 3) Familial: the parents over all children; and
- 4) Material: the masters over all employees.

- ❖ 1<sup>st</sup> Have you ever stepped back and looked at how UNFAIR life was in the world of the Old Testament? Now let your mind move across the pages of sacred and inspired history. As I read each of these names, what comes to your mind? One common condition, they each felt some type of MISTREATMENT and DIFFICULT SITUATIONS.
  - Hagar – mistreated by her mistress Sarah;
  - Joseph – mistreated by his older brothers, by his boss Potiphar's wife, by the higher ranking fellow prisoners;
  - Jacob – mistreated by his father-in-law.
  - Hannah – mocked by her closest companions, misunderstood by God's priests.
  - David – mistreated by his brothers, neglected by his dad,
  - Daniel – betrayed by his fellow workers, sentenced by his own boss to the lions den.
- ❖ 2<sup>nd</sup> Have you ever stepped back and looked at how UNFAIR life was in the New Testament world? Think about that as we look again at I Peter 2. The world and the people to which Peter wrote were unfair and hard to get along with, in these early days of the New Testament? The society of the Roman Empire around Christ's church had four layers of power. There were the:

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- ALL POWERFUL MASTERS: Think of the more than 60 million people who had become mere possessions of their masters. They were the slaves of the New Testament world.
  - ALL POWERFUL FATHERS: Then think of the small children. Under the Roman Law of *pater potestis* a father was presented with his newborn children at which time he could accept them or reject them. If rejected they were cast out onto the trash pile to die of exposure, and hunger.
  - ALL POWERFUL HUSBANDS: Then there were the women who were treated just above the slaves and children as workers only.
  - ALL POWERFUL WEALTHY: Finally, there were the poor, the orphans, the handicapped, and the widows who were exploited, mistreated, and allowed to suffer by the greedy wealth seeking powerful ones.

Four groups of weak, endangered and troubled peoples.

And what did God's Word offer them? Interestingly enough, the God of the Universe who does all things well, knows all things and is infinitely wise says the same thing to them all. He said to submit and obey

- your masters if you are a slave,
- your fathers if you are a child,
- your husbands if you are a wife, and
- your boss if you are poor.

Listen to God's Word as we stand and hear Peter's inspired words in I Peter 2:13 and onward.

- **God says to Weak:** 1 Peter 2:13 Therefore submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether to the king as supreme, 14 or to governors, as to those who are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and for the praise of those who do good. 15 For this is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men—17 Honor all people. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king. 20 For what credit is it if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God. 21 For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: 23 who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously; I Peter 3:8 Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous; 9 not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing. 10 For "He who would love life And see good days, Let

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him refrain his tongue from evil, And his lips from speaking deceit. 12 For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, And His ears are open to their prayers; But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.” 13 And who is he who will harm you if you become followers of what is good? 14 But even if you should suffer for righteousness’ sake, you are blessed. “And do not be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled.”

- **God says to Workers:** 1 Peter 2:18 Servants, be submissive to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the harsh.
- **God says to Wives:** 1 Peter 3:1 Wives, likewise, be submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives,
- **God says to Children:** Ephesians 6:1-2 Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 2 “Honor your father and mother,” which is the first commandment with promise:

So the Lord says we are to yield ourselves to all levels of authority over us (unless they ask us to disobey a clear command of God's Word). No matter what the conditions, the command was the same. SUBMIT, TRUST, WAIT, and HOPE. The Lord expects the same from us today and that is why we have come to our next area of prayer for our children: **RELATIONAL STABILITY MEANS SEEING THEM LEARNING TO TRUST GOD WITH HARD SITUATIONS AND NOT TO REBEL.**

Is that really possible? Not only possible, it is imperative. As we shall see, anything less becomes the breeding grounds for one of the deadliest of all spiritual conditions – rebellion. Rebellion is an inward choice we make to resist, and go against the will of one in authority over us. Though often unseen at first rebellion grows. The results of rebellion are infinitely more dreadful than ANY mistreatment or hard situation.

So as our children face challenges, hardship, and unfair situations we must pray that they never harden their hearts and rebel against God’s ordained authorities in their lives. Prayer is the key to raising, nurturing, and launching children that please the Lord is learning how to pray for our children.

WE MUST PRAY FOR REALITY IN THEIR SPIRITUAL LIFE:

2. **SEEING THEM GENUINELY SAVED.**
3. **SEEING THEM LOVING GOD'S WORD.**
4. **SEEING THEM LIVING IN VICTORY.**
5. **SEEING THEM THINKING OF HEAVEN.**
6. **SEEING THEM FINDING SIN REPULSIVE.**
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WE MUST PRAY FOR INTEGRITY IN THEIR PERSONAL LIFE:

6. **SEEING THEM MAINTAINING A CLEAR CONSCIENCE.**
7. **SEEING THEM LEARNING TO STAND ALONE.**
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10. **PERSONAL INTEGRITY MEANS SEEING THEM NEVER BECOMING BITTER IN TRIALS.**

WE MUST PRAY FOR STABILITY IN THEIR RELATIONAL LIFE :

3. **RELATIONAL STABILITY MEANS SEEING THEM CULTIVATING A LOVE FOR THEIR BROTHERS AND SISTERS.**
4. **RELATIONAL STABILITY MEANS SEEING THEM LEARNING TO TRUST GOD WITH HARD SITUATIONS AND NOT TO REBEL.**

- 1 Samuel 15:22-23 So Samuel said: "Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, As in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, And to heed than the fat of rams. 23 For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, And stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, He also has rejected you from being king."
- Proverbs 3:5-6 **Trust** in the LORD with all your heart, And **lean not** on your own understanding; In all **your ways acknowledge Him**, And **He shall direct** your paths. (NKJV);
- 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. 2 Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and **those who resist will bring judgment on themselves**. (NKJV)

One of the most sobering lessons on the destructive power of stubbornness, disobedience and the deadliness of rebellion s seen in God's account of the Personal Shipwreck of the Life of King Saul. There are fifteen glaring warning lights blinking of impending disaster in the life of King Saul. As we read the 15 chapters that chronicle his rise and fall, there is a sobering lesson for each of us to glean.

Thoughtfully ask yourself whether as a man you are following this deadly course, or as a young person if you are starting this slide, or as a woman or young lady, if these areas are neglected. For anyone these warnings unheeded spell infinite doom!

Saul lived a life of ignoring the warnings of departure from God's Way! What were those signs? Here they are with the locations from God's Word.

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5. Saul's pathway of rebellion started with IMPATIENCE with God's plan. This can be:

- Impatience with God's timing for us getting a job,
- Impatience with God's timing for us getting married,
- Impatience with God's timing for us having children,
- Impatience with God's timing for us dealing with sexual desires,
- Impatience with God's timing for us dealing with wealth and security, or any of many temptations we face.

Saul was seeking the approval of man before he sought the approval of God. 1 Samuel 13:8 He waited seven days, the time set by Samuel; but Samuel did not come to Gilgal, and **Saul's men began to scatter.**

5. Saul's pathway of rebellion involved NEGLECTING to provide for those entrusted to your care. In the New Testament such a one is worse than an infidel. Saul had made sure he had what he needed to defend himself, but not that those he cared for were armed for the battle. 1 Samuel 13:22 So on the day of the battle not a soldier with Saul and Jonathan had a sword or spear in his hand; **only Saul and his son Jonathan had them.**
6. Saul's pathway of rebellion involved LAZY INDIFFERENCE. Saul was unaware of his son, the battle, and even the victory. He missed it all. 1 Samuel 14:2-3 Saul was staying on the outskirts of Gibeah **under a pomegranate tree** in Migron. With him were about six hundred men, among whom was Ahijah, who was wearing an ephod. He was a son of Ichabod's brother Ahitub son of Phinehas, the son of Eli, the LORD's priest in Shiloh. **No one was aware** that Jonathan had left.
7. Saul's pathway of rebellion involved RASH WORDS. Saul spoke with no thought of what the implications were to his family or nation. 1 Samuel 14:24 Now the men of Israel were in distress that day, because Saul had bound the people under an oath, saying, **"Cursed be any man** who eats food before evening comes, before I have avenged myself on my enemies!" So none of the troops tasted food.
8. Saul's pathway of rebellion involved INCOMPLETE OBEDIENCE. Saul used selective, self-serving obedience in place of total and God honoring obedience. 1 Samuel 15:9 But Saul and the army spared Agag and the best of the sheep and cattle, the fat calves and lambs—everything that was good. These they were **unwilling to destroy completely**, but everything that was despised and weak they totally destroyed.
9. Saul's pathway of rebellion involved NOT CULTIVATING PERSONAL WORSHIP. There was no seeking of God on a personal level or worship offered to God from Saul's heart to Saul's God! 1 Samuel 15:30 Saul replied, "I have sinned. But please honor me before the elders of my people and before Israel; come back with me, so that **I may worship the LORD your God.**"

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10. Saul's pathway of rebellion involved DOUBTING THE POWER OF GOD in your life. Saul had no concept of the Awesome God who had revealed Himself to him. Saul and those who followed him thought mere mortals (the Philistines) were greater than the Ancient of Days. 1 Samuel 17:11 On hearing the Philistine's words, **Saul and all the Israelites were dismayed and terrified.**
  11. Saul's pathway of rebellion involved allowing the continuation of a SELF FOCUS. Saul measured the worth of his life by what others said rather than by the Lord. 1 Samuel 18:8a Saul was very angry; **this refrain galled him.** "They have credited David with tens of thousands," he thought, "but me with only thousands. What more can he get but the kingdom?"
  12. Saul's pathway of rebellion involved the entrance of INSECURITY into daily living. Fear is always the realm of Satan. Saul surrenders the care of his future security to himself and took it away from the Lord! 1 Samuel 18:8b Saul was very angry; this refrain galled him. "They have credited David with tens of thousands," he thought, "but me with only thousands. **What more can he get but the kingdom?**"
  13. Saul's pathway of rebellion involved JEALOUSY. Saul was driven by the lust for self that manifests itself in a desire to keep others from having something you want for yourself; this is the worst form of jealousy. Jealousy darkens our eyes to anything good about another; David was unable to ever measure up from that moment onward in Saul's mind. 1 Samuel 18:9 And from that time on Saul **kept a jealous eye on David.**
  14. Saul's pathway of rebellion involved cultivating a WRONG VALUE SYSTEM. Saul did not treasure nor seek God's blessing, God's favor, God's presence, or even God's involvement in his life. Rather he feared David because God was with him. Saul valued himself, neglected God, and feared David. What a tragic misdirected life! 1 Samuel 18:12 **Saul was afraid of David,** because the LORD was with David but had left Saul.
  15. Saul's pathway of rebellion involved NEGLECTING his MARRIAGE. Saul confessed his failure to nurture and care for his wife. An undisciplined wife breeds many painful days. 1 Samuel 20:30 Saul's anger flared up at Jonathan and he said to him, "You **son of a perverse and rebellious woman!** Don't I know that you have sided with the son of Jesse to your own shame and to the shame of the mother who bore you?"
  16. Saul's pathway of rebellion involved ONLY SEEING THINGS FROM AN EARTHLY PERSPECTIVE. Saul seemed to only get one channel; he wasn't able to see the eternal, the divine, and the spiritual parts of life. He looked on his family, his future, and their success as only a physical pursuit, not a spiritual heritage. God was always left out of the equation for security, prosperity, and happiness. 1 Samuel 20:31 As long as the son of Jesse lives on this earth, **neither you nor your kingdom will be established.** Now send and bring him to me, for he must die!"
  17. Saul's pathway of rebellion involved HAVING NO FEAR OF GOD. Saul did not see God, so he did not fear God. Thus there was no limit to the actions he

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allowed to proceed from his life. Saul saw no consequence in offending the Lord by his life. 1 Samuel 22:17 Then the king ordered the guards at his side: “Turn and **kill the priests of the LORD**, because they too have sided with David. They knew he was fleeing, yet they did not tell me.” But the king’s officials were not willing to raise a hand to strike the priests of the LORD.

18. Saul’s pathway of rebellion involved NOT HATING THE ENEMIES OF THE LORD. If we love someone we hurt when they do. We are loyal and reverent of the name of those we cherish. Saul had none of these qualities. 1 Samuel 28:18 Because **you did not obey the LORD or carry out his fierce wrath against the Amalekites**, the LORD has done this to you today.

The end of Saul was a tragedy. He crashed against the rocks of his own disobedient life and sank into the dark waters of sin. He was a disgrace to himself by his ignominious death; to his family he failed to protect; to his country he betrayed and brought to defeat; and to his God he ignored and dishonored.

What a colossal failure and a tragic testimony of neglected warning signs, which led to a personal, infinite shipwreck of a very promising life! Be warned by his failure today!

Pray and live in such a way that these areas don’t get solidified in the lives of those we love:

4. IMPATIENCE with God’s plan. This can be:
5. NEGLECTING to provide for those entrusted to your care.
6. LAZY INDIFFERENCE.
7. RASH WORDS.
8. INCOMPLETE OBEDIENCE.
9. NOT CULTIVATING PERSONAL WORSHIP.
10. DOUBTING THE POWER OF GOD in your life.
11. SELF FOCUS. Saul measured the worth of his life by what others said rather than by the Lord.
12. INSECURITY into daily living.
13. JEALOUSY. Saul was driven by the lust for self that manifests itself in a desire to keep others from having something you want for yourself;
14. WRONG VALUE SYSTEM. Saul did not treasure nor seek God’s blessing, God’s favor, God’s presence, or even God’s involvement in his life.
15. NEGLECTING his MARRIAGE.
16. ONLY SEEING THINGS FROM AN EARTHLY PERSPECTIVE.
17. HAVING NO FEAR OF GOD.
18. NOT HATING THE ENEMIES OF THE LORD.

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## **Loving the Way God Made You**

**WFF: Message Twenty-Eight (020901AM)**

Each of us was built to a perfect and intricate set of plans, engineered by God Himself. Within every cell of our body is a set of those Divine Fingerprints called our DNA. The Human Genome is a wonder of precise engineering that laid down everything about your physical body.

So each one of us was perfectly designed by God for His glory. Who we are, where we were born, how we look, all of our imperfections and weaknesses, and countless other details are all part of God's marvelous design.

Each of us are the handiwork of God, like spiritual snowflakes, no two exactly alike.

Each of us are like rare and precious jewels, no one is worthless or unimportant in God's plan.

This morning, every child in this place was especially designed by God for Divine Purposes. Your intellect, your giftedness, your abilities, and most of all who you are as a young man or a young woman are the strategic resources God has given you to serve and please Him.

Now comes the challenge. Parents, do you know what God wants from your sons as men and from your daughters as women? In some areas the Lord wants similar character for boys and girls, but in most areas, His plan for a young lady GREATLY DIFFERS from His plans for young men.

The Lord Almighty, God of the Universe has made men and women differently, with different qualities, different roles, and different purposes within His great plan. So, again I ask from God's Word -- Parents, do you know what God wants from your sons as men and from your daughters as women? As we walk through many passages in the Scriptures this morning we will see a portion of God's wondrous plan. And we will see anew and afresh that praying, teaching, and modeling the Word of God is the key to raising, nurturing, and launching children that please the Lord. We need to be learning how to pray for our children from the Scriptures.

Please stand and listen to the Lord speak from Psalm 139.13-18.

**WE MUST PRAY FOR REALITY IN THEIR SPIRITUAL LIFE:**

3. **SEEING THEM GENUINELY SAVED.**
4. **SEEING THEM LOVING GOD'S WORD.**

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5. **SEEING THEM LIVING IN VICTORY.**
  6. **SEEING THEM THINKING OF HEAVEN.**
  7. **SEEING THEM FINDING SIN REPULSIVE.**
  8. **SEEING THEM STAY TENDER TOWARD GOD.**

**WE MUST PRAY FOR INTEGRITY IN THEIR PERSONAL LIFE:**

4. **SEEING THEM MAINTAINING A CLEAR CONSCIENCE.**
5. **SEEING THEM LEARNING TO STAND ALONE.**
6. **SEEING THEM SEEKING TO STAY PURE.**
7. **SEEING THEM CULTIVATING A SERVANT'S HEART.**
8. **PERSONAL INTEGRITY MEANS SEEING THEM NEVER BECOMING BITTER IN TRIALS.**

**WE MUST PRAY FOR STABILITY IN THEIR RELATIONAL LIFE:**

4. **RELATIONAL STABILITY MEANS SEEING THEM CULTIVATING A LOVE FOR THEIR BROTHERS AND SISTERS.**
5. **RELATIONAL STABILITY MEANS SEEING THEM LEARNING TO TRUST GOD WITH HARD SITUATIONS AND NOT TO REBEL.**
6. **RELATIONAL STABILITY MEANS SEEING THEM EACH LOVING THE WAY GOD MADE THEM AS MEN AND WOMEN.**

Psalm 139:13-18 For **You formed** my inward parts; You covered me in my mother's womb. 14 **I will praise You**, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Marvelous are Your works, And that my soul knows very well. 15 My frame was not hidden from You, When I was made in secret, And skillfully wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. 16 Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. And in Your book they all were written, **The days fashioned for me**, When as yet there were none of them. 17 How precious also are Your thoughts to me, O God! How great is the sum of them! 18 If I should count them, they would be more in number than the sand; When I awake, I am still with You. (NKJV)

Each of us are the handiwork of God, like spiritual snowflakes, no two exactly alike.

Each of us are like rare and precious jewels, no one is worthless or unimportant in God's plan.

So how should we direct, train, and guide our young men and women as specifically designed by God? Of course, using the Scriptures. Turn with me now and note how specifically the Lord has directed our young men and young women to be – so they can please God by their lives, their choices and their conduct. The key is that more is caught

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(discipleship) than taught (lecture). Fathers and mothers, what YOU ARE is very much what THEY WILL BECOME!

1 Timothy 2:8 "I desire therefore that the men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting;"

- "pray everywhere" YOUNG MEN SHOULD SEE THEIR FATHERS as MEN OF PRAYER at the table, at bed time, before school, before travel, on the road, alone, in public. Godly fathers just pray EVERYWHERE!
- "lifting up holy hands" YOUNG MEN SHOULD SEE THEIR FATHERS as MEN OF PURITY. When their hands, and lives, and secrets are exposed all that shows are holy hands, cleansed and kept pure by a Spirit filled walk!
- "without wrath" YOUNG MEN SHOULD SEE THEIR FATHERS as MEN OF PATIENCE. The fruit of the Spirit is long suffering patience that grows and takes over my responses!
- "without doubting" YOUNG MEN SHOULD SEE THEIR FATHERS as MEN OF FAITH. Believing God's Word enough to live it!

1 Timothy 2:9-10 "in like manner also, that the women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with propriety and moderation, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly clothing, but, which is proper for women professing godliness, with good works. "

GOD'S DESIRE FOR WOMEN IS A GODLY ATTITUDE (1 Timothy 2:9-10): Two attitudes ought to characterize your approach to worship: "modestly and discreetly" (v. 9). The Greek word translated "modestly" in verse 9 refers to modesty mixed with humility. At its core it connotes a sense of shame—not shame in being a woman, but shame for in any way inciting lust or distracting others from a proper worship of God. A godly woman will do all she can to avoid being a source of temptation. The word also has the connotation of rejecting anything dishonorable to God. Some would even suggest it means "grief over a sense of sin." A godly woman hates sin so much that she will avoid anything that can produce sin in others. Consider the following dictionary definitions:

- YOUNG LADIES SHOULD SEE THEIR MOTHERS as "modest": What is that? Moms that means they see you as having a regard for decencies of behavior or dress; quiet and humble in appearance, style, etc.; not displaying one's body; not boastful or vain; unassuming; virtuous; shy or reserved; chaste.
- YOUNG LADIES SHOULD SEE THEIR MOTHERS as "proper": Moms that means they see you as having a specially adapted or suitable manner; appropriate; conforming to an accepted standard; correct; fitting; right; decent.

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Titus 2:4-5 "that they admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, 5 to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed. "

GOD WANTS YOUNGER WOMEN TO STAND OUT IN OUR CULTURE (Titus 2:4-5)  
The older women are to train the younger women “to love their husbands, to love their children, to be sensible, pure, workers at home, kind, being subject to their own husbands” (Titus 2:4–5). In our culture, that is the exacti[2] opposite of what they are being taught. Women today are encouraged to love whomever they want, to farm out their children to someone else’s care and influence, and not to worry about being sensible or pure, but to do whatever pleases them in fulfilling their desires. “Younger women” refers to those women who are able to bear children or are still rearing children. Since women can bear children well into their forties and the main duties of raising a child last for about twenty years, a woman under sixty could be considered young in the biblical sense (1 Tim. 5:9). What qualities ought to characterize her life?

YOUNG LADIES SHOULD SEE THEIR MOTHERS “love their husbands”: This word in the Greek text, **philandros** , is translated “love their husbands.” Paul used the same terms to describe godly widows (1 Tim. 5:9). It means to be a one-man woman, totally devoted to her husband, and in tune with his needs, plans, and desires. **Mothers, do your girls see this type of love in you?**

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## **Masculinity and Femininity**

### **WFF: Message Twenty-Nine (020901PM)**

As the world crumbles, as society disintegrates, and roles and genders are obliterated – God's Word stands. As even the Christian community erases masculinity from the Bible versions, and families abdicate God's standards for the family – the Christian Home is getting harder and harder to build. But one truth remains, God has promised His blessing on those who will believe Him enough to obey Him!

Now comes the challenge. Parents, do you know what God wants from your sons as men and from your daughters as women? In some areas the Lord wants similar character for boys and girls, but in most areas, His plan for a young lady GREATLY DIFFERS from His plans for young men.

The Lord Almighty, God of the Universe has made men and women differently, with different qualities, different roles, and different purposes within His great plan. So, again I ask from God's Word -- Parents, do you know what God wants from your sons as men and from your daughters as women? As we walk through many passages in the Scriptures this morning we will see a portion of God's wondrous plan. And we will see anew and afresh that praying, teaching, and modeling the Word of God is the key to raising, nurturing, and launching children that please the Lord. We need to be learning how to pray for our children from the Scriptures.

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5. SEEING THEM LOVING GOD'S WORD.
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7. SEEING THEM THINKING OF HEAVEN.
8. SEEING THEM FINDING SIN REPULSIVE.
9. SEEING THEM STAY TENDER TOWARD GOD.

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1. SEEING THEM MAINTAINING A CLEAR CONSCIENCE.
2. SEEING THEM LEARNING TO STAND ALONE.
3. SEEING THEM SEEKING TO STAY PURE.
4. SEEING THEM CULTIVATING A SERVANT'S HEART.
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## WE MUST PRAY FOR STABILITY IN THEIR RELATIONAL LIFE:

1. RELATIONAL STABILITY MEANS SEEING THEM CULTIVATING A LOVE FOR THEIR BROTHERS AND SISTERS.
2. RELATIONAL STABILITY MEANS SEEING THEM LEARNING TO TRUST GOD WITH HARD SITUATIONS AND NOT TO REBEL.
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1 Timothy 2:8 "I desire therefore that the men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting;"

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child last for about twenty years, a woman under sixty could be considered young in the biblical sense (1 Tim. 5:9). What qualities ought to characterize her life?

1. YOUNG LADIES SHOULD SEE THEIR MOTHERS “love their husbands”: This word in the Greek text, **philandros**, is translated “love their husbands.” Paul used the same terms to describe godly widows (1 Tim. 5:9). It means to be a one-man woman, totally devoted to her husband, and in tune with his needs, plans, and desires. **Mothers, do your girls see this type of love in you?**
2. YOUNG LADIES SHOULD SEE THEIR MOTHERS as “a lover of children”: This characteristic is also one word in the Greek text, **philoteknos**, and it means to be a lover of children. As 1 Timothy 2:15 says, that is a woman’s highest calling. Obviously God doesn’t want all women to be mothers or they would be. Those women who have no children mean a great deal to God’s kingdom because He has given them freedom to serve in unique ways. God wants women who are mothers to love their children, which involves making personal sacrifices for the benefit of their children. Remember, loving your children is not based on emotion. Rather, it is your responsibility to pour yourself into your child’s life so that he or she grows up to love Christ. **Mothers, do your girls see this type of love in you?**
3. YOUNG LADIES SHOULD SEE THEIR MOTHERS as “sensible”. Young women are to be taught to be sensible, a required characteristic of elders (1 Tim. 3:2) and older men (Titus 2:2). It refers to using common sense and making sound judgments. Those things are learned best by example, and that’s where the older women can have such an influence. **Mothers, do your girls see this type of Spirit-controlled living in you?**
4. YOUNG LADIES SHOULD SEE THEIR MOTHERS as “pure”: Young women are to be morally pure, virtuous, and sexually faithful to their husbands. They are to be devoted to that one man in body and spirit. By what they read, and what they listen to, and what they watch on TV and movies, their lives should declare loyalty and devotion to a real man they live with not a dream or fantasy man that only exists in their minds. **Mothers, do your girls see this type of holiness in you?**
5. YOUNG LADIES SHOULD SEE THEIR MOTHERS as “worker at home”: A woman’s responsibility is in the home because it is the place where she can have the greatest impact on the world by raising godly men and women. GOD’S PLAN FOR WOMEN CENTERS AROUND THEIR HOME AND FAMILY: The phrase “workers at home” is translated from the compound Greek word *oikourgōs*, which is derived from *oikos* (house) and a form of *ergon* (work). *Ergon* does not simply refer to labor in general; it often refers to a particular job or employment. It is the word Jesus used when He said, “My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to accomplish His *work*” (John 4:34, emphasis added). Our Lord focused His entire life on fulfilling God’s will. In a similar fashion, a wife is to focus her life on the home. God has designed the family to be her sphere of responsibility. That doesn’t mean she should spend twenty-four hours a day there, however. The

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woman in Proverbs 31 left her home when she needed to buy a field or when she needed supplies, yet even those trips benefited her family. She poured her life into her family—she woke up early and went to bed late for the sake of those in it. **Mothers, do your girls see this type of focus upon God's will in you?**

6. YOUNG LADIES SHOULD SEE THEIR MOTHERS as “kind”: A young woman ought to be characterized by being gentle, tender-hearted, and merciful toward others. **Mothers, do your girls see this type of spirit-filled kindness in you?**
7. YOUNG LADIES SHOULD SEE THEIR MOTHERS as “subject to their own husbands”: This echoes Paul's instruction in Ephesians 5:22. A godly young woman understands God's created order and submits to it (cf. 1 Cor. 11:5). **Mothers, do your girls see this type of godliness in you?**

Titus 2:6-8 "6 Likewise, **exhort the young men** to be sober-minded, 7 in all things showing yourself to be a pattern of good works; in doctrine showing integrity, reverence, incorruptibility, 8 sound speech that cannot be condemned, that one who is an opponent may be ashamed, having nothing evil to say of you. "

David Wilkerson the 71 year old author of the Cross and the Switch blade, and now for 16 years the pastor of Times Square Church gave this amazing testimony[3] to his church a few weeks ago:

Keep in mind, Jesus calls us "kings and priests unto God and his Father" (Revelation 1:6). And the apostle Peter reminds us, "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood...Ye also...are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood" (1 Peter 2:9, 5). I ask you, which priesthood describes your life: the godly Zadok priesthood, or the corrupt Eli priesthood? These two ministries represent two kinds of manifestations. And they represent Jesus to the world in two very different ways.

### **A HALFHEARTED MANIFESTATION OF JESUS IN THE HOME PRODUCES A PASSIVE HEART IN THE CHILDREN**

It's sad but true: many Christian parents are sending their kids straight to hell. Dad is to be the priest in the home. And Mother is a member of God's royal priesthood too. So, which of these two priesthoods are you manifesting: Zadok's or Eli's?

For years I was a youth evangelist, traveling the nation and ministering to thousands of young people. During that time, I had conversations with many troubled teenagers from Christian homes. These kids were completely turned off to church. They wanted nothing to do with their parents' religion. They spoke of their dad and mom's angry fights, blatant hypocrisy, awful gossip, secret sins. They heard constant grumbling and complaints about their minister, church members, family, and friends.

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Usually in such cases, the dad was active in church. People saw him as dedicated and full of Jesus. But his kids knew how to read his life, and they saw him as he really was: a phony. He mistreated their mother with abusive language. Or he had a secret stash of pornographic magazines. Or he was caught watching filthy videos.

Such a dad serves in the Eli priesthood. He has no spiritual authority. And in turn, he has no respect. He might lecture his kids, or threaten them, or try to demand obedience. But he's wasting his breath. It's all to no avail.

We see this illustrated in Eli's life. Eli had two sons named Hophni and Phinehas, who also served as priests. God called these men "sons of Belial," or children of the devil. Yet Eli never dealt with his sons about their sin. He never spoke to them more than an empty word of caution. After all, he knew anything he might say to them was in vain, because of his own spiritual sloth.

1. YOUNG MEN SHOULD SEE THEIR FATHERS as "sensible in all things" (vv. 6–7a). We've seen Paul use this characteristic of elders, older men, and younger women. Young men need to develop self-control and balance, discernment and judgment (cf. 2 Tim. 2:22; 1 Peter 5:5). The phrase "in all things" stretches this matter of mental balance and self-mastery in the Christian life to an almost infinite level. Young men—so potentially volatile, impulsive, passionate, arrogant, and ambitious—need to become masters over every area in their lives. **Fathers, do your boys see this type of Spirit-controlled living in you?**
2. YOUNG MEN SHOULD SEE THEIR FATHERS as "example of good deeds": Paul turns from the young men in general to encourage Titus to "show [himself] to be an example of good deeds." One of the most important qualities of a leader is the example he sets. Paul wanted Titus to be a model first of "good deeds." That refers to his inherent righteousness, nobility, and moral excellence. A godly young man is to model righteousness in everything he does. Young men, you'll begin to control your life when you understand God wants you committed to producing righteous, holy deeds. **Fathers, do your boys see this type of Spirit-controlled living in you?**
3. YOUNG MEN SHOULD SEE THEIR FATHERS with pure motives: "with purity in doctrine" (v. 7) is how God wants those deeds accomplished. A better way to translate the Greek word is "uncorruptness." Titus and young men are to live in perfect accord with sound doctrine, and without defect. Young men must know the Word of God and live according to it. Psalm 119:9 says, "How can a young man keep his way pure? By keeping it according to Thy Word." Living in obedience to God's Word will keep you in line. **Fathers, do your boys see this type of holiness in you?**
4. YOUNG MEN SHOULD SEE THEIR FATHERS as "dignified": At the end of Titus 2:7 Paul adds that Titus and young men are to be "dignified" —a characteristic that should also be true of men and women deacons and older men. That means

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young men are to be serious. Youth tends to be somewhat frivolous, particularly in our culture where entertainment has become an all-consuming passion. While that doesn't mean young men can't enjoy life, they should have a mature understanding of life, death, time, and eternity. **Fathers, do your boys see this type of Spirit-controlled living in you?**

5. YOUNG MEN SHOULD SEE THEIR FATHERS with "sound speech": Finally Paul encourages Titus to: "[Be] sound in speech which is beyond reproach." As we've seen, "sound" means "healthy" or "wholesome." In reference to one's words, Paul wrote, "Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned, as it were, with salt, so that you may know how you should respond to each person" (Col. 4:6). Young men, let what you say be worth saying. Make sure it edifies your hearers to the point that it is "beyond reproach" —that the only accusations which can be brought against it are shameful in the light of reason.<sup>i[4]</sup> **Fathers, do your boys see this type of Spirit-controlled living in you?**

1 Peter 3:1-7 **Wives**, in the same way be submissive to your husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives, 2 when they see the purity and reverence of your lives. 3 **Your beauty should not come from outward adornment**, such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewelry and fine clothes. 4 Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight. 5 For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to make themselves beautiful. They were submissive to their own husbands, 6 like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her master. You are her daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear. 7 Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers. **The Message paraphrases this passage as:** The same goes for you wives: Be good wives to your husbands, responsive to their needs. There are husbands who, indifferent as they are to any words about God, will be **captivated by your life of holy beauty. What matters is not your outer appearance**—the styling of your hair, the jewelry you wear, the cut of your clothes—but **your inner disposition. Cultivate inner beauty, the gentle, gracious kind that God delights in**. The holy women of old were beautiful before God that way, and were good, loyal wives to their husbands. Sarah, for instance, taking care of Abraham, would address him as "my dear husband." You'll be true daughters of Sarah if you do the same, unanxious and unintimidated. The same goes for you husbands: Be good husbands to your wives. Honor them, delight in them.

1 Timothy 4:12 Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but **set an example for the believers** in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity. (NIV) The Message says: Get the word out. Teach all these things. And don't let anyone put you down because you're young. **Teach believers with your life: by word, by demeanor, by love, by faith, by integrity**. ... Cultivate these things. Immerse

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yourself in them...Keep a firm grasp on both your character and your teaching. Don't be diverted. Just keep at it.

GOD'S GOAL IS FOR WOMEN TO BE GODLY EXAMPLES OF SPIRITUAL MINISTRY (I Timothy 5:9, 14): That the New Testament required such a lifestyle for women is clear from the demands of 1 Timothy 5:9–10, 14: the wife of one man, having a reputation for good works, brought up children, shown hospitality to strangers, washed the saints' feet, assisted those in distress, devoted to every good work, kept house, and given the enemy no occasion for reproach.

- “brought up children” is A GODLY EXAMPLE OF SACRIFICE
- “lodge strangers” is A GODLY EXAMPLE OF SERVICE
- “washed saints feet” is A GODLY EXAMPLE OF HUMILITY
- “relieved the afflicted” is A GODLY EXAMPLE OF COMPASSION
- “following good works” is A GODLY EXAMPLE OF TRUE DEVOTION

**I Timothy 4:12 Let no one despise your youth.** Paul lists 5 areas (the better Gr. manuscripts omit “in spirit”) in which Timothy was to be an example to the church:

1. “word” (speech; cf. Matt. 12:34–37; Eph. 4:25,29,31); “In word” (1 Tim. 4:12) implies that our speech should always be honest and loving, “speaking the truth in love” (Eph. 4:15).
2. “conduct” (righteous living; cf. Titus 2:10; 1 Pet. 1:15; 2:12; 3:16); In conduct” (the KJV’s “conversation” means “walk,” not “talk”) suggests that our lives are to be controlled by the Word of God. We must not be like the hypocrites Paul described to Titus (Titus 1:16): “They profess that they know God; but in works they deny Him.”
3. “love” (self-sacrificial service for others; cf. John 15:13); “In love” (charity) points to the motivation of our lives. We do not obey God to be applauded by men (Matt. 6:1ff), but because we love God and love God’s people.
4. (“In spirit” is not in many manuscripts, but it would describe the inner enthusiasm and excitement of a child of God.)
5. “faith” (not belief, but faithfulness or commitment; cf. 1 Cor. 4:2); “In faith” implies that we trust God and are faithful to Him. Faith and love often go together (1 Tim. 1:14; 2:15; 6:11; 2 Tim. 1:13; 2:22). Faith always leads to faithfulness.
6. “In purity” is important as we live in this present evil world. Ephesus was a center for sexual impurity, and the young man Timothy was faced with temptations. He must have a chaste relationship to the women in the church (1 Tim. 5:2) and keep himself pure in mind, heart, and body. “purity” (especially sexual purity; cf. 3:2). Timothy’s exemplary life in those areas would offset the disadvantage of his youth.

Watch out for the little things. God wants you to be a psalm 15 man:

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1. HE KNOWS THE TRUTH v. 1 Spiritual integrity

- worships: knows and learning more about God
- passes God's scrutiny, not man's
- knows the secret of communion with God

2. HE INTERNALIZES THE TRUTH v. 2 Private personal integrity: Joseph Genesis 39:9-

- daily way of life
- deeds public and private
- thoughts are pure
- "walks with integrity"
- "works righteousness"

3. HE TALKS THE TRUTH. He is honest. v.2a -3a

- "speaks truth in his heart"
- "doesn't slander with his tongue"

4. HE LIVES THE TRUTH v.3b he is a loyal friend

- "nor does evil to his neighbor"
- "nor takes up a reproach against a friend"

5. HE RESPECTS TRUTH. he has proper heroes. v. 4a

- "in whose eyes a reprobate is despised"
- "he honors those who fear the Lord"

6. HE PROTECTS THE TRUTH. He can't be bought. v. 4b-5

- "he swears to his own hurt" = a man of his word
- "he doesn't put out his money at interest" = not take advantage of adversity in another's life.
- "nor take a bribe against the innocent" = he can't be swayed from what is right.

**The Younger Saints (Titus 2:4b-8)**

1. "To be discreet" (Titus 2:5) is our familiar word *sober-minded* again ("temperate" in Titus 2:2). Outlook determines outcome; and if a person is not thinking rightly, he will not act properly. A woman needs a correct and disciplined outlook on her

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ministry in the home. “Self-controlled” is the idea contained in this word. If parents do not discipline themselves, they can never discipline their children.

2. “Chaste” means “pure of mind and heart.” A Christian wife is true to her husband in mind and heart as well as in action.
3. “Keepers at home” does not suggest that her home is a prison where she must be kept! “Caring for the home” is the idea. “Guide the house,” Paul wrote (1 Tim. 5:14). The wise husband allows his wife to manage the affairs of the household, for this is her ministry.
4. “Good” (Titus 2:5) can be translated “kind.” She does not rule her household with an iron hand, but practices “the law of kindness” (Prov. 31:26).

### **WORK LIFE: Christian Slaves (Titus 2:9–15)**

1. Paul warned these Christian slaves about three common sins they must avoid (Titus 2:9–10). First, *disobedience*. They were to obey their masters and seek to please them, which meant going the extra mile. It is possible to obey, but not “from the heart” (Eph. 6:6). It is possible to do a job grudgingly. Some unsaved masters would not be thoughtful and would overwork their slaves.
2. The second sin was *talking back* (“answering again,” Titus 2:9). While a slave would not carry this too far (his master might severely discipline him), he could argue with his master since the master probably knew less about the job than the slave did. The slave could also “gripe” about his master to others on the job. This would certainly be a poor testimony for a Christian slave.
3. Christian slaves were also to avoid the sin of *stealing* (“purloining”). This was the sin Onesimus probably committed against Philemon (see Phile. 18). It would be easy for a slave to pilfer little items and sell them, and then report that they had been broken or lost.<sup>i[5]</sup>

### **The Women—Submitting (1 Tim. 2:9–15)**

The emphasis in this section (1 Tim. 2:9–15) is on the place of women in the local church. Paul admonished these believing women to give evidence of their submission in several ways.

**Modest dress (v. 9).** The contrast here is between the artificial glamour of the world and the true beauty of a godly life. Paul did not forbid the use of jewelry or lovely clothes, but rather the excessive use of them as substitutes for the true beauty of “a meek and quiet spirit” (see 1 Peter 3:1–6). A woman who depends only on externals will soon run out of ammunition! She may attract attention, but she will not win lasting affection. Perhaps the latest fashion fads were tempting the women in the church at Ephesus, and Paul had to remind Timothy to warn the women not to get trapped.

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The word translated “modest” (1 Tim. 2:9) simply means “decent and orderly.” It is related to the Greek word from which we get the English word “cosmetic.” A woman’s clothing should be decent, orderly, and in good taste. “Shamefacedness” literally means “modesty, the avoidance of extremes.” A woman who possesses this quality is ashamed to go beyond the bounds of what is decent and proper. “Sobriety” comes from a Greek word that means “having a sound mind and good sense.” It describes an inner self-control—a spiritual “radar” that tells a person what is good and proper.

Ephesus was a wealthy commercial city, and some women there competed against each other for attention and popularity. In that day expensive hairdos arrayed with costly jewelry were an accepted way to get to the top socially. Paul admonished the Christian women to major on the “inner person,” the true beauty that only Christ can give. He did not forbid the use of nice clothing or ornaments. He urged balance and propriety, with the emphasis on modesty and holy character.

“It’s getting harder and harder for a Christian woman to find the right kind of clothes!” a church member complained to me one summer. “I refuse to wear the kind of swimsuits they’re selling! I simply won’t go swimming. Whatever happened to old-fashioned modesty?”

**Godly works (v. 10).** Paul did not suggest that good works are a substitute for clothing! Rather, he was contrasting the “cheapness” of expensive clothes and jewelry with the true values of godly character and Christian service. “Godliness” is another key word in Paul’s pastoral letters (1 Tim. 2:2, 10; 3:16; 4:7–8; 6:3, 5–6, 11; 2 Tim. 3:5; Titus 1:1). Glamour can be partially applied on the outside, but godliness must come from within.

We must never underestimate the important place that godly women played in the ministry of the church. The Gospel message had a tremendous impact on them because it affirmed their value before God and their equality in the body of Christ (Gal. 3:28). Women had a low place in the Roman world, but the Gospel changed that.

There were devoted women who ministered to Jesus in the days of His earthly ministry (Luke 8:1–3). They were present at His crucifixion and burial, and it was a woman who first heralded the glorious news of His resurrection. In the Book of Acts we meet Dorcas (Acts 9:36ff), Lydia (Acts 16:14ff), Priscilla (Acts 18:1–3), and godly women in the Berean and Thessalonian churches (Acts 17:4, 12). Paul greeted at least eight women in Romans 16; and Phebe, who carried the Roman epistle to its destination, was a deaconess in a local church (Rom. 16:1). Many believing women won their husbands to the Lord and then opened their homes for Christian ministry.<sup>i</sup>[6]

## **Younger Women**

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1. *Love Their Husbands* One word in the Greek text, *philandros*, is translated “love their husbands.” Paul used the same terms to describe godly widows (1 Tim. 5:9). It means to be a one-man woman, totally devoted to one’s husband.
  2. *A Lover of Children* This characteristic is also one word in the Greek text, *philoteknos*, and it means to be a lover of children. As we saw from our study of 1 Timothy 2:15, that is a woman’s highest calling. Obviously God doesn’t want all women to be mothers or they would be. Those women who have no children mean a great deal to God’s kingdom because He has given them freedom to serve in unique ways. God wants women who are mothers to love their children, which involves making personal sacrifices for the benefit of their children. Remember, loving your children is not based on emotion. Rather, it is your responsibility to pour yourself into your child’s life so that he or she grows up to love Christ.
  3. *Sensible* Young women are to be taught to be sensible, a required characteristic of elders (1 Tim. 3:2) and older men (Titus 2:2). It refers to using common sense and making sound judgments. Those things are learned best by example, and that’s where the older women can have such an influence.
  4. *Pure* Young women are to be morally pure, virtuous, and sexually faithful to their husbands. They are to be devoted to that one man in body and spirit.
  5. *Worker at Home* Titus 2:5 also says young women are to be “workers at home.” Since we examined this quality in depth in chapter 6, I’ll just reiterate this one thought: a woman’s responsibility is in the home because it is the place where she can have the greatest impact on the world by raising godly men and women.
  6. *Kind* A young woman ought to be characterized by being gentle, tender-hearted, and merciful toward others.
  7. *Subject to Their Own Husbands* This echoes Paul’s instruction in Ephesians 5:22. A godly young woman understands God’s created order and submits to it (cf. 1 Cor. 11:5).

## Young Men

1. *Sensible* Paul tells Titus to “urge the young men to be sensible; in all things” (vv. 6–7). We’ve seen Paul use this characteristic of elders, older men, and younger women. Young men need to develop self-control and balance, discernment and judgment (cf. 2 Tim. 2:22; 1 Peter 5:5). The phrase “in all things” at the beginning of Titus 2:7 fits better at the end of verse 6, for it stretches this matter of mental balance and self-mastery in the Christian life to an almost infinite level. Young men—so potentially volatile, impulsive, passionate, arrogant, and ambitious—need to become masters over every area in their lives.
2. *Example of Good Deeds* Paul turns from the young men in general to encourage Titus to “show [himself] to be an example of good deeds.” One of the most important qualities of a leader is the example he sets. Paul wanted Titus to be a model first of “good deeds.” That refers to his inherent righteousness, nobility, and moral excellence. A godly young man is to model righteousness in

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everything he does. Young men, you'll begin to control your life when you understand God wants you committed to producing righteous, holy deeds.

3. *Pure Motives* "With purity in doctrine" (v. 7) is how God wants those deeds accomplished. A better way to translate the Greek word is "uncorruptness." Titus and young men are to live in perfect accord with sound doctrine, and without defect. Young men must know the Word of God and live according to it. Psalm 119:9 says, "How can a young man keep his way pure? By keeping it according to Thy Word." Living in obedience to God's Word will keep you in line.
4. *Dignified* At the end of Titus 2:7 Paul adds that Titus and young men are to be "dignified" —a characteristic that should also be true of men and women deacons and older men. That means young men are to be serious. Youth tends to be somewhat frivolous, particularly in our culture where entertainment has become an all-consuming passion. While that doesn't mean young men can't enjoy life, they should have a mature understanding of life, death, time, and eternity.
5. *Sound Speech* Finally Paul encourages Titus to: "[Be] sound in speech which is beyond reproach." As we've seen, "sound" means "healthy" or "wholesome." In reference to one's words, Paul wrote, "Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned, as it were, with salt, so that you may know how you should respond to each person" (Col. 4:6). Young men, let what you say be worth saying. Make sure it edifies your hearers to the point that it is "beyond reproach" —that the only accusations which can be brought against it are shameful in the light of reason.i[7]

Peter, nearing the end of his ministry writes for God this inspired snapshot of what a gorgeous woman in God's sight looks like. Its a timeless, never out of style, supra-cultural absolute. This is what a woman of god has always looked like. But watch out it is very different from the woman of the nineties, the woman of vogue, cosmopolitan, victorian and so on. It cuts against the grain of culture and society. Well, what does god say a woman of godly virtue is to be? He gives a four part look:

1. V. 1-2 in her actions she lines up with god's plan for the church and the home. Thus, she is submissive.

- V. 1-2 IN HER ACTIONS she lines up with god's plan for the church and the home. Thus, she is submissive. "observe"= a greek word that speaks of peering intently at anathletic event"

2. V. 3 in her adornment she looks like a woman in whom the Holy Spirit dwells, thus she is modest.

- V. 3 IN HER ADORNMENT she looks like a woman in whom the holy spirit dwells, thus she is modest. Ivbraiding hair" = the roman world custom of gold, gems and so on in towering displays of wealth. "putting on"= the only New Testament ref to the repeated changing of clothes to show great possessions.

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F.b. Meyer "the one law is to dress as becomes the station in which he has placed us, and in such a way as not to attract notice to ourselves."

3. V.4 in her attitude she longs to offer god what he is looking for. Thus, she is gentle and quiet.

- v. 4 IN HER ATTITUDE she longs to offer god what he is looking for. Thus, she is gentle and quiet. The seven characteristics of Titus 2:3-5 distinguish what a godly women is like:
  - She loves her husband= this is not agapao love that does the right thing no matter what one's feelings are. This is phileo, the word describing the emotion of love. It speaks of a friendship. And, in this era it was even if she had no choice about him
  - She loves her children=this means positive feelings about them.even if she is only to bear her unsaved husband an heir...
  - Sober minded=balanced
  - Chaste=self restraint, purity
  - A worker at home=priority is at home
  - Kind=see the i tim 5:9-10 list below.
  - Submissive=voluntary acceptance of her divinely ordained role to her husband. See getz quote.
  - Why? That the word of god not be dishonored by Christians saying who cares what it says.

4. V.5-6 in her attention she is focused on the home. Thus, she is feminine.

- v. 5-6 IN HER ATTENTION she is focused on the home. Thus,
  - She is feminine.
  - "obeyed"=to listen to or attend another"
  - First Timothy 5:9-10 lists seven qualifications for a woman of god:
    1. Pure= one man sort of woman
    2. Faithful= reputation for good works
    3. Compassionate= nourished children= age of the abandoned child, orphans as well as own
    4. Loving=hospitable to strangers=inns notoriously filthy, expensive and immoral
    5. Humble= washed feet of saints

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6. Bold = helped those in trouble= Christians illegal?

7. Focused = devoted to good works

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## Marriage Divine Style

### WFF: Message Thirty (020908AM)

For **most of us, *most of our life will be spent in marriage.*** What do you want those bulk of your years of life to be like? Do you want them to be hard times of tension, agony, frustration or pain? Or do you want them to be joyous and satisfying and the best years of your life?

#### THE CHOICE IS YOURS!

- If you are married as you listen to me this morning, then what I am about to say is **what you should BE.**
- If you are young and at home as you listen to me, then what I am sharing from God's Word is **what you should BECOME.**
- And if you are grown, and starting out in life as a single person, this is what you should BE and **what you should LOOK FOR in your marriage.**

Again, this is the biggest decision next to salvation YOU WILL EVER MAKE. Be careful, be expecting a blessing, and be blessed with a wonderful joyous BIBLICAL MARRIAGE.

Can I just share a short personal testimony? Growing up in Michigan as a child was delightful. We lived by a lake and fished all summer, had fish fries with most of our neighbors, enjoyed many fun moments as a family, at church. I even would walk from sweet older ladies who were great neighbors and who would give me cookies and hugs when I visited. **That was life at five years old.**

As the years passed and my perception of the world around me grew I began to notice the family next door was different. They could be heard at all hours screaming, banging, throwing things, and fighting. Then my parents explained that all that fighting meant that they were separating as a couple, and later they were divorced. Soon I noticed while making a family tree for my class at Haslett School, that my dad's mother, Grandma Barnett's name had changed to Grandma Miller as she had divorced my grandfather and I got a new one – grandpa Miller. My mom's mother also stopped living with grandpa, her husband, moved in with my uncle, and lived there never seeing her husband again until the day of her death. Welcome to the America I grew up in, in the 1950's!

What I was exposed to is similar to some, vastly different than others. But, what I saw as the years passed, and as my exposure to God's Word grew -- caused me at a young age to start wanting with all my heart one of those wonderful marriages the Bible seemed to offer. I was driven to the Psalms where many over the centuries have found

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comfort. My comfort became a prayer, “Lord, please let me have a home, a wife, and a family like Psalm 127 and 128 seems to promise.”

That prayer never stopped. It adapted to my growing years. I most distinctly remember walking through the back woods at college after my jogging miles were finished to cool down, and as I walked days, weeks, and months passed with the same prayer – “Lord don’t let me go my own way. I only want to marry the one you have prepared for me. I want your will not mine!”

Well this morning after almost 20 years of shared life, may I testify that the Lord answered that prayer? He gave me a wonderful marriage, a wonderful wife, a wonderful family, and a wonderful home life. He gave what the text we are reading this morning describes: A Wonderful Biblical Marriage.

Please listen to what the Lord offers to each of you young people, to each of you singles, and most of all – to each of you married couples. Psalm 127-128.

**Psalm 127:1-2 A BIBLICAL MARRIAGE STARTS WITH A DIVINE**

**FOUNDATION:** Unless the Lord builds the house, They labor in vain who build it; Unless the Lord guards the city, The watchman stays awake in vain. 2 It is vain for you to rise up early, To sit up late, To eat the bread of sorrows; For so He gives His beloved sleep.

**Psalm 127:3-5 A BIBLICAL MARRIAGE TRUSTS GOD FOR BLESSED**

**FRUITFULNESS:** Behold, children are **a heritage from the Lord**, The fruit of the womb is a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, So are **the children of one’s youth**. Happy is the man who has his quiver full of them; They shall not be ashamed, But shall speak with their enemies in the gate.

**Psalm 128:1-4 A BIBLICAL MARRIAGE ENJOYS A HAPPY FAMILY LIFE:**

Blessed is every one who fears the Lord, Who walks in His ways. When you eat the labor of your hands, You shall be happy, and it shall be well with you. Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine In the very heart of your house, Your children like olive plants All around your table. Behold, thus shall the man be blessed Who fears the Lord.

**Psalm 128:5-6 A BIBLICAL MARRIAGE SEE THE PROMISED FULFILLMENT OF A GODLY FAMILY THAT IS SATISFYING IN OLD AGE:**

The Lord bless you out of Zion, And may you see the good of Jerusalem All the days of your life. Yes, may you see your children’s children. Peace be upon Israel! And as the Apostle John said at the end of his life in 3 John 4 that the supreme earthly joy we can ever experience is when we see our family following the Lord! “I have **no greater joy** than to hear that my children walk in truth.”

Lets pray:

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*O Lord, you promise us the best. We must decide. May each married couple today plan, and purpose in their hearts that this is what they want. And help them start today. And Lord, for those precious children in each home of this Your church, may they be led and shown and taught how to become this type of godly person to have this kind of marriage and family spoken of in these Psalms. And for our precious singles, Lord grant them to become and grow toward this model and walk waiting with You until they find that one who corresponds to their life that they may establish a Godly Biblical marriage. And all this we ask in Your Name that is above all other Names, in the Name of Jesus we ask. Amen.*

We are studying Prayer as the key to raising, nurturing, and launching children that please the Lord. We are learning how to pray for our children.

**WE MUST PRAY FOR REALITY IN THEIR SPIRITUAL LIFE:**

1. SEEING THEM GENUINELY SAVED.
2. SEEING THEM LOVING GOD'S WORD.
3. SEEING THEM LIVING IN VICTORY.
4. SEEING THEM THINKING OF HEAVEN.
5. SEEING THEM FINDING SIN REPULSIVE.
6. SEEING THEM STAY TENDER TOWARD GOD.

**WE MUST PRAY FOR INTEGRITY IN THEIR PERSONAL LIFE:**

1. SEEING THEM MAINTAINING A CLEAR CONSCIENCE.
2. SEEING THEM LEARNING TO STAND ALONE.
3. SEEING THEM SEEKING TO STAY PURE.
4. SEEING THEM CULTIVATING A SERVANT'S HEART.
5. PERSONAL INTEGRITY MEANS SEEING THEM NEVER BECOMING BITTER IN TRIALS.

**WE MUST PRAY FOR STABILITY IN THEIR RELATIONAL LIFE:**

1. RELATIONAL STABILITY MEANS SEEING THEM CULTIVATING A LOVE FOR THEIR BROTHERS AND SISTERS.
2. RELATIONAL STABILITY MEANS SEEING THEM LEARNING TO TRUST GOD WITH HARD SITUATIONS AND NOT TO REBEL.
3. RELATIONAL STABILITY MEANS SEEING THEM EACH LOVING THE WAY GOD MADE THEM AS MEN AND WOMEN.
4. RELATIONAL STABILITY MEANS SEEING THEM WAITING TO MEET GOD'S CHOSEN LIFE PARTNER FOR THEM.

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- A HUSBAND/WIFE IS A GIFT FROM THE LORD. Proverbs 18:22 He who finds a **wife finds what is good and receives favor from the LORD.** (NIV)
  - A GOOD HUSBAND/WIFE IS REALLY A GIFT FROM THE LORD. Proverbs 19:13-14 A foolish son is the ruin of his father, And the contentions of a wife are a continual dripping. 14 Houses and riches are an inheritance from fathers, But **a prudent wife is from the LORD.**
  - A GOOD HUSBAND/WIFE IS PRICELESS. Proverbs 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 All the days of her life. (NKJV)
  - BUT - WE MAY ONLY MARRY A BELIEVER. 2 Corinthians 6:14 **Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers:** for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?

Remember you only get one chance in life to start with a wonderful Biblical marriage. It is worth the wait. Don't squander one of the greatest areas of life by doing your own thing instead of God's! Think about the end of life this morning.

When your life is done, and you look back those last few weeks or months that you have before cancer, or heart or respiratory problems overtake you – will you regret the days of your marriage and family? Will you be saddened when you remember those days? Will you be saddened when you see what your children are doing? Or will those have been the greatest years of your life? I think the choice is yours. Where are you headed in your marriage and as a family this morning? You will never get to anywhere you are not headed right now!

## WHAT IS A BIBLICAL MARRIAGE AND PARTNER REALLY LIKE?

There are few words that can describe the sheer delights of a marriage as God designed it to be. The Lord planned for His people to have marriages described as:

- **Marriage is to be** such wonderful attraction that seven years of hard labor waiting for this is like a moment (Jacob in Genesis 29:20),
- **Marriage is to be** like a fruitful vine that delightfully grow around our lives (Psalm 128:3),
- **Marriage is to be** like joyful rivers of intoxicating blessings (Proverbs 5:18-19),
- **Marriage is to be** goodness and favor from the Lord (Proverbs 18:22), and

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- **Marriage is to be** to a companion of our youth (Malachi 2:14-15) to whom we make a life long covenant to;

All of us here tonight blessed in our marriages and families can testify what God's Word describes is exactly what we who have followed the Lord have experienced.

- A Biblical marriage and family is just a small snapshot of the delights of Heaven.
- A Biblical marriage and family is just a living portrait of the perfect love of Jesus.
- A Biblical marriage and family is just a traveling demonstration of the way the Lord works on earth.

So, how do we pray for our children if we are parents? And how do we direct our lives if we are young people? And how do we live together if we are married today? Or what do we look for if we are single and waiting today? Here we go, into God's Word to find all the answers from the Author and establisher of Marriage Himself. Lets turn back to the 1<sup>st</sup> book of the Bible Genesis. As parents pray that your children:

1. **BE** (if you are married), **BECOME** (if you are at home or single and waiting) **WAIT and FIND** (if you know God is leading you to get married) A PERSON WHO BELIEVES THAT GOD DESIGNED MARRIAGE AND THAT WANTS TO FOLLOW HIS RULES FOR A WONDERFUL MARRIAGE. Genesis 2:18 And the Lord God said, "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him."
2. **BE** (if you are married), **BECOME** (if you are at home or single and waiting) **WAIT and FIND** (if you know God is leading you to get married) A PERSON WHO WILL CORRESPONDS TO YOU. Genesis 2:20 So Adam gave names to all cattle, to the birds of the air, and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper **comparable** to him.
3. **BE** (if you are married), **BECOME** (if you are at home or single and waiting) **WAIT and FIND** (if you know God is leading you to get married) A PERSON WHO WILL BE GLUED TO YOU. Genesis 2:24 Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and **be joined** to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. ***By the way a big part of the glue is the sexual intimacy marriage provides. Have you ever licked and envelope or pulled the sealer tape, sealed it and then remembered something else and unsealed it? It doesn't work the second or third time does it? Don't ruin the glue of your marriage by playing with it or you will find that you are not secure in your marriage, glued together as one. Your husband or wife should be the only person you have ever experienced physical intimacy with. The first one you have loved, touched, held, and seen in any intimate way. Anything less than that will spell woes, pains, troubles, and grief for a lifetime.***

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4. **BE** (if you are married), **BECOME** (if you are at home or single and waiting) **WAIT and FIND** (if you know God is leading you to get married) A PERSON WHO LIKES TO BE AT HOME AND NOT ALWAYS RUNNING. 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*. **By the way, all of those are hard to do if you don't eat together as a family, you don't spend time together, you don't put them to bed, and don't get them up.**
5. **BE** (if you are married), **BECOME** (if you are at home or single and waiting) **WAIT and FIND** (if you know God is leading you to get married) A PERSON WHO LOVES CHILDREN AND WANTS TO TEACH THEM. 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. Nehemiah 8:8 So they read distinctly from the book, in the Law of God; **and they gave the sense, and helped them to understand the reading.**
6. **BE** (if you are married), **BECOME** (if you are at home or single and waiting) **WAIT and FIND** (if you know God is leading you to get married) A PERSON THAT WANTS A PURE HOME. Deuteronomy 6:9 You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates; 6:14 **You shall not go after other gods, the gods of the peoples who are all around you**; 7:25-26 You shall burn the carved images of their gods with fire; you shall not covet the silver or gold that is on them, nor take it for yourselves, lest you be snared by it; for it is an abomination to the Lord your God. 26 **Nor shall you bring an abomination into your house**, lest you be doomed to destruction like it. You shall utterly detest it and utterly abhor it, for it is an accursed thing. Psalm 106:35 But they mingled with the Gentiles And learned their works;
7. **BE** (if you are married), **BECOME** (if you are at home or single and waiting) **WAIT and FIND** (if you know God is leading you to get married) A PERSON WHO KEEPS THEIR WORD.. Psalm 15:4 In whose eyes a vile person is despised, But he honors those who fear the Lord; **He who swears to his own hurt and does not change**;
8. **BE** (if you are married), **BECOME** (if you are at home or single and waiting) **WAIT and FIND** (if you know God is leading you to get married) A PERSON COMMITTED TO STAY MILES AWAY FROM THE WICKED PERSON OF PROVERBS. Proverbs 5:1-3 **My son**, attend unto my wisdom, and bow thine ear to my understanding: 2 That thou mayest regard discretion, and that thy lips may keep knowledge. 3 **For the lips of a strange woman** drop as an honeycomb, and her mouth is smoother than

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oil: Proverbs 7:1,10-11 My son, keep my words, and lay up my commandments with thee. 10 And, behold, there met him **a woman with the attire of an harlot**, and subtle of heart. 11 (She is loud and stubborn; her feet abide not in her house:

## **How to be God's Man and Husband**

### **WFF: Message Thirty-One (020915AM)**

One of my favorite moments in ministry is when I stand at the front of the church with two trembling hearts standing before me at the wedding ceremony. May I remind you of what they agree to be at just one portion called the LIGHTING THE UNITY CANDLE:

The two outside candles have been lighted to represent your lives to this moment. They are two distinct lights, each capable of going its separate way. To bring joy and radiance into your home, there must be the merging of these two flames into one.

From this time onward may your thoughts be for each other rather than for your individual selves; may your plans be mutual, your joys and sorrows shared.

Wow, every time I say that it gives me shivers of joy to think that is what our marriages are all about. The Lord has offered to each of us a choice. We can either choose to follow His plan or ours through life. One of the most visible of all our choices is the person we marry. The choice is either a marriage after our own heart or after God's own heart.

Remember you only get one chance in life to start with a wonderful Biblical marriage. It is worth the wait. Don't squander one of the greatest areas of life by doing your own thing instead of God's! I think the choice is yours. Where are you headed in your marriage and as a family this morning? You will never get to anywhere you are not headed right now! But if we aren't careful, what is the other choice? It is called unhappiness, unfaithfulness, hardness, and divorce.

There are over 111 Million<sup>[1]</sup> of us in America who are married. That is the majority or 56% of all over 18-year-old adults. Most of us this morning only faintly realize the dangerous climate we live in. We live in a culture soaked with the stain of divorce that has penetrated to the depths of all our institutions. Listen to a couple paragraphs from a book called **The Divorce Culture**<sup>[2]</sup>.

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"Divorce is now part of everyday American life. It is embedded in our laws and institutions, our manners and mores, our movies and television shows, our novels and children's storybooks, and our closest and most important relationships. Indeed, divorce has become so pervasive that many people naturally assume it has seeped into the social and cultural mainstream over a long period of time. Yet this is not the case. Divorce has become an American way of life only as the result of recent and revolutionary change.

For most of the nation's history, divorce was a rare occurrence and an insignificant feature of family and social relationships. In the first sixty years of the twentieth century, divorce became more common, but it was hardly commonplace. *In 1960, the divorce rate stood at a still relatively modest level of nine per one thousand married couples.* [emphasis added] After 1960, however, the rate accelerated at a dazzling pace. It doubled in roughly a decade and continued its upward climb until the early 1980s, when it stabilized at the highest level among advanced Western societies. As a consequence of this sharp and sustained rise, divorce moved from the margins to the mainstream of American life in the space of three decades.

Beginning in the late 1950s, Americans began to change their ideas about the individual's obligations to family and society. Broadly described, this change was away from an ethic of obligation to others and toward an obligation to self. I do not mean that people suddenly abandoned all responsibilities to others, but rather that they became more acutely conscious of their responsibility to attend to their own individual needs and interests. At least as important as the moral obligation to look after others, *the new thinking suggested, was the moral obligation to look after oneself.* [emphasis added]

People began to judge the strength and "health" of family bonds according to their capacity to promote individual fulfillment and personal growth. The family began to lose its separate place and distinctive identity as the realm of duty, service, and sacrifice. The conception of divorce as both an individual right and an inner experience merged with and reinforced the new ethic of obligation to the self. In family relationships, one had an obligation to be attentive to one's own feelings and to work toward improving the quality of one's inner life. This conception of divorce strongly argued for removing the social, legal, and moral impediments to the free exercise of the individual right to divorce.

So, how do we pray for our children if we are parents? And how do we direct our lives if we are young people? And how do we live together if we are married today? Or what do

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we look for if we are single and waiting today? We are studying Prayer as the key to raising, nurturing, and launching children that please the Lord. We are learning how to pray for our children.

#### **WE MUST PRAY FOR REALITY IN THEIR SPIRITUAL LIFE:**

1. SEEING THEM GENUINELY SAVED.
2. SEEING THEM LOVING GOD'S WORD.
3. SEEING THEM LIVING IN VICTORY.
4. SEEING THEM THINKING OF HEAVEN.
5. SEEING THEM FINDING SIN REPULSIVE.
6. SEEING THEM RESPONDING TO GOD.

#### **WE MUST PRAY FOR INTEGRITY IN THEIR PERSONAL LIFE:**

1. SEEING THEM MAINTAINING A CLEAR CONSCIENCE.
2. SEEING THEM LEARNING TO STAND ALONE.
3. SEEING THEM SEEKING TO STAY PURE.
4. SEEING THEM CULTIVATING A SERVANT'S HEART.
5. SEEING THEM AVOIDING BITTERNESS IN TRIALS.

#### **WE MUST PRAY FOR STABILTY IN THEIR RELATIONAL LIFE**

1. SEEING THEM LOVING THEIR BROTHERS AND SISTERS.
2. SEEING THEM TRUSTING GOD WITH HARD SITUATIONS AND NOT REBELING.
3. SEEING THEM LOVING THE WAY GOD MADE THEM AS MEN AND WOMEN.
4. SEEING THEM WAITING TO MEET GOD'S CHOSEN LIFE PARTNER FOR THEM.
  - A HUSBAND/WIFE IS A GIFT FROM THE LORD. Proverbs 18:22 He who finds a **wife finds what is good and receives favor from the LORD.** (NIV)
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righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?

Here we go, into God's Word to find all the answers from the Author and establisher of Marriage Himself. Lets turn back to the 1<sup>st</sup> book of the Bible Genesis. As parents pray that your children:

1. **BE** (if you are married), **BECOME** (if you are at home or single and waiting) A PERSON WHO WANTS TO FOLLOW GOD'S RULES FOR A WONDERFUL MARRIAGE. Genesis 2:18 And the Lord God said, "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him."
2. **BE** (if you are married), **BECOME** (if you are at home or single and waiting) A GODLY PERSON WHO WILL CORRESPONDS TO A GODLY PARTNER. Genesis 2:20 So Adam gave names to all cattle, to the birds of the air, and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper **comparable** to him.
3. **BE** (if you are married), **BECOME** (if you are at home or single and waiting) A GODLY PERSON WHO WILL BE GLUED TO A GODLY HUSBAND OR WIFE. Genesis 2:24 Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and **be joined** to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. ***By the way a big part of the glue is the sexual intimacy marriage provides. Have you ever licked and envelope or pulled the sealer tape, sealed it and then remembered something else and unsealed it? It doesn't work the second or third time does it? Don't ruin the glue of your marriage by playing with it or you will find that you are not secure in your marriage, glued together as one. Your husband or wife should be the only person you have ever experienced physical intimacy with. The first one you have loved, touched, held, and seen in any intimate way. Anything less than that will spell woes, pains, troubles, and grief for a lifetime.***
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The outlook for a joy filled lifelong marriage is bleak without the Lord! To help us, God has left a colorful guide to marriage; it is a timeless list of personalities to avoided at all costs, and personalities to be attracted toward. This list is in the Bible. Nestled among the 66 books of God's Word are the 31 chapters, 915 verses and over 15,000 words of the Book of Proverbs. This week I poured over this book and found there are over 200 verses that actually declare what good men and women, boys and girls look and act

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like, and what the ungodly opposites look and act like. Have you refreshed your understanding of what the Lord in His infinite wisdom has said about this very practical and relevant area?

So for us this list would express what we should be and what we should avoid.

God's Word goes so far as to even identify what type of person we should avoid, stay away from, and especially never consider as a viable marriage partner. The list is timeless, and can be your guide to a joyous Biblical marriage. How about taking a look at some of those 200 verses with me this morning? Let's open to Proverbs chapter 1.

### **GOOD BOYS AND MEN LOOK AND ACT LIKE THIS**

Listen to what God says we can be by His grace. This is what you should want to be, what we should want to be around, what we should be drawn toward:

1. **Seek to become a man who is Wise** (1.5) Proverbs 1:5 A wise man will hear and increase learning, And a man of understanding will attain wise counsel. The Lord has already told us in James 3.17 that this wise man has wisdom from above. He is characterized as pure, peaceable, gentle, and easy to talk things over with, full of mercy and wanting to do good.
2. **Seek to become a man who is Happy** (3.13) Proverbs 3:13 Happy is the man who finds wisdom, And the man who gains understanding. The Sermon on the Mount says it all. Happy are the pure in heart, Happy are the meek, Happy are the humble, Happy are the peace makers, Happy are the righteous seekers, and Happy are those who are hungry for God.
3. **Seek to become a man who is Blessed** (8.34) Proverbs 8:34 Blessed is the man who listens to me, Watching daily at my gates, Waiting at the posts of my doors. As Psalm 1 says the Blessed Man is rooted deep in God's Word, the Blessed Man is full of God's fruit, and the Blessed Man is won't walk, or stand, or sit with those who mock God. And on that point, parents are you aware that your teen aged children sit week after week whispering, passing notes, laughing, and doing everything but paying attention? They should sit with you until they are mature enough to act honorably and respectfully out of your presence.
4. **Seek to become a man who is Just** (9.9) Proverbs 9:9 Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be still wiser; Teach a just man, and he will increase in learning. This quality of being just is like the English word 'straight'. This man is straight – in his talk, walk, habits, convictions. You know who he is and where he is going.
5. **Seek to become a man who is Merciful** (11.17) Proverbs 11:17 The merciful man does good for his own soul, But he who is cruel troubles his own flesh. Hitler surrounded himself with men who were evil, and cruel. Together they

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made the darkest blot yet seen in history. Stay away from those who delight in cruel words, attitudes, and actions.

6. **Seek to become a man who is Sowing righteousness** (11.18) Proverbs 11:18 The wicked man does deceptive work, But he who sows righteousness will have a sure reward. What we plant we reap. Sow secret sins and they come back at harvest time. Sow in godliness and life gets sweeter and sweeter.
7. **Seek to become a man who is Good** (12.2) Proverbs 12:2 A good man obtains favor from the Lord, But a man of wicked intentions He will condemn. Remember real goodness is a fruit of God present within a person's life. There is no clearer indicator of what a man will be like than his goodness level. Is he drawn toward what is good or evil? Few people turn out very far from where they are headed right now. Change your direction, turn toward the Lord who is good if you are not facing Him and headed toward Him today.
8. **Seek to become a man who is Rooted in righteousness** (12.3) Proverbs 12:3 A man is not established by wickedness, But the root of the righteous cannot be moved. As Psalm 1 and Jeremiah 17.8 both say, righteousness holds us firmly in the place where God can make us flourish fruitfully and securely.
9. **Seek to become a man who is Righteous in every day life** (12.10) Proverbs 12:10 A righteous man regards the life of his animal, But the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel. An animal might have been his transportation – so the Lord should be evident in your car. How you drive, keep up, and decorate your car declares a lot about you. Also an animal might have been his work. God says righteousness invades all of life even the barnyard (or work). A righteous man exhibits the Lord in how he treats the indefensible, the weak, the common.
10. **Seek to become a man who is Prudent** (12.16) Proverbs 12:16 A fool's wrath is known at once, But a prudent man covers shame. Another fruit of God living within is self control. A fool lets it all out, vents, rages, carries on. The prudent man knows how to respond in hard, difficult or shameful times.
11. **Seek to become a man who is Diligent** (12.24) Proverbs 12:24 The hand of the diligent will rule, But the lazy man will be put to forced labor. Proverbs describes the lazy a.k.a. sluggards 14 times. That is a study in itself. How much heartache would be avoided if a lazy man was not an option. Laziness seems to only grow.
12. **Seek to become a man who is Good** (14.14) Proverbs 14:14 The backslider in heart will be filled with his own ways, But a good man will be satisfied from above. The surest sign of danger in a man is when you detect that he is full of himself. He talks about himself, shows himself off, promotes himself, and on and on he goes. This is a life that is sliding backward towards an abyss, don't attach yourself to such a person or you will be pulled down and into his abyss.
13. **Seek to become a man who is Wisely Cautious** (14.16; also 12.8) Proverbs 14:16 A wise man fears and departs from evil, But a fool rages and is self-confident. Brashness, overconfidence, and foolhardiness are not noble virtues.

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14. **Seek to become a man who is Following the way of the upright** (15.19) Proverbs 15:19 The way of the lazy man is like a hedge of thorns, But the way of the upright is a highway. Here is another one of the 14 verses containing 'lazy man' warnings. The way of the righteous is a path that God designs, and the wise follow. It is an exhilarating life of adventure, excitement, and wonders – walking on the high places of the earth as Isaiah describes it. But the wicked in all their seeming gaiety are actually walking through a hedge of thorns. Like cut, scrapes, scratches, and tears them up with every step. Which path do you want to take?
  15. **Seek to become a man who is Wise son** (15.20) Proverbs 15:20 A wise son makes a father glad, But a foolish man despises his mother. Watch carefully how a boy relates to his parents. What he was at home will touch his life with blessing or lacking all the days of his life.
  16. **Seek to become a man who is Humble** (18.12) Proverbs 18:12 Before destruction the heart of a man is haughty, And before honor is humility. The key to God's blessing is a humble life. Haughtiness invites disaster.
  17. **Seek to become a man who is Excellent** (22.29) Proverbs 22:29 Do you see a man who excels in his work? He will stand before kings; He will not stand before unknown men. The mark of an excellent man, who will excel in whatever he does is that he practices, and perfects a skill in his life. There is no limit God says to what I can do with one who works hard at what he does.
  18. **Seek to become a man who is Upright** (29.27) Proverbs 29:27 An unjust man is an abomination to the righteous, And he who is upright in the way is an abomination to the wicked.

### **BAD BOYS AND MEN LOOK AND ACT LIKE THIS**

Now, for the other side of the fence. What type of man would God say to stay away from, avoid imitating and setting any attention or affection upon? Here is the list:

1. **Beware of becoming a Perverse speaker** (2.12) Proverbs 2:12 To deliver you from the way of evil, From the man who speaks perverse things. This is one whose mouth is familiar with words that are off color, smutty, innuendo, vulgar, and crass.
2. **Beware of becoming a Wicked Person**(5.22) Proverbs 5:22 His own iniquities entrap the wicked man, And he is caught in the cords of his sin. To this man God, God's Word, God's worship, holiness, purity – are all repulsive and a cause for mockery. A wicked person easily mocks discipline, they mock humility, they mock respect and they mock authority.
3. **Beware of becoming a Worthless Person** (6.12) Proverbs 6:12 A worthless person, a wicked man, Walks with a perverse mouth. This type of man has no direction, no purpose, no goals, no plans, they are just wanderers through life looking for and finding bad stuff.

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4. **Beware of becoming a Lustful Person** (6.26-27) Proverbs 6:26-27 For by means of a harlot A man is reduced to a crust of bread; And an adulteress will prey upon his precious life. 27 Can a man take fire to his bosom, And his clothes not be burned? Watch their eyes. What turns their head? If a man can't resist looking at a woman, married or not, he won't stop those wandering eyes, wandering hands, unsatisfied longings. A lustful man chases anyone for merely external appeal, looks for cheap and quick thrills; and will only grow more lustful, more unsatisfied, and more ungodly.
  5. **Beware of becoming an Empty Person** (7.7) Proverbs 7:7 And saw among the simple, I perceived among the youths, A young man devoid of understanding, This is a person with no substance, no depth, no long term visible growth, no discipline, they work to buy shoes, to prowling the malls, to play video games, to waste their lives doing nothing of substance or worth.
  6. **Beware of becoming a Foolish Person** (10.23) Proverbs 10:23 To do evil is like sport to a fool, But a man of understanding has wisdom. You can spot this type of fellow because he always clown around, always wants attention, always seeks to dominate conversations, always seeks to catch the spot light, shows off, brags, takes needless risks, always daring others, never respects authority. In fact, a foolish child is a child who cannot control themselves when outside the reach of their parents. Your child should sit with you until they are mature enough to sit alone without talking, writing notes, giggling, poking, and drawing others attention away from the teacher, the pastor, the leader, or the ministry.
  7. **Beware of becoming a Lazy Person** (10.26) Proverbs 10:26 As vinegar to the teeth and smoke to the eyes, So is the lazy man to those who send him. This is the fellow who lays around, avoids work, loafers, sleeps in, over eats, over sleeps, always late, always behind.
  8. **Beware of becoming a Cruel Person** (11.17) Proverbs 11:17 The merciful man does good for his own soul, But he who is cruel troubles his own flesh. This type is mean to animals, mean to people, hurts with words, often angry.
  9. **Beware of becoming a Quick Tempered Person** (14.17) Proverbs 14:17 A quick-tempered man acts foolishly, And a man of wicked intentions is hated. This is the red faced, hot worded, hasty and physical person who shoves, pushes and easily fights with those who get in his way.
  10. **Beware of becoming an Ungodly Person** (16.27) Proverbs 16:27 An ungodly man digs up evil, And it is on his lips like a burning fire. This fellow rarely show hunger for God's Word, or concern for the Spirit of God, or passion for fellowship or worship of God. They have no song from the Lord on their heart, anger and self-centeredness are their habits.
  11. **Beware of becoming a Perverse person** (16.28) Proverbs 16:28 A perverse man sows strife, And a whisperer separates the best of friends. They are drawn to the gross, the violent, the borderline, they are un-shockable, un-embarrassable, unfeeling, and uncaring.

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12. **Beware of becoming a Violent person** (16.29) Proverbs 16:29 A violent man entices his neighbor, And leads him in a way that is not good. They are fighters, argumentative, brash, harsh and hurtful.
  13. **Beware of becoming an Isolated Person** (18.1) Proverbs 18:1 A man who isolates himself seeks his own desire; He rages against all wise judgment. They aren't socially responsive, withdrawn, introverted, and unwilling to talk to anyone but a few chosen ones. They stonewall parents, teachers, and anyone who seeks to guide them. They follow their own way and are headed to the Pit.
  14. **Beware of becoming a Guilty person** (21.8) Proverbs 21:8 The way of a guilty man is perverse; But as for the pure, his work is right. They are under the load of guilt for things they have done and often are actually under conviction for disobeying the Lord.
  15. **Beware of becoming an Unfaithful person** (25.19) Proverbs 25:19 Confidence in an unfaithful man in time of trouble Is like a bad tooth and a foot out of joint. They don't keep their word, they change their mind, they stand you up, keep you waiting, and are basically unreliable.
  16. **Beware of becoming a Unsatisfied person** (27.20) Proverbs 27:20 Hell and Destruction are never full; So the eyes of man are never satisfied. They never get enough, never have enough, always want more, and even then – that is never enough. They are listless, restless, and helplessly held by their desires.
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## Women and Wives God Will Bless

WFF: Message Thirty-Two (020922AM)

God has inspired two pictures in Proverbs. One is the Proverbs 31 woman; the other is the Proverbs 14 woman. In contrast to the elegantly resourceful, humbly beautiful, woman of wisdom in Proverbs 31 is the Proverbs 14 woman. She is the antithesis of excellence and virtue. She destroys and troubles, and lacks wisdom.

A godly woman and a godly young lady learn their manners from the Word of God. They look like Proverbs 31. Sounds like a good idea. This morning join me as we look over the shoulders of the great Biblical women of the faith. Throughout the centuries they have poured over the Scriptures and looked for God's truth. A great place to start is in Proverbs 14:1-9 with special emphasis on v. 1. In these verses we find the Proverbs 14 woman.

*The wise woman builds her house, but the foolish pulls it down with her hands.*

What a contrast. The wise woman is a builder of a godly home. She is a model of godly conduct. The foolish woman is a destroyer. That is what the words "tear down" mean. She destroys her home, her family and eventually her own life. Word by word, person by person, her evil stifles, chokes and eventually destroys people and relationships. What is her outcome? Look back at Proverbs 11:29

*He who troubles his own house will inherit the wind, and the fool [will be] servant to the wise of heart. (NKJV).*

There is a classic American Talei[1], Gone with the Wind that so vividly portrays this idea. The movie is based on Margaret Mitchell's novel about a slice of Southern Living in the strife torn Civil War Era. The key themes of the movie are very similar to those we find as we meditate on the warnings of God's Word.

- It was a life nearly oblivious to the world around it.
- It was a vividly selfish, indulgent life. The central character is well known to us - the enticing southern belle, Scarlet O'Hara. A cunning and crafty woman who knew what she wanted and always tried to get it. Her self-centeredness is in stark contrast to the servant hearted Melanie. So Solomon, under the inspiration of the Spirit of God, contrasts the selfish and indulgent Foolish woman to the sweet and selfless Wise woman.

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The outlook for a joy filled lifelong marriage is about as bleak without the Lord as those tragic war torn scenes of devastation from the Civil War! But that is not God's Will. He doesn't want strife torn lives and homes. He doesn't want empty lives and hearts. He wants marriage to be life long and joy filled. So to prepare us, God has left a colorful guide to marriage; it is a timeless list of godly character qualities that we who know and love the Lord should seek. God's Word says much about men and women. The Lord goes so far as to even identify what type of person we should avoid, stay away from, and especially never consider as a viable marriage partner. The list is timeless, and can be your guide to a joyous Biblical marriage.

Let's take a look at some of those 200 verses. Open to Proverbs chapter 1.

How do we cultivate godliness in our daughter? By knowing, sharing, praying, and most of all – LIVING the portrait God has painted of a GODLY WOMAN.

We are studying Prayer as the key to raising, nurturing, and launching children that please the Lord. We are learning how to pray for our children.

#### **WE MUST PRAY FOR REALITY IN THEIR SPIRITUAL LIFE:**

1. SEEING THEM GENUINELY SAVED.
2. SEEING THEM LOVING GOD'S WORD.
3. SEEING THEM LIVING IN VICTORY.
4. SEEING THEM THINKING OF HEAVEN.
5. SEEING THEM FINDING SIN REPULSIVE.
6. SEEING THEM STAY TENDER TOWARD GOD.

#### **WE MUST PRAY FOR INTEGRITY IN THEIR PERSONAL LIFE:**

1. SEEING THEM MAINTAINING A CLEAR CONSCIENCE.
2. SEEING THEM LEARNING TO STAND ALONE.
3. SEEING THEM SEEKING TO STAY PURE.
4. SEEING THEM CULTIVATING A SERVANT'S HEART.
5. PERSONAL INTEGRITY MEANS SEEING THEM NEVER BECOMING BITTER IN TRIALS.

#### **WE MUST PRAY FOR STABILITY IN THEIR RELATIONAL LIFE**

1. RELATIONAL STABILITY MEANS SEEING THEM CULTIVATING A LOVE FOR THEIR BROTHERS AND SISTERS.

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2. RELATIONAL STABILITY MEANS SEEING THEM LEARNING TO TRUST GOD WITH HARD SITUATIONS AND NOT TO REBEL.
  3. RELATIONAL STABILITY MEANS SEEING THEM EACH LOVING THE WAY GOD MADE THEM AS MEN AND WOMEN.
  4. RELATIONAL STABILITY MEANS SEEING THEM WAITING TO MEET GOD'S CHOSEN LIFE PARTNER FOR THEM.
- A HUSBAND/WIFE IS A GIFT FROM THE LORD. Proverbs 18:22 He who finds a **wife finds what is good and receives favor from the LORD.** (NIV)
  - A GOOD HUSBAND/WIFE IS REALLY A GIFT FROM THE LORD. Proverbs 19:13-14 A foolish son is the ruin of his father, And the contentions of a wife are a continual dripping. 14 Houses and riches are an inheritance from fathers, But **a prudent wife is from the LORD.**
  - A GOOD HUSBAND/WIFE IS PRICELESS. Proverbs 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 All the days of her life. (NKJV)
  - BUT - WE MAY ONLY MARRY A BELIEVER. 2 Corinthians 6:14 **Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers:** for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?

Remember you only get one chance in life to start with a wonderful Biblical marriage. It is worth the wait. Don't squander one of the greatest areas of life by doing your own thing instead of God's! Think about the end of life this morning.

### **BAD GIRLS AND WOMEN LOOK AND ACT LIKE THIS**

1. Beware of the Immoral woman (2.16; 5.3; 5.20; 7.5)
2. Beware of the Evil woman (6.24)
3. Beware of the Adulterous woman (6.32; 30.20)
4. Beware of the Harlotrous woman (7.10)
5. Beware of the Loud and Foolish woman (9.13)
6. Beware of the Lovely but indiscreet woman (11.22)
7. Beware of the Foolish woman (14.1)
8. Beware of the Contentious woman (21.9; 25.24; 27.15)
9. Beware of the Angry woman (21.19)

### **GOOD GIRLS AND WOMEN LOOK AND ACT LIKE THIS**

#### **A GODLY WOMAN ALWAYS SEEKS TO BE MODEST IN HER DRESS.**

*Proverbs 7:10 Then out came a woman to meet him, dressed like a prostitute and with crafty intent. (NIV).*

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- Her clothing points to her not to her Father in Heaven and His holiness. Remember the words of Paul in the New Testament Gallery of beautiful women? God emphasizes a beauty of the unseen character, the flesh flaunts the body, God beautifies the spirit!
  - 1 Timothy 2:9 I also want women to dress modestly, with decency and propriety, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or expensive clothes, (NIV)

### **A GODLY WOMAN ALWAYS SEEKS TO BE HOLY IN HER CONDUCT.**

*Proverbs 7:13-14 She took hold of him and kissed him and with a brazen face she said: 14 "I have fellowship offerings at home; today I fulfilled my vows. (NIV).*

- A godly woman fears the Lord. She seeks His well done over the approval of anyone else on earth. Her fear of God makes her aware of the future consequence of her choices. A godly woman avoids any present situation that would be destructive for her future usefulness to God.
- 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; 20 you were bought at a price. **Therefore honor God with your body.** (NIV)

### **A GODLY WOMAN ALWAYS SEEKS TO BE TRUTHFUL IN SPEECH AND MOTIVES.**

*Proverbs 7:21-23 With her enticing speech she caused him to yield, With her flattering lips she seduced him. 22 Immediately he went after her, as an ox goes to the slaughter, Or as a fool to the correction of the stocks, 23 Till an arrow struck his liver. As a bird hastens to the snare, He did not know it [would cost] his life. (NKJV)*

- This deceitful woman is an ugly woman because she is self-driven and wants her way. A beautiful woman wears heavenly beauty as God's Word describes it.
- 1 Peter 3:4 Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight. (NIV)

### **A GODLY WOMAN ALWAYS SEEKS TO BE GENTLE AND QUIET.**

*Proverbs 9:13 The woman Folly is loud; she is undisciplined and without knowledge. (NIV)*

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- Proverbs 7:11 (She is loud and defiant, her feet never stay at home; (NIV) This includes disrespect, hostility, aggressiveness and cunningness. All of these qualities are bad news.
  - 2 Timothy 2:24 And the Lord's servant must not quarrel; instead, he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. (NIV)
  - James 3:17 But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. (NIV)
  - 1 Peter 3:1-7 Wives, likewise, be submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives, 2 when they observe your chaste conduct accompanied by fear. 3 Do not let your adornment be merely outward—arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on fine apparel— 4 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. 5 For in this manner, in former times, the holy women who trusted in God also adorned themselves, being submissive to their own husbands, 6 as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, whose daughters you are if you do good and are not afraid with any terror. 7 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.
  - Moms and dads, what are you raising? A wise woman or a foolish one? Bring your daughters up to the X-Rays of God's Word and see what He finds.
    1. Is she loud, assertive, boisterous, and whiney or the center of attention? Or is she quiet, submissive, gentle and humble?
    2. Does she dress in a way that draws a young man to think about her body and its enticements or her spirit and its beauty?
    3. Does she have a holy hatred of sin or does she have a desire to watch sinners [TV and Movies] as they live out their fleshly fantasies?
    4. Does she use all her powers to get her own way? Does she manipulate by tears, looks and whatever it takes to accomplish her ends?
    5. Is she argumentative, easily quarreling and fighting with you or her brothers and sisters? Or is she peaceable, gentle and easily entreated? If these symptoms are present in any degree or amount the prognosis for the future bleak.
    6. One gifted expositor in writing about these verses said, “ we may say with a surgeon's frankness, her home will be like Scarlett's - troubled, torn down, and literally Gone with the Wind.”

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## A GODLY WOMAN ALWAYS SEEKS TO BE A HOMEMAKER.

*Proverbs 31:13 She seeks wool and flax, And willingly works with her hands. (NKJV)*

- As Paul said, she is a worker at home in Titus 2:5. She loves to tangibly serve others with food and skills, she has a home that is open and hospitable, she is given to ministry to the sick and needy and less fortunate.

## A GODLY WOMAN ALWAYS SEEKS TO SERVE OTHERS!

*Proverbs 31:15, 20 She also rises while it is yet night, and provides food for her household, and a portion for her maidservants. 20 She extends her hand to the poor, yes, she reaches out her hands to the needy. (NKJV)*

- She has learned the love of Christ for others.

## A GODLY WOMAN ALWAYS SEEKS TO BE A PERSON THAT CAN BE TRUSTED.

*Proverbs 31:11-16 The heart of her husband doth **safely trust in her**, so that he shall have no need of spoil. 12 She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life.*

## A GODLY WOMAN ALWAYS SEEKS TO BE PRUDENT IN FINANCIAL MATTERS.

*Proverbs 31:16, 24 She considers a field and buys it; from her profits she plants a vineyard. 24 She makes linen garments and sells [them,] and supplies sashes for the merchants. (NKJV)*

- She is a saver not a spender. She can see beyond today alone.

## A GODLY WOMAN ALWAYS SEEKS TO BE A HARD WORKER.

*Proverbs 31:17,19 She girds herself with strength, and strengthens her arms. 19 She stretches out her hands to the distaff, and her hand holds the spindle. (NKJV)*

- God puts a premium on hard work and so she moves toward it not away. There is no slothfulness, indolence or lack of motivation.

## A GODLY WOMAN ALWAYS SEEKS TO BE A PERSON WHO HAS A GOOD REPUTATION.

*Proverbs 31:23 Her **husband is known** in the gates, when he sitteth among the elders of the land. 1 Timothy 3:7 Moreover he must have a good testimony*

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*among those who are outside, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.*

**A GODLY WOMAN ALWAYS SEEKS TO INTERNALIZE BIBLICAL WISDOM.**

*Proverbs 31:26 She opens her mouth with wisdom, And on her tongue [is] the law of kindness. (NKJV).*

- The Word is in her heart and life and so it comes out of her mouth. And when it does it is dressed in the clothes of the Spirit, gentle and kind.

**A GODLY WOMAN ALWAYS SEEKS TO LIVE THESE SECRETS OF GODLY WOMANHOOD.**

- As Solomon said Proverbs 31:25 Strength and honor [are] her clothing; She shall rejoice in time to come. (NKJV) the future smiles at her and her children bless her.
- Is there any comparison? This kind of woman and daughter is a blessing to all. A Builder of the home and family. This is our goal as parents.

**A GODLY WOMAN ALWAYS SEEKS TO BE A PERSON WHO CAN BE PRAISED FOR DOING THE RIGHT THINGS.**

*Proverbs 31:28 Her children arise up, and call her blessed; **her husband also, and he praiseth her.***

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# No Greater Power than Praying Marriages

## WFF: Message Thirty-Three (021013AM)

Paul distilled the life of a believer down to one word in 1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 1.10 – **WAIT**. We are waiting for Jesus, waiting for the Kingdom, waiting upon Him who loved us and loosed us from our sins. But what do we do while we wait? That is answered in 1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 5.17 “pray without ceasing”.

Parenting is life long. Praying keeps us on the front lines of our children’s lives – all through our lives. Successful parenting of a godly family only has two requirements: get started in prayer and never quit that praying.

Before we are parents **we are praying**, while we are up to our ears in those child filled years **we are praying**, and after they launch out into their own lives **we are praying**. My philosophy of great parenting is that you raise a godly family – one prayer at a time. Prayer is the key to raising, nurturing, and launching children that please the Lord. This morning is a practical, how to lesson in learning how to pray for our children.

### **WE MUST PRAY FOR REALITY IN THEIR SPIRITUAL LIFE:**

10. SEEING THEM GENUINELY SAVED.
11. SEEING THEM LOVING GOD'S WORD.
12. SEEING THEM LIVING IN VICTORY.
13. SEEING THEM THINKING OF HEAVEN.
14. SEEING THEM FINDING SIN REPULSIVE.
15. SEEING THEM STAYING TENDER TOWARD GOD.

### **WE MUST PRAY FOR INTEGRITY IN THEIR PERSONAL LIFE:**

6. SEEING THEM MAINTAINING A CLEAR CONSCIENCE.
7. SEEING THEM LEARNING TO STAND ALONE.
8. SEEING THEM SEEKING TO STAY PURE.
9. SEEING THEM CULTIVATING A SERVANT'S HEART.
10. SEEING THEM NEVER BECOMING BITTER IN TRIALS.

### **WE MUST PRAY FOR STABILTY IN THEIR RELATIONAL LIFE**

4. SEEING THEM CULTIVATING A LOVE FOR THEIR BROTHERS AND SISTERS.
5. SEEING THEM LEARNING TO TRUST GOD WITH HARD SITUATIONS AND NOT TO REBEL.
6. SEEING THEM EACH LOVING THE WAY GOD MADE THEM AS MEN AND WOMEN.
7. SEEING THEM WAITING TO MEET GOD'S CHOSEN LIFE PARTNER FOR THEM.

So, how do we pray for our children if we are parents? And how do we direct our lives if we are young people? And how do we live together if we are married today? Or what do we look for if we are single and waiting today? Here we go, into God's Word to find all

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the answers from the Author and establisher of Marriage Himself. Let's turn back to the 1<sup>st</sup> book of the Bible Genesis. As parents pray that your children:

❖ **Pray that they FOLLOW GOD'S RULES FOR A WONDERFUL MARRIAGE.**

Genesis 2:18, And the Lord God said, "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him." Genesis 2:20 So Adam gave names to all cattle, to the birds of the air, and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper **comparable** to him. Genesis 2:24 Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and **be joined** to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. ***By the way a big part of the glue is the sexual intimacy marriage provides. Have you ever licked and envelope or pulled the sealer tape, sealed it and then remembered something else and unsealed it? It doesn't work the second or third time does it? Don't ruin the glue of your marriage by playing with it or you will find that you are not secure in your marriage, glued together as one. Your husband or wife should be the only person you have ever experienced physical intimacy with. The first one you have loved, touched, held, and seen in any intimate way. Anything less than that will spell woes, pains, troubles, and grief for a lifetime.***

❖ **Pray that they WANT A PURE HOME.**

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.* Deuteronomy 6:9 You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates; 6:14 You shall not go after other gods, the gods of the peoples who are all around you; 7:25-26 You shall burn the carved images of their gods with fire; you shall not covet the silver or gold that is on them, nor take it for yourselves, lest you be snared by it; for it is an abomination to the Lord your God. 26 Nor shall you bring an abomination into your house, lest you be doomed to destruction like it. You shall utterly detest it and utterly abhor it, for it is an accursed thing. Psalm 106:35 But they mingled with the Gentiles And learned their works;

❖ **Pray that they KEEP THEIR WORD**

Psalm 15:4 In whose eyes a vile person is despised, But he honors those who fear the Lord; **He who swears to his own hurt and does not change;**

❖ **Pray that they STAY MILES AWAY FROM THE WICKED PERSON OF PROVERBS.**

Proverbs 5:1-3 **My son**, attend unto my wisdom, and bow thine ear to my understanding: 2 That thou mayest regard discretion, and that thy lips may keep knowledge. 3 **For the lips of a strange woman** drop as an honeycomb, and her mouth is smoother than oil: Proverbs 7:1,10-11 My son, keep my words, and lay up my commandments with thee. 10 And, behold, there met him **a woman with the attire of an harlot**, and subtle of heart. 11 (She is loud and stubborn; her feet abide not in her house:

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❖ **Pray that they FOCUS ON LISTENING.**

Song of Solomon 2:14-15 “**O my dove**, in the clefts of the rock, In the secret places of the cliff, **Let me see your face, Let me hear your voice**; For your voice is sweet, And your face is lovely.” 15 **Catch us the foxes, The little foxes that spoil the vines, For our vines have tender grapes.** James 1:19 So then my beloved brethren, let everyone be **swift to hear, slow to speak**, and slow to wrath.

❖ **Pray that they HAVE A PEACE FILLED LIFE.**

Isaiah 32:17 The work of righteousness will be peace, And the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance forever. Isaiah 57:20-21 But the wicked are like the troubled sea, When it cannot rest, Whose waters cast up mire and dirt. 21 “There is no peace,” Says my God, “for the wicked.”

❖ **Pray that they NEVER BREAK THEIR COVENANT WITH GOD.**

Malachi 2:14 Yet ye say, Wherefore? Because the LORD hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously: **yet is she thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant.**

❖ **Pray that they SPEND TIME WITH YOU.**

Mark 3:14 Then He appointed twelve, **that they might be with Him** and that He might send them out to preach,

❖ **Pray that they CULTIVATE A SERVANT’S HEART.**

Mark 9:35 And He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, “If anyone desires to be first, he **shall be last of all and servant of all.**” Mark 10:44 And whoever of you desires to be first shall be **slave of all.**

❖ **Pray that they OBEY AND HONOR THEIR PARENTS.**

Luke 2:51-52 Then He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and **was subject to them**, but His mother kept all these things in her heart. 52 **And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.**

❖ **Pray that they STAY FAITHFUL IN LITTLE THINGS.**

Luke 16:10 He who is **faithful in what is least** is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much.

❖ **Pray that they BECOME DISCIPLINED STEWARDS OF THEIR MONEY.**

Romans 13:8 Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law.

❖ **Pray that they WANT TO BE LIKE JESUS.**

1 Corinthians 11:1 Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.



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❖ **Pray that they WANT AN ORDERLY LIFE.**

1 Corinthians 14:40 Let all things be done decently and in order.

❖ **Pray that they WANT A GODLY LIFE.**

Ephesians 4:26-27 “Be angry, and do not sin”: do not let the sun go down on your wrath, 27 **nor give place to the devil**. James 3:15-16 This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic. 16 For where envy and self-seeking exist, **confusion and every evil thing are there**. 1 Peter 3:7 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.

❖ **Pray that they LOVE GOD’S WORD.**

Ephesians 5:26 that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word,

❖ **Pray that they FOLLOW THE LORD.**

Philippians 3:17 Brethren, be followers together of me, and **mark them which walk so** as ye have us for an ensample.

❖ **Pray that they STAY FINANCIALLY RESPONSIBLE.**

1 Timothy 5:8 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.

❖ **Pray that they STAY TRANSPARENT WITH YOU.**

James 5:16 **Confess your faults one to another**, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. 1 John 1:7 But if we **walk in the light** as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.

❖ **Pray that they WANT TO UNDERSTAND YOU.**

1 Peter 3:7a 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. **WANT TO HONOR YOU**. 1 Peter 3:7b Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, **giving honor unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel**, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered. **WANT TO SHARE ALL OF LIFE**. 1 Peter 3:7c 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. **WANT TO PRAY**. 1 Peter 3:7d 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**.

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## **Is Marriage Your Priority?**

### **WFF: Message Thirty-Four (021014PM)**

A few years ago my little five-year-old slid up on my lap while I was hunched over my laptop typing. He said, “Dad, have we had good morning prayer time yet?” he must have forgotten that he had slid in and put his arms around Bonnie and I as we started our day in prayer together earlier that morning, like we try to do every day. He came up while we prayed, wrapped those chubby little arms around our shoulders and chimed right in with a very creative and heartfelt prayer.

But later as he came to me he had something on his mind, so he wanted to pray again. His prayer was short and simple.

“Dear God, help me NEVER become an ak-o-holie (not sure where he heard about that) and NEVER walk around with a bottle (possibly from a John Wayne movie he seems to watch a lot of our trip by New York City last week, or something) but I want to be the BEST SERVANT OF THE LORD THERE EVER WAS.”

Do you have as clear a mandate about life? Children reduce life to its bare essentials; they know what really matters – love, time, food, and the Lord!

- Do you know what is your highest earthly calling TO MINISTRY?
- Do you know what is most important to God about MEASURING the fruitfulness to God of your life today?
- What is the primary ministry each one of us publicly signed up for? Is it parenting, educating our children, and serving in Christ's church, missions, Sunday school, youth work, evangelism?

All of these are important to God, but did the Lord declare that they are our PRIMARY MINISTRY that we were created to fulfill?

### **God's Blueprint for Marriage is in Genesis 2:18-25**

After combing God's Word for all that He has instructed us about marriage, I have found only one description of marriage that God chooses to repeatedly present to us. Four times in the Bible the Lord clearly states what He wants us to do – what our SIMPLE MANDATE is to be in marriage. These four declarations are in Genesis 2:24, Matthew 19:5, Mark 10:7,8, and Ephesians 5:31. Here is our SIMPLE and very CLEAR MANDATE:

*“For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother and shall cleave to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.”*

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Four times God says the same thing. Four times God repeats Himself. Four times the Lord clearly maps out what He wants us to do and to be if we are married.

Now for those of you who like to really study a topic in God's Word here are some interesting facts:

- God's Mandate for Marriage is stated once in the Old Testament and three times in the New Testament.
- God's Mandate for Marriage is stated once before man fell into sin and three times after man fell into sin.
- God's Mandate for Marriage is God's marital purpose for perfect man and for sinful man.
- God's Mandate for Marriage is God's all-time blueprint for a good marriage.
- An honest examination<sup>[2]</sup> of scriptural data leads to the conclusion that the wife's primary ministry in life is her husband, and the husband's primary ministry in life is his wife! Everything we do is tied to that.

God says our prayers the very life breath of spiritual life are hindered if we don't follow His plan and live like Marriage is OUR PRIMARY MINISTRY!

When God created Eve for Adam He said, ' It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable [literally, corresponding to] for him. And out of the ground the Lord formed every beast of the field and every bird of the sky. ...But for Adam there was not found a helper suitable for him. So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then He took one of the ribs and closed up the flesh at that place. And the Lord God fashioned into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man, and brought her to the man" (Gen. 2:18-22).

If we want to most fully serve the Lord then we shouldn't get married is what Paul said. In other words certain people (like Jeremiah and the 144,000) and certain times (like the persecutions of the early church) are times that marriage may not be best.

1 Corinthians 7:32-33 But I want you to be without care. He who is unmarried cares for the things of the Lord—how he may please the Lord. 33 But he who is married cares about the things of the world—how he may please his wife.

But for most of history and for most of God's servants – their marriage is to be their PRIMARY MINISTRY. Marriage is what God created us for.

Think about the Genesis Mandate that God repeats 4 times. Several important facts about our marriage relationship emerge from this passage.

**1. Husbands are INCOMPLETE without a godly wife.** GOD MADE THE WOMAN TO BE MAN'S HELPER. Without the woman, man, even in his perfect condition, was incomplete.

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**2. Husbands are ONLY COMPLETED by a godly wife.** GOD MADE THE WOMAN TO BE A SUITABLE HELPER. None of the animals could provide the kind of help that man needed. Only woman could do that. "He who finds a wife finds a good thing, and obtains favor from the Lord" (Prov. 18:22). 'An excellent wife, who can find? For her worth is far above jewels. The heart of her husband trusts in her, and he will have no lack of gain" (Prov. 31: 10, 11). I can try to fill my life with activity and ministry but if I neglect my primary ministry of my marriage – I am a failure!

**3. Husbands are DIFFERENT than their wife.** GOD CREATED THE WOMAN TO CORRESPOND TO MAN. She is similar to man, yet somewhat different. She is man's complement, not his carbon copy. She is to man what a key is to a lock and what a film is to a camera-indispensable. 1 Corinthians 11:11 Nevertheless, neither is man independent of woman, nor woman independent of man, in the Lord.

**4. Husbands are ONLY ABLE TO SUCCEED by a biblical partnership with a godly wife.** ACCORDING TO THE SCRIPTURE THE WIFE WAS MADE TO FULFILL THE NEEDS, THE LACKS, THE INADEQUACIES OF HER HUSBAND.

- She was made to be her husband's unique helper. She is to "do him good and not evil all the days of her life" (Prov. 31:12).
- She is to be like a fruitful vine in her husband's house (Ps. 128:3).
- She is to be "one flesh" with her husband, and this will happen only as she accepts and fulfills her God-appointed role in marriage. This does not mean that everything she does must have a direct connection to her husband. Nor does it mean that she should never do anything for her own benefit or for the benefit of others, or that she should never become involved in activities or ministries outside the home (Prov. 31:10-31). It does mean, however, that she ought never to do anything which would be detrimental or harmful to her husband or that would cause her to neglect her primary ministry of helping her husband (Prov. 31:10-31).

And now becoming very specific, I want to suggest some ways in which a wife may help her husband. She may help her husband in word and in deed, at home and at heart.

## **THE WIFE'S MANDATE**

**1. A PRIORITY OF THE IRRESISTABLE HOME. A wife who believes her primary ministry is marriage** will be making her home a safe place—a place of encouragement, comfort, understanding and refuge. Your home can be that shining beacon on the hill that beckons your husband to come. It should be the place he would rather be when he is at work and at play. It is his place of refreshment, renewal, and refocus. You are the guardian of that place. When activities and the urgent over run this priority all must be stopped and the home reset to be the place of refuge your husband needs. Proverbs 31:11 The heart of her husband safely trusts her; So he will have no lack of gain.

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**2. A PRIORITY OF REVERENCE. A wife who believes her primary ministry is marriage will** not joke about her husband or make cutting remarks to him. She won't constantly remind him of his faults, mistakes, and failures. Rather she will correct him only if it is absolutely necessary. She will avoid the danger of allowing the home to be in shambles and full of disorder and confusion. But also avoid the danger of making the house a show place where everything must always be neat and immaculate. Husbands want homes to live in, not show places to visit. This is all bound up in her being trustworthy and dependable Proverbs 31:12 She does him good and not evil All the days of her life. Ephesians 5:33 Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

**3. A PRIORITY OF CHEERFULNESS. A wife who believes her primary ministry is marriage will** be maintaining a good attitude (Prov. 31:26, 28, 29; James 3:13-18; Phil.4: 4). James 3:13-18 Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom. 14 But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. 15 This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic. 16 For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there. 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. 18 Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace. Philippians 4:4 Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice! Proverbs 31:26-29 She opens her mouth with wisdom, And on her tongue is the law of kindness. 27 She watches over the ways of her household, And does not eat the bread of idleness. 28 Her children rise up and call her blessed; Her husband also, and he praises her: 29 "Many daughters have done well, But you excel them all." (The reason the Proverbs 31 woman is so amazing is that her marriage was at the center of all she did. It was her PRIMARY MINISTRY!)

**4. A PRIORITY OF COMMUNICATION. A wife who believes her primary ministry is marriage will** be discussing things lovingly, openly, and honestly. Ephesians 4:29-32 Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers. 30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. 31 Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. 32 And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.

**5. A PRIORITY OF CONTENTMENT. A wife who believes her primary ministry is marriage will** be satisfied with her position, her possessions, her tasks (Phil. 4:6-13; Heb. 13:5,16). Philippians 4:6-13 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; 7 and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. 8 Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely,

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whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things. 9 The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you. 10 But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at last your care for me has flourished again; though you surely did care, but you lacked opportunity. 11 Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: 12 I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. 13 I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

**6. A PRIORITY OF PATIENCE. A wife who believes her primary ministry is marriage will** be long suffering, forgiving, and forbearing (Eph. 4:2,31,32; Col.3:12-14).

Colossians 3:12-14 Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; 13 bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. 14 But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection.

**7. A PRIORITY OF CARING. A wife who believes her primary ministry is marriage will** be showing an interest in his problems and concerns. Philippians 2:3-4 Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. 4 Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.

**8. A PRIORITY OF INDUSTRIOUSNESS. A wife who believes her primary ministry is marriage will** be an industrious, frugal, diligent, ambitious, and creative member of the team (Ps. 128:3; Prov. 31:10-31).

**9. A PRIORITY OF HELPFULNESS. A wife who believes her primary ministry is marriage will** be offering suggestions, advice, and corrections when needed in a loving fashion. Proverbs 31:26 She opens her mouth with wisdom, And on her tongue is the law of kindness.

**10. A PRIORITY OF BEAUTY. A wife who believes her primary ministry is marriage will** be keeping herself beautiful, especially in the inner person. 1 Peter 3:3-5 Do not let your adornment be merely outward—arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on fine apparel— 4 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. 5 For in this manner, in former times, the holy women who trusted in God also adorned themselves, being submissive to their own husbands,

**11. A PRIORITY OF DEVOTION. A wife who believes her primary ministry is marriage will** be maintaining a good spiritual life I Pet. 3:1,2,7 Wives, likewise, be submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without

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a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives, 2 when they observe your chaste conduct accompanied by fear. 7 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.

**12. A PRIORITY OF AGREEMENT. A wife who believes her primary ministry is marriage will be cooperating with him in raising children** (Eph. 6:20; Prov. 31: 26-28, 1 Tim. 5:13-14). 1 Timothy 5:13-14 And besides they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house, and not only idle but also gossips and busybodies, saying things which they ought not. 14 Therefore I desire that the younger widows marry, bear children, manage the house, give no opportunity to the adversary to speak reproachfully.

**13. A PRIORITY OF LOYALTY. A wife who believes her primary ministry is marriage will be building loyalty to him in the children.** The wife's attitudes toward the husband are quickly picked up by the children. Lack of respect or confidence in his leadership, complaints about what he has or has not done will have debilitating influence on the children. She must avoid taking sides with the children or anyone against her husband. She must support and cooperate with him in discipline. All differences of opinion about discipline should be settled away from the children. Amos 3:3 Can two walk together, unless they are agreed?

**14. A PRIORITY OF GRATITUDE. A wife who believes her primary ministry is marriage will express regular gratefulness to her husband.** Appreciation should be expressed freely and in a variety of ways. Romans 13:7 Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor. 1 Peter 3:6 as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, whose daughters you are if you do good and are not afraid with any terror.

**15. A PRIORITY OF CONFIDENCE. A wife who believes her primary ministry is marriage will be showing confidence in his decisions.** Disdain, lack of confidence, anxiety, or strong opposition over his decisions may cause him to become indecisive, defensive, or reactionary. If the wife doubts the wisdom of important decisions, she should ask questions in a non-threatening way, assuming that there are some facts she does not know and that he really does want what is best for them both (1 Cor. 13:4-8). 1 Corinthians 13:4-8 Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; 5 does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; 6 does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; 7 bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. 8 Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away.

## **THE HUSBAND'S MANDATE**

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There are, of course, many passages<sup>[3]</sup> in the Bible which speak of the man's part in marriage. Some of the key passages are Genesis 3:16; Ephesians 5: 23-33; 1 Timothy 3:4,5; Psalm 128; 1 Peter 3:7; 1 Corinthians 7:3,4; Proverbs 5:15-19; Colossians 3:19. As I read these passages I hear God saying that the husband has two primary responsibilities to his wife.

1. He is to be his wife's leader.
2. He is to be his wife's lover.

The husband is to be his wife's leader (Eph 5:23; 1 Tim. 3: 4, 5, 12; 1 Cor. 11:3). Matthew 20:20-28 gives us the Bible's concept of a leader.

Husbands, God call you to be your wife's leader. This means that you must be your wife's servant, that you must spend much time with her, that you must give her useful, scriptural and practical instruction, that you must be a good example to her, and that you must make decisions and delegate responsibilities in your home. Of the many elements involved in developing genuine oneness, none is more important than this one. Unquestionably, it is the other side of the marital coin. If genuine oneness is to be experienced, the lifestyle of the wife must be genuine biblical submission. Conversely, the lifestyle of the husband must be the kind of leadership that has just been described. But the Bible not only says that the husband must be his wife's leader, it also asserts that he is to be his wife's lover.

The husband is not only to be a leader, he is to be a loving leader. The importance of husbandly love has already been implied in what has previously been said about the husband, but now it must be emphasized and amplified. The wife has such a great need for love or the husband has such a great lack of love, that God commands the husband to love his wife three times within the space of a few verses in Ephesians 5. Two times in this passage God enjoins the husband to love his wife even as he loves himself (vss. 28, 33). One time God instructs the husband to love his wife just as Christ also loved the church (vs. 25).

Oceans of truth concerning the husband's relationship to his wife are opened to us by these verses. Normally, a man uses a lot of time and gives a great deal of thought, effort, and money to take care of himself. His needs, his desires, his aspirations, his hopes, his body, his comfort are very important to him. He nourishes and cherishes himself.

- He carefully protects and provides for the needs of his body.
- He does not deliberately do that which would bring harm to himself.
- When he is hungry, he eats. When he is thirsty, he drinks. When he is tired, he sleeps. When he is in pain, he goes to the doctor. When he cuts himself, he

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washes the wound and binds it up. When he sees an object coming toward him, he puts up his hands for protection.

- He very naturally and carefully and fervently nourishes and cherishes himself. "Well," the Scripture indicates, "this is the way a man is to love his wife. He is to nourish her, cherish her, protect her, satisfy her, provide for her, care for her, sacrifice for her to the same degree and extent, and in the same manner as he does himself."

Now that is a lot of love that a husband is to have for his wife. That is a high standard for a husband to keep, but there is still a higher standard. Scripture says, "Husbands, love your wives just as Christ also loved the church."

Who then can understand, who then can plumb the depths of the love of Jesus for His people? But this much we do know about love of Christ for His people.

- It is an unconditional or free love (Rom. 5:8).
- It is a volitional love. He chooses to love us (Deut. 7:7; Eph. 1:6,7).
- It is an intense love (John 13:1; Eph. 5:2,25).
- It is an unending love (John 13:1; Jer. 31:3; Rom. 8:39).
- It is an unselfish love (Phil. 2:6, 7).
- It is a purposeful love.
- It is a sacrificial love. Eph. 5:2, 24; Gal. 2:20; 1 Pet. 3:18; Rom. 5:6-11; 1 Pet. 2:24).
- It is a manifested love. John 10:1-14; 14:1-3; 13:34,35; 15:9-10; Rom. 8:32; Phil. 4:13, 19; Heb. 4:14-16).

So how can we as husbands love our wives with Christ's love? Here are just a few ideas:

**1. A PRIORITY OF HUMILITY. A husband who believes his primary ministry is marriage will** be like Jesus. Jesus as a leader was first and foremost a servant. John 13:1-15 gives us the same picture of what it means to be a leader. In this passage, the emblem of leadership is not a throne or a club but a big towel and a basin. In other words, a leader must have a servant's heart. And if he has a servant's heart, he will act like a servant and react like a servant - when he is treated like a servant. 1 Peter 5:3 nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock;

**2. A PRIORITY OF SERVANTHOOD. A husband who believes his primary ministry is marriage will** be the family's biggest servant. He is to be the head of his wife even as Christ is the head of the church (Eph. 5:23). His great model in leadership is Jesus Christ, who made Himself a servant (Phil. 2: 6-8); who came not to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many (Mark 10:45); who is head over all things for the sake of the church (Eph. 1:22, 23). Whatever Jesus Christ does, He does for our sake; He does with our best interests at heart. In similar fashion, the husband is to live for the sake of his wife, always keeping her best interests at heart. He is to be his wife's servant-leader.

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- **A servant stays close to those he serves.** Jesus Christ practiced the principle of continuous association with those whom He led. He did not lead His disciples by long distance telephone calls, or by writing them a few letters or by infrequent visits. For over three years, He spent great amounts of time with them. (Compare John 1:39,43; Mark 1:17; 3:14; 4:10; 5:1,30,31,40; 6:1,30,31,32,35; 8:1,10,27,34; 9:2,30; 10:13,23,46; 11:1.) Biblical leadership requires association with those who are being led.
  - **A servant clearly talks to those he serves.** Jesus Christ carefully and relevantly instructed His disciples.
  - **A servant clearly lives before those he serves.** Jesus Christ led His disciples by being a good example.
  - **A servant clearly does his job for those he serves.** Jesus Christ led His disciples by making decisions and delegating responsibility to them. Compare John 4:1,2; Mark 1:35-39; 6:7; 6:35-43; John 11:39-44; Matt. 10:1-14; 16:21-23; 21:1,2; 28:18-20, where Jesus made decisions and delegated responsibilities to His disciples. Similarly, Christian husbands are called upon to lead their wives by making decisions and by delegating responsibility. To be the leader does not mean that he must bear all the responsibility and do all the work while his wife bears nothing and does nothing. It does mean that he will see to it that the work gets done and that everyone knows who does what. In marriage someone has to be the final decision maker. Someone has to delegate responsibility, and God has ordained that this should be the husband. Indeed, the husbands must make decisions and delegate responsibility as a servant of his wife.

**3. A PRIORITY OF KIND WORDS. A husband who believes his primary ministry is marriage will** practice one of the simplest, yet most neglected, ways of communicating love - by way of words spoken kindly, warmly, and directly toward his wife. John 7:46 The officers answered, "No man ever spoke like this Man!" Remember those words in the hymn In the Garden? "He speaks and the sound of His voice"

**4. A PRIORITY OF KIND DEEDS. A husband who believes his primary ministry is marriage will** love his wife by providing for the satisfaction of her varying needs. Matthew 20:28 just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

**5. A PRIORITY OF THE STRENGTH OF YOUR PRESENCE.** A husband who believes his primary ministry is marriage will You may love your wife by protecting her (Eph. 5:28).

**6. A PRIORITY OF HELPING. A husband who believes his primary ministry is marriage will** express love to his wife by assisting her to fulfill her chores and responsibilities.

**7. A PRIORITY OF SACRIFICE.** A husband who believes his primary ministry is marriage will express his love by sacrificing for her (Eph. 5:25; Phil 2:5,6).

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**8. A PRIORITY OF SHARING. A husband who believes his primary ministry is marriage will** love his wife by allowing her really to share your life (1 Pet. 3:7-“heirs together of the grace of life”).

**9. A PRIORITY OF LOYALTY. A husband who believes his primary ministry is marriage will** express his love by refusing to compare her unfavorably with other people, especially other women.

**10. A PRIORITY OF HER. A husband who believes his primary ministry is marriage will** express his love by demonstrating to her that, apart from your relationship to Jesus Christ, she has first place in your life.

**11. A PRIORITY OF TENDERNESS. A husband who believes his primary ministry is marriage will** express his love by giving her a lot of tenderness, respect, chivalry, and courtesy (Eh. 5:28; Col. 3:19; 1 Cor. 13:4, 5). Do not use jokes about her or make cutting remarks to her in front of other people. Speak to her in a gentle and respectful way. Treat her as you would a valuable jewel rather than a piece of cinder or a garbage can.

**12. A PRIORITY OF PRAISING HER. A husband who believes his primary ministry is marriage will** love her by expressing appreciation and praise generously and in large doses (1 Pet. 3:7; Prov. 31:28).

Husbands, God calls you to be your wife’s leader and lover. To some extent we have seen what that means. But knowing what it means is of little value unless it is applied to your relationship with your wife. Knowing these facts will not promote oneness in marriage. Performing them will.

I ask you, therefore, to seriously examine your relationship with your wife in the light of these truths. Look back over what we have seen about your responsibility to be your wife’s leader and lover.

- Specifically note areas where you are failing and where you should improve. When you have identified those areas: make confession of your sin to God and to your wife (1 John 1:9; Matt. 5:23, 24; James 5:16).
- Seek cleansing from this sin and all your sins through the blood of Christ (Eph. 1:7).
- Ask the Holy Spirit for power to be different (Luke 11:13; Gal. 5:16, 22, 23).
- Move out in obedience to the Word of God, and make the necessary changes (Phil 2:12,13,13; James 1:19-24).

**Choice number one:** “For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother...”

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God's Mandate for Marriage is to leave our parents. Leaving our parents means that our relationship to our parents must be radically changed. So if this is first, how should our relationship to our parents change?

- You now relate to them as adults, as friends, and as your honored parents. God picked them for you, put you into their home, and as long as they live you must honor them!
- You must now choose to value and respond to your mate's plans, goals, ideas, opinions, and practices rather than those of your parents.
- You must now seek the affection, approval, assistance, and counsel of your mate rather than of your parents.
- You must choose to repent of any and all bad attitudes towards your parents. If not that spiritual flaw will leave open a place for the devil to hinder you emotionally regardless of how far you move from them.
- You must choose to stop trying to change your mate simply because your parents do not like him the way he is.
- It means that you make the husband and wife relationship your priority human relationship. Yes, you should be concerned about being a good son/daughter – or mother/father, but you should be more concerned about being a good husband/wife than about being a good son/daughter or father/mother. Children do not need indulgent parents who continually neglect each other. They need parents who will demonstrate how to face and solve problems. They need parents who will show them how to be good husbands and wives; how to relate to other people.
- Choice number two: "...and shall cleave to his wife ..."
- God's blueprint for marriage directs husbands and wives to cleave to one another. A good marriage is based more on commitment than feeling or animal attraction.
- According to Malachi 2:14 and Proverbs 2:17, marriage is an irrevocable covenant or contract to which we are bound.
- Therefore, when two people get married they promise that they will be faithful to each other regardless of what happens.

1. The wife promises that she will be faithful even if the husband is afflicted with bulges, baldness, bunions, and bifocals; even if he loses his health, his wealth, his job, his charm; even if someone more exciting comes along.

2. The husband promises to be faithful even if the wife loses her beauty and appeal; even if she is not as neat and tidy or as submissive as he would like her to be; even if she does not satisfy his sexual desires completely; even if she spends money foolishly or is a terrible cook.

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3. Marriage means that a husband and wife enter into a relationship for which they accept full responsibility and in which they commit themselves to each other regardless of what problems arise.

In many ways getting married is like becoming a Christian.

- When a person becomes a Christian he leaves his former way of life, his self-righteousness, his own efforts to save himself, and turns to Christ, who died in the place and stead of sinners.
- In this act of turning to Christ, he commits himself to Christ. The very essence of saving faith is personal commitment to Christ in which a person promises to trust Christ faithfully and completely and to serve Christ faithfully and diligently, regardless of how he feels or what problems arise. (Compare Rom. 10:9, 10; Acts 16:31; Phil. 3:7,8; I Thess. 1:9, 10.)
- Just so, God's kind of marriage involves a total and irrevocable commitment of two people to each other.
- God's kind of marriage involves cleaving to one another in sickness and health, poverty and wealth, pleasure and pain, joy and sorrow, good times and bad times, agreements and disagreements.
- Choice number three: "...and they shall become one flesh..."
- God's blueprint for marriage involves one flesh. At its most elementary level, this is referring to sexual relations or physical union. Consider I Corinthians 6:16.
- Within the bounds of marriage, sexual relations are holy, good, and beautiful, but if they are entered into apart from the "leaving and cleaving" they are ugly, degrading, and sinful. (Study Heb. 13:4.)

The idea of the wife's submission<sup>[4]</sup> is not a very popular one in our day. Some resistance to a wife's biblical submission is only a sinful rebellion against the will of God. But sometimes it reflects a wrong understanding of what the biblical wife's submission really involves. To clarify a wife's biblical submission, let me correct the incorrect ideas about submission by showing what biblical submission is not.

1. BIBLICAL SUBMISSION IS ACTUALLY UNIVERSAL. Submission is not merely a concept for women. It is a concept for all believers. (Compare Eph. 5:21; Phil. 2:3,4; I Pet. 5:5; Rom. 13:1; Heb. 13:17.)

2. BIBLICAL SUBMISSION IS COMPLETELY LIBERATING. Submission does not mean that the wife becomes a slave. Actually, the wife is never more free than when she is in submission to her husband, for then she is free to become all that God intended her to become. (Study the description of God's ideal wife in Prov. 31:10-31.)

3. BIBLICAL SUBMISSION PROMOTES COMMUNICATING. Submission does not mean that the wife never opens her mouth, never has an opinion, never gives advice. (Compare Prov. 31:26; Acts 18:26; Judges 13:21-23.)

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4. BIBLICAL SUBMISSION IS MAXIMIZING OUR CALLING. Submission does not mean that the wife becomes a wallflower who folds up and allows her abilities to lie dormant. (Compare the full use that God's ideal wife made of her talents and abilities in Prov. 31.)

5. BIBLICAL SUBMISSION IS ACTUALLY DIVINE. Submission does not mean that the wife is inferior to the husband, Jesus Christ was not inferior to Mary and Joseph, and yet the Scripture says that as a child, "He continued in subjection to them" (Luke 2:51). Jesus Christ was in no way inferior to God the Father. He was and is fully and completely God, in every sense. Yet the Scripture asserts that there is order and structure in the Trinity. Jesus said, "I can do nothing on my own initiative, as I hear I judge....I do not seek my own will but the will of Him who sent me" (John 5:30), and Paul declared, "I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of a woman and God is the head of Christ" (I Cor. 11:3). Certainly this does not imply that Christ is inferior to God the Father. Rather it teaches that there is a division of labor and responsibility in the Trinity. In like fashion, the submission of the wife in no way implies inferiority. Instead, it teaches the necessity for order and structure, for a division of responsibility within the home. Genesis 1:26, 27; 2:23; and Galatians 3:28 all assert the equalitarian status and dignity of women and men. So, with the wrong picture of submission deleted, what is a biblical wife's mandate in marriage?

1. BIBLICAL SUBMISSION IS A LIFESTYLE. *Scripture indicates that it is the wife's responsibility to make herself submissive.* Nowhere is the husband commanded to physically force his wife into submission. Rather, the wife is commanded to make herself submissive. (Compare Eph. 5:22 and I Pet. 3:1.) Scripture indicates that the wife's submission is to be continuous. The Greek verb in most passages about submission is in the present tense. Submission is to be the continuous life style of the wife. (Compare Eph. 5:22 and I Pet. 3:1.) Wifely submission is mandatory, not optional. The Greek verb is in the imperative mood. (Compare Eph. 5:21, 22 and I Pet. 3:1.) Her submission is not to be based upon the way her husband treats her. Nor is it to be conditioned by the husband's abilities, talents, wisdom, education, or spiritual state. (Compare I Pet. 3: 1 and Luke 2:51.) Wifely submission is a spiritual matter. It is to be done "as to the Lord" (Eph. 5:22). The Lord commands the wife to be submissive. Refusal to submit to the husband is therefore rebellion against God Himself. Submission to the husband is a test of her love for God as well as a test of love for her husband. The wife then must look upon her submission to her husband as an act of obedience to Christ and not merely to her husband. Jesus said, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments" (John 14:15), and one of his commands to wives is, "Be subject to your own husbands. .." (Eph. 5:22).

2. BIBLICAL SUBMISSION IS A WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. Wifely submission is a spiritual matter because it must be performed in the power of the Holy Spirit. The

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context in which submission is commanded indicates that it can be performed only by women whose hearts have been cleansed, by the blood of Christ, by women who are being strengthened in the inner man by the Holy Spirit, by women who are being filled up to all fullness of God. (Compare Eph. 1:1-5:21; 1Pet. 1:1-3:6.) Submission is a positive, not negative concept. It emphasizes what the wife should do rather than what she should not do. In my opinion, Bill Gothard's definition of submission is right on target. He asserts that submission is "the freedom to be creative under divinely appointed authority."

3. BIBLICAL SUBMISSION IS STRATEGIC. Submission means that the wife puts all of her talents, abilities, resources, and energy at her husband's disposal. So now there are two hearts, two minds, twice the strength, twice the endurance, twice the capacity to accomplish ONE PURPOSE!

4. BIBLICAL SUBMISSION IS UNIFYING. Submission means that the wife yields and uses all of her abilities under the management of her husband for the good of her husband and family – and thus **she sees herself as a part of her husband's team**. She is not her husband's opponent fighting at cross-purposes or trying to outdo him. She is not merely an individual going her separate way. She is her husband's teammate striving for the same goal. She has ideas, opinions, desires, requests, and insights, and she lovingly makes them known. But she knows that on any good team someone has to make the final decisions and plans. She knows that the team members must support the team leader, his plans and decisions, or no progress will be made, and confusion and frustration will result.

5. BIBLICAL SUBMISSION IS DELIGHTFUL. Jesus Christ was thoroughly submitted to the Father. He said, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent me and to accomplish His work" (John 4:34). But how did He serve the Father? In a spirit of resignation, servility, or heaviness? No, He served the Father with gladness. He delighted to do the Father's will (Ps. 40:7,8). So biblical submission involves the wife's attitudes of finding great satisfaction in using all of her God-given resources to fulfill the needs of her husband and family. Ephesians 5:33 contains a very important injunction concerning the attitude in which a wife should submit to her husband. It says, "Let the wife see to it that she respect her husband." As she submits to her husband, she is to do so with respectful attitude. What this means is clarified by the Amplified Version of the New Testament when it asserts that the wife is to notice, regard, honor, prefer, esteem, praise, and admire her husband exceedingly.

6. BIBLICAL SUBMISSION IS COMPLETE. Wifely submission is to be extensive. She is to be subject unto her husband as the church is to Christ (Eph. 5:24). And how broad should the submission of the church be to Christ? Well, the submission of the church to Christ is to be total; it is to be comprehensive. Christ is "head over all things for the church" (Eph. 1:22), and the church is to do whatever it does in word or deed in the name of the Lord Jesus, in total dependence upon His person, acknowledging and

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recognizing Him in all its ways, doing all for His honor and glory (Col. 3:17; Prov. 3:5,6; I Cor. 10:31). In like fashion Paul says, "the wives are to be subject to their husbands in everything." The wife's submission to her husband then is to be extensive but not necessarily total or unlimited. She is to obey him in everything except that which contradicts the Word of God. And even then she is to disobey in a loving, submissive fashion, explaining calmly and clearly her reasons for disobedience, assuring her husband of her love and loyalty, and seeking to demonstrate that love and loyalty in a variety of continuous and tangible ways. She is to be her husband's helper (Gen. 2:18), and this she can never be if she manifests a contentious, inconsiderate, uncooperative spirit.

7. BIBLICAL SUBMISSION IS LIFE LONG. Submission is not to be an on-again off-again matter for the wife. Nor is it to be a selective, choose what you like, reject what you do not like proposition. Submission is to be her life style at all times, in all places, and in everything. Certainly this does not mean that she must obey her husband when he commands her to do what God forbids or tries to keep her from doing what God commands. She is to be subject to her husband "as is fitting in the Lord" (Col. 3:18). Her husband's authority is a delegated or ministerial authority. He has authority because he is under the authority of God. As long as he does not ask her to do what God forbids or forbids her from doing what God commands, she is to submit. Failure to do so would be rebellion against God as well as her husband. However, since her husband's authority is delegated to him, he loses his authority at those times and in those areas when his directives are clearly contrary to the revealed will of God as it is found in the Bible. When the husband asks her to do that which is unmistakably contrary to the Word of God, the wife must obey God rather than man (Acts 5:28-29).

Wives, God calls you to be in submission to your husband, to be his unique and suitable helper. To some extent in this unit we have seen what that means. But knowing what it means is of little value, unless it is applied to your relationship with your husband. Knowing these facts will not promote oneness in marriage. Performing them will. I ask you wives to examine your relationship to your husbands in the light of these truths.

- Are you really practicing submission to your husband?
- Are you really his helper?
- I suggest that where you find yourself to be failing: Make confession of your sin to God and your husband. Seek cleansing from this sin and all your sins through the blood of Christ (Eph. 1:7; 1 John 1:9). Ask the Holy Spirit for power to be different (Gal. 5:16, 22, 23). Move out in obedience to the Word of God, and make the necessary changes (Phil. 2:12, 13; James 1:19-24).

## **THE WIFE'S MANDATE**

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So how can we as wives love our husbands with Christ's love? Here are just a few ideas. **A wife who believes her primary ministry is marriage will CHOOSE TO HAVE:**

1. A PRIORITY OF THE IRRESISTABLE HOME.
2. A PRIORITY OF REVERENCE.
3. A PRIORITY OF CHEERFULNESS
4. A PRIORITY OF COMMUNICATION.
5. A PRIORITY OF CONTENTMENT.
6. A PRIORITY OF PATIENCE.
7. A PRIORITY OF CARING.
8. A PRIORITY OF INDUSTRIOUSNESS.
9. A PRIORITY OF HELPFULNESS.
10. A PRIORITY OF BEAUTY.
11. A PRIORITY OF DEVOTION.
12. A PRIORITY OF AGREEMENT.
13. A PRIORITY OF LOYALTY.
14. A PRIORITY OF GRATITUDE.
15. A PRIORITY OF CONFIDENCE.

### **THE HUSBAND'S MANDATE**

There are, of course, many passages in the Bible, which speak of the man's part in marriage. Some of the key passages are Genesis 3:16; Ephesians 5: 23-33: 1 Timothy 3:4,5; Psalm 128; 1 Peter 3:7: 1 Corinthians 7:3,4: Proverbs 5:15-19; Colossians 3:19. So how can we as husbands love our wives with Christ's love? Here are just a few ideas. **A husband who believes his primary ministry is marriage will CHOOSE TO HAVE:**

1. A PRIORITY OF HUMILITY.
2. A PRIORITY OF SERVANTHOOD.
3. A PRIORITY OF KIND WORDS.
4. A PRIORITY OF KIND DEEDS.
5. A PRIORITY OF YOUR PRESENCE.
6. A PRIORITY OF HELPING.
7. A PRIORITY OF SACRIFICE.
8. A PRIORITY OF SHARING.
9. A PRIORITY OF LOYALTY.
10. A PRIORITY OF HER.
11. A PRIORITY OF TENDERNESS.
12. A PRIORITY OF PRAISING HER.

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<sup>[1]</sup> This section and the rest of this message are all adaptations, quotations, and allusions to sections of the fantastic outline in Wayne Mack, Strengthening You Marriage, Phillipsburg, NJ, Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co.. 1977, Page 1-4

<sup>[2]</sup> From Wayne Mack, Strengthening You Marriage, Phillipsburg, NJ, Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co.. 1977, Page 13-18.

<sup>[3]</sup> From Wayne Mack, Strengthening You Marriage, Phillipsburg, NJ, Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co.. 1977, Pages 27-36.

<sup>[4]</sup> From Wayne Mack, Strengthening You Marriage, Phillipsburg, NJ, Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co.. 1977, Page 13-18. (Grateful acknowledgment for the substance of suggestions 13-15 is given to Robert D. Smith, M.D. Dr. Smith has granted permission for their inclusion. He indicates that his remarks are a distillation of concepts taught by Bill Gothard.)

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## Beware of Affluenza

### WFF: Message Thirty (021110AM)

One of my hobbies is to follow Global Trends. Often as Americans we are so fixated on America that we are out of touch with issues that most of the world is focusing upon.

There was a time when many major world newspapers began to examine the “Super-Flu”. Here is what they said:

#### Overdue attack

Some[1] experts have been looking at the genetic structure of the virus which caused the 1918 pandemic, as well as a serious outbreak in Hong Kong in 1997 for clues which may help doctors combat such an outbreak. There were three flu pandemics in the last century, in 1918, 1957 and 1968. Even though the 1957 and 1968 outbreaks were less severe than the Spanish flu, they still accounted for **40,000,000 deaths between them (or 1% of the population)**. Researchers suggest that an approximate 30 year cycle between pandemics means **we are well overdue for another one**. (1% of America falling victim to influenza would mean 3,000,000 deaths!)

We need to listen because we have had our share of disasters with the flu or Influenza as it is properly called.

In the[2] spring of 1918, as the nation mobilized for war, Private Albert Gitchell reported to an Army hospital in Kansas. He was diagnosed with the flu, a disease doctors knew little about. Before the year was out, America would be ravaged by a flu epidemic that killed 675,000--more than in all the wars of this century combined--before disappearing as mysteriously as it began.

There is a super influenza coming that tragically will strike many people's physical bodies. However as we all know – there is something far worse that a sick and dying body – and that is a sick and dying soul.

This morning I believe that an even worse epidemic is already being reported in Tulsa. However it is not Influenza – it is Affluenza. To catch the difference, please stand with me as we read Paul's 1<sup>st</sup> letter to Timothy and the last chapter. Please follow along as I read all 21 verses.

What is Affluenza? It is so dangerous even the world has noticed. It is the habitual chasing of money and stuff. One gifted Christian writer calls it -- **Possession Obsession**. In September of 1997 PBS aired a special television program they entitled *Affluenza*. The topic was a warning against what the public sector has identified as the

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“modern-day plague of materialism.” Here are the symptoms they observed five years ago:

- The average[3] American shops six hours a week while spending forty minutes playing with his children.
- By age twenty, we’ve seen one million commercials.
- Recently, more Americans declared bankruptcy than graduated from college.
- In 90 percent of divorce cases, arguments about money play a prominent role.

Here is the PBS self-diagnosis questionnaire. As you think over these questions remember this is PBS not Paul, and yet they are saying the same thing! When the world points out our problems they are really bad!

**Are You Escaping[4] from Affluenza?** Take this quiz and find out! Answer the following as honestly as possible.

1. My life would be happier if I had more money.
2. I often feel overwhelmed by the amount of stuff I have, and the amount of time it takes to pay for, maintain, and store it all.
3. My partner and I have different views on spending and saving, it's hard to talk about these subjects without arguing.
4. My children seem more materialistic than I was at their age. (If you have no children, answer this from your experiences with the children you know.)
5. I never seem to have enough "quality time" with my family and other loved ones.
6. Our family loves clothing with the fashionable logos on it, and we're usually among the first on the block to see the latest hit movie.
7. I hardly know my neighbors, I feel disconnected from my local community.
8. I very often feel rushed, with too much to do and not enough time to do it all.
9. I don't enjoy my job, I would quit if I didn't have to work for money.
10. I don't feel that I live my life in total alignment with my values and beliefs.
11. I don't know what the interest rates are on my credit cards or exactly how much debt I have.
12. I pay only the monthly minimum payment on my credit cards.
13. I do not put money into savings regularly.
14. I spend much more time shopping each month than I do being involved in my community.
15. I sometimes buy something because it's cool or fashionable, not because I love it or need it.
16. I know I have more "extras" in my life than my parents and grandparents did, but I don't feel as satisfied about my standard of living as I think they were.

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What struck one author about this program was<sup>[5]</sup> that it doesn't argue against materialism on a moral basis but a pragmatic one: Material wealth doesn't make us happy. Listen to some of the wealthiest people of their day:

- "The care of \$200 million is enough to kill anyone. There is no pleasure in it." W. H. Vanderbilt
- "I am the most miserable man on earth." John Jacob Astor
- "I have made many millions, but they have brought me no happiness." John D. Rockefeller
- "Millionaires seldom smile." Andrew Carnegie
- "I was happier when doing a mechanic's job." Henry Ford

If affluenza is the disease, what's the cure? If materialism is the poison, what's the antidote? Paul offers an answer. Look again at 1Timothy 6:17-19:

Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy. 18 Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share, 19 storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may **lay hold on eternal life**.

This morning we are going to do something very hard for us as people living on Earth – we are going to try to think about our Eternal Life instead of merely our Temporal Life. Let me explain. Temporal Life is everyday life. Life that has aches and pains, deadlines and pressures, hopes and fears, ups and downs. It is life getting up, going to school or work, and waiting for special things like dinners, dates, vacations, events. It is a life that is framed by our body, our car, our job and our world we have experienced. In other words it is **LIFE** as we all know it.

Now, when we were saved, and the Lord regenerated us by the new birth, we were born a second time. Our first birth put us in the Temporal Life; our second birth puts us in the Eternal Life. Both run parallel for 30, 40, 50, 60 or even 80 plus years. In fact most of us barely experience the Eternal part of Life. We know it is there, we hope in it for the future but we don't exactly know what to do with Eternal Life today as we are so completely overwhelmed by our Temporal or physical world.

What is the key to Vitality in our Eternal Life? Listen to God's Word – "Lay Hold on Eternal Life..." That is our next and final section of our study on Growing Godly Families – One Prayer at a Time. We need to be deeply engaged in earnest prayer that our children and grandchildren get and maintain Vitality in the Eternal Life.

Signs of a Life dominated by the temporal are explained by Jesus in the Gospels. He spends many hours pointing out the symptoms:

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- Matthew 4:4 But He answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.'"
  - Matthew 6:19-28 "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; 20 but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. 21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. 24 "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon. 25 "Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? 26 Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? 27 Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature? 28 "So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin;
  - Luke 12:13-21 Then one from the crowd said to Him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me." 14 But He said to him, "Man, who made Me a judge or an arbitrator over you?" 15 And He said to them, "Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses." 16 Then He spoke a parable to them, saying: "The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. 17 And he thought within himself, saying, 'What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?' 18 So he said, 'I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods. 19 And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry." ' 20 But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?' 21 "So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."

Vitality in our Eternal Life means we are alive and thinking and motivated by the fact that we are already immortal. We are thinking Eternally when we start seeing what our moments look like when they are observed from God's Throne. All of a sudden we see that our life span and our resources were all given us by Another who owns us and wants a return on His investment.

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## Contented Living

### WFF: Message Thirty-Six (021117AM)

What was Christ's most frequent emotion? **Compassion**-- right? He was moved with compassion. When we aren't compassionate there is usually one cause -- we are rich and discontented and not willing to sacrifice. Contented people are compassionate because they always think they have more than they need and are willing to share. Discontent dries up the springs of compassion. Contentment feeds the springs of compassion. Christ's compassion is our model, our goal and our desire.

Contentment leads to renewed vitality in our Eternal Life. Contentment means we are alive and thinking and motivated by the fact that we are already immortal. We are thinking Eternally when we start seeing what our moments look like when they are observed from God's Throne. All of a sudden we see that our life span and our resources were all given us by Another -- who owns us and wants a return on His investment.

With Christ's call to compassion and contentment on my mind this week I turned again to watch the World Population Clock. It is a very moving sight to see each second noted as the numbers changed. The math of this UN site is simple -- the number goes up by five births and down by two deaths for a net gain of three new immortal souls on this Planet Earth **per second!**

Then the details listed and counted around that clock are overwhelming; it helps us feel the immensity of the world -- just watch it and see that 3 new souls are arriving and surviving every second 24 hours a day and 7 days a week. Now as we sit here alive and relatively well fed and uncrowded in Tulsa, relatively prosperous in the American heartland, we need to look again at our world. We have about 6.273.632.243 souls alive at this moment

But if we were to reduce that unimaginable number of 6 with nine zeros after it to just this room, and we distilled all the inhabitants of earth down to a representative group of 100 chairs in this room here is how the world looks this morning. Our world shrunk down to a community of 100 persons we would have a town which:

- 1/7<sup>th</sup> or about 13 of us live high on a hill called the developed world -- that would be the balcony;
- 6/7<sup>th</sup>s or about 87 of them live on the rocky bottomland called the rest of the world.
- Those of us in the balcony are the world's richest. We have houses, which provide us with an average of more than 2 rooms per person; while those in the rest of the world have housing that averages 5 people per room.

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- The people in the rest of the world outside the 815 million in the developed nations (code for wealthy countries) live on much less than we do. 1 Billion or 1/6<sup>th</sup> are in complete poverty existing on less than US \$1 per day. 3 more billion are better off, they live on US \$2 each day. 3/4<sup>th</sup>s of these poor people will not ever live to celebrate their 50<sup>th</sup> Birthday!

Wealth	GDP	Population	Pop totals	
33%	\$ 10.2 Trillion	4%	281,404,500	USA
21%	\$ 6.6 Trillion	5%	329,000,000	Europe
17%	\$ 5.2 Trillion	3%	205,000,000	NIE (Jap, Kor, Taiw, Korea)
71%		13%		
29%	\$ 31.2 Trillion	87%	6,273,358,993	World

**We, the fortunate 13 on the hill hold 80 percent of the wealth of the whole town,**

- up in our balcony we own over half of all the homes in town
- our homes average over two rooms per person,
- we own 85 percent of all the automobiles,
- we own 80 percent of all the TV sets,
- we own 93 percent of all the telephones,
- and we make an average income of over \$ 27,000 per person per year.

#### **The not-so-fortunate 87 people on the bottom**

- they get by on 1/40<sup>th</sup> of our incomes or roughly \$700 per person per year,
- but many of them on less than \$75.
- they average five persons to a room, and most will never live to see their 50<sup>th</sup> Birthday!

**How do we the fortunate group of hill-dwellers use our incredible wealth?** Well, as a group we spend less than 1% of our income to aid the lower land. In the United States, for example, of every \$1 we earned (averages of 1997-2002):

20%	is spent on taxes
26%	is spent on our homes
18%	goes for food
17%	is for health care
12%	we spend on transportation
08%	is spent on recreation and amusement
07%	buys clothes

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02%	is given for religious and charitable uses (and only a small part of that goes outside the U.S).
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Veteran Missionary to India and noted author Dr. Paul Brandt once asked, “I wonder how the villagers on the crowded plain (a third of whose people are suffering from malnutrition) feel about us folks up there on the hill?”[2]

What was Christ's most frequent emotion? Compassion[3] -- right? He was moved with compassion. When we aren't compassionate there is usually one cause – we are rich and discontented and not willing to sacrifice. Contented people are compassionate because they always think they have more than they need and are willing to share. Discontent dries up the springs of compassion. Contentment feeds the springs of compassion. Christ's compassion is our model, our goal and our desire.

### **Contentment Leads to Renewed Vitality in our Eternal Life**

Contentment means we are alive and thinking and motivated by the fact that we are already immortal. We are thinking Eternally when we start seeing what our moments look like when they are observed from God's Throne. All of a sudden we see that our life span and our resources were all given us by Another -- who owns us and wants a return on His investment.

So we pray for vitality in our children's eternal life to show up in contentment through life. Parenting is life long. Praying keeps us on the front lines of our children's lives – all through our lives. My philosophy of great parenting is that you raise a godly family – one prayer at a time.

Prayer is the key to raising, nurturing, and launching children that please the Lord. This morning is a practical, how to lesson in learning how to pray for our children.

- We must pray for REALITY IN THEIR SPIRITUAL LIFE: is seeing them genuinely saved, loving God's Word, living in victory, thinking of heaven, finding sin repulsive, staying tender toward God.
- We must pray for INTEGRITY IN THEIR PERSONAL LIFE: is seeing them maintaining a clear conscience, learning to stand alone, seeking to stay pure, cultivating a servant's heart, never becoming bitter in trials.
- We must pray for STABILITY IN THEIR RELATIONAL LIFE: which is seeing them cultivating a love for their brothers and sisters, learning to trust God with hard situations and not to rebel, each loving the way God made them as men and women, waiting to meet God's chosen life partner for them.
- We must pray for VITALITY IN THEIR ETERNAL LIFE.

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## Vitality in Their Eternal Life Means Seeing Them Choosing a Life of Contentment

*Philippians 4:11 Not that I speak in respect of want: for **I have learned**, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. (KJV)*

The New Testament mentions contentment five times. Two different Greek words are used. Let's look at them and learn a lesson on being content.

1. Luke 3:14 And the soldiers likewise demanded of him, saying, And what shall we do? And he said unto them, Do violence to no man, neither accuse *any* falsely; and be content [#714 satisfied] with your wages. (KJV)
2. Philippians 4:11 Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, *therewith* to be content [#842 independent of external circumstances]. (KJV) **(being willing to accept where God has placed me in life and willing to devote my energies to the advancement of His kingdom and not my own.)**
3. 1 Timothy 6:6 But godliness with contentment [#714 satisfaction] is great gain. (KJV) **(“Contentment lies not in what is yours, but in whose you are.”) [4]**
4. 1 Timothy 6:8 And having food and raiment let us be therewith content [#842 independent of external circumstances] . (KJV) (not wanting too be like, have or do what others are doing!)
5. Hebrews 13:5 Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." (NIV) **(“it means to be free from inner turmoil, satisfied with one's material and financial state, and in possession of a sense of peace regardless of one's circumstances or feelings.”)[5]**

How do we learn and teach contentment to our families? The best way to start is to do a study of the Seven Keys To Promote and Protect Contentment from 1 Timothy 6. Here they are, why don't you jot them into your Bibles?

1. **Always remember things are only temporary.** 1 Timothy 6:7 For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.
2. **Only seek necessities, wait for the rest.** 1 Timothy 6:8 And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content.
3. **Avoid a consuming desire for prosperity.** 1 Timothy 6:9-10 But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. 10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.
4. **Flee materialism.** 1 Timothy 6:11 But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness.

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5. **Cling to eternal life.** 1 Timothy 6:12, 15, 19 Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. 15 which He will manifest in His own time, He who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords, 16 who alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see, to whom be honor and everlasting power. Amen. 19 storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.
  6. **Pin your hopes on God.** 1 Timothy 6:17 Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy. **(I hope we have enough to...I hope that this investment will...I hope this job will last...)**
  7. **Give until it hurts.** 1 Timothy 6:18 Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share,

### **What Can be the Result of Living by the Bible's Definition of Contentment?**

1. If you are content, you can enjoy the present rather than being anxious about the future. Mt 6:25
2. If you are content, you can be liberated to truly enjoy the successes of others around you without envy. Ps 37:7
3. If you are content, you will be able to let the Lord build a true sense of thankfulness about everything. 1 Th 5:18

**CONTENTMENT is a habit of life that helps us avoid things that deeply offend and grieve our Heavenly Father.**

- The desire for things more than God
- The desire for pleasure more than godliness
- The desire for satisfaction through things more than to be satisfied by God.
- The desire for better things and other things that others have more than thanking God for what we have.
- The desire for the rewards of the physical world more than a desire for eternal rewards.

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[1] Eleven times noted in the Gospels by Matthew 9:36; 14:14; 15:32; 18:27; 18:33; 20:34; and Mark 1:41; 5:19; 6:34; 8:2; (9:22); and Luke 7:13; (10:33; 15:20).

[2] Dr. Paul Brand and Philip Yancey, Fearfully and Wonderfully Made (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing House, 1980), pp. 61-62.

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[3] Eleven times noted in the Gospels by Matthew 9.36; 14.14; 15.32; 18.27; 18.33; 20.34; and Mark 1.41; 5.19; 6.34; 8.2; (9.22); and Luke 7.13; (10.33; 15.20).

[4] Swenson, p.198.

[5] Swindoll, p.99.

## **How to Win in Life, Marriage, and Home**

### **WFF: Message Thirty-Seven (021124AM)**

Remember when you went to school as a child? Out on the playground you learn a lot of things that stay through life. Here's one "Finders keepers, losers (what?) weepers." Right?

Well let's find out. What does Jesus say in Luke 9:23? He says that what we lose for Him we get to keep forever. What we find and keep for self we lose forever. So in reality losers are keepers and keepers are the weepers!

One of the best illustrations of that is in the tale of two men – one who lost and gained and one who gained and lost it all.

Sometimes I am amazed at some of the unexpected opportunities I had growing up. Let me share just one. I was about 9 years old. My family was caring for an 88-year-old saint from our church named Dora Kaiser. Now Mrs. Kaiser was quite adventurous but also very weak. She always wanted to go with us but usually had to find a place to sit down soon after she got anywhere.

My dad heard that a famous exhibit was coming to the Museum of Detroit and wanted us to go. I wasn't sure what we were going to see but it was exciting all the same. After the 90-minute ride we rolled up to the curb in downtown Detroit. Soon we saw that there was a line half a block long waiting to get in. So I was assigned to take Mrs. Kaiser to find a comfortable bench inside where we were to sit and wait. Turning we saw people coming out a door just in front of where we parked by the curb. So being obedient I guided my elderly friend through the crowd saying excuse me as I went in search of a soft seat for her to rest while we waited.

Within moments of entering the building, I was astounded as we began to walk by glass cases filled with gold objects. More gold than either of had seen in the 97 years we had lived between us. Mrs. Kaiser never found a bench. In fact we never stopped looking in amazement at row after row of displays. Finally after a half an hour Mrs. Kaiser stood with me at a large square box of stone with a glass top. Looking down I found myself looking into the serene face of a three thousand years old -- teenager. Here was the

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teen that died mysteriously, 30 centuries ago, yet most of the civilized <sup>[1]</sup> world today recognizes and are familiar with his face.

I was overwhelmed at the warmth of the gold, the sparkling beauty of the gems that make up the final resting place of the boy king. The golden mask with its exquisite beauty has an almost spiritual quality to it. I noticed that each person who came to stand by me reacted the same way – with quiet awe and wonder. I was standing next to the earthly remains of the man who seems to sum up all that was the best of one of the greatest of all the Ancient World's Civilizations. I was face to face with Tutankhamun -- 12<sup>th</sup> Pharaoh of Ancient Egypt's 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty.

After about 45 more minutes of wandering in amazement through the King Tut exhibit at the Museum of Detroit we actually bumped into my parents. They had just made it in. After waiting in the half a city block long line and paying the \$5 fee, they were now starting to view "The Treasures of Ancient Egypt Exhibit" – which I had just finished viewing!

Almost 20 years later as an adult I stood at the same stone box in Cairo, Egypt. And just as the first time, King Tut glowed with wonder. This boy was buried with tons of golden treasures that were so numerous that it took Howard Carter nearly ten years to catalogue each one of them.

So why am I giving so much detail? Because, the grave of Tutankhamun is such a tragic reminder of a wasted life, with a horrible ending – a life lived only for earth, and not for Heaven.

Please open your hearts and listen to the voice of Jesus as I read His words recorded flawlessly in Luke 14.26-33.

Jesus called out to all who would listen – come follow me and be my disciple. Don't waste your life; don't end life horribly unprepared for the true afterlife. Making a clear choice to give themselves unreservedly to Him marked his followers. This call expresses the two <sup>[2]</sup> approaches to life:

EITHER --	OR --
We belong to Jesus	We belong to our self
We deny our self	We live for our self
We give everything back to God	We keep our stuff
We take up our cross	We ignore the cross
We follow Christ	We follow the world

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We lose our life for His sake	We save our life for our own sake
We forsake the world	We try to gain the world
We keep your soul	We lose our soul
We share His reward and glory	We lose His reward and glory

We are looking at the fourth and final area we are to pray for as parents and grandparents for those we love. We are to pray that they lay hold on eternal life. We have seen that God's Word says we must lay hold on eternal life; then we lay hold by contentment; and this week we lay hold by consecration.

Consecration means we give back to the Lord all of our life. Our body, our future, our time and all our resources – all are to be consecrated to the Lord. Lets go back to Cairo for a moment by way of another pastor who has written about his impressions as he also saw the King Tut exhibit in Cairo. Here are his words.

*The<sup>[3]</sup> King Tut exhibit at the Egyptian national Museum was mind-boggling. Tutankhamun, the boy king, was only seventeen when he died. He was buried with solid gold chariots and thousands of golden artifacts. His gold coffin was found in a burial site filled with tons of gold. The Egyptians believed they could take earthly treasures into the afterlife. But all the treasures intended for King Tut's eternal enjoyment stayed right where they were until Howard Carter discovered the burial chamber in 1922. Tutankhamun tomb glittered with unimaginable wealth.*

There is a second, lesser-known grave in Cairo. It stands as a powerful contrast, a lesson to all who will reflect for a moment. May I take you there? You have to choke through the gray dust of the city of 12 million Egyptians. Down a long dirty alley and into a fenced cemetery only findable by a guide lays the Protestant Cemetery of Cairo. In a plot of overgrown grass stand rows of sun-scorched tombstones. If you dust off the right one these words faintly appear:

**"William Borden, 1887-1913."**

Below those words is etched an epitaph that testifies of his love and sacrifices for the kingdom of God and for Muslim people. The words end with a penetrating phrase: "Apart from faith in Christ, there is no explanation for such a life."

May I fill you in on that magnificent life of William Borden this morning? He is the one buried in the other tomb in Cairo. In 1904, William Borden, a member of the Borden dairy family, finished high school in Chicago and was given a world cruise as a graduation present. Particularly while traveling through the Near East and Far East, he became heavily burdened for the lost. After returning home, he spent seven years at Yale and Princeton University, the first four in undergraduate work and the last three in

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seminary. Rejecting a life of ease to reach Muslims, he gave away his fortune. After he did so he penned these words in the back of his Bible: “**No reserves.**”

On his way to China to witness to Muslims he stopped in Egypt to learn Arabic. As he studied there he penned these words in the back of his Bible under the no reserves. He wrote: “**No retreats.**”

After 4 months on intense studying and regular evangelism among the poor of Cairo he contracted cerebral meningitis there in the slums he ministered in there in Egypt. He died within a month at age 25. His mother arrived from Chicago at his bedside just an hour after his death. As she was looking through his Bible she discovered the third and final set of words: “**No regrets.**”

So William Borden’s life was a life consecrated to Christ’s call, and he summed it up in only 6 words – No Reserves, No Retreats, and No Regrets!

**Are <sup>[4]</sup>you struck by the contrast between these two graves?**

- *Borden's grave is obscure, dusty, and hidden off the back alley of a street littered with garbage. Tutankhamun tomb glitters with unimaginable wealth. Yet where are these two young men now?*
- *One, who lived in opulence and called himself king is in the misery of a Christ less eternity. The other, who lived a modest life on earth in service of the one true King, is enjoying his everlasting reward in the presence of his Lord.*
- *Tut's life was tragic because of an awful truth discovered too late-he couldn't take his treasures with him. William Borden's life was triumphant. Why? Because instead of leaving behind his treasures, he sent them on ahead.*
- *We'll each part with our money. The only question is when. Jesus warns us not to store up treasures on earth, not just because wealth might be lost; **but because wealth will always be lost.** Either it leaves us while we live, or we leave it when we die. No exceptions.*
- *He wants us to store up treasures; he's just telling us to store them in the right place! Anything we put into the Father's hands will be ours for eternity. If we give instead of keep, if we invest in the eternal instead of the temporal, we store up treasures in heaven that will never stop paying dividends. You can't take it with you, but you can send it on ahead.*

So, knowing what Jesus wants, we are compelled to pray that our children consecrate their lives to Christ!

Remember, parenting is life long. Remember that praying keeps us on the front lines of our children’s lives – all through our lives. Remember that great parenting means that you raise a godly family – one prayer at a time.

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Prayer is the key to raising, nurturing, and launching children that please the Lord. This morning is a practical, how to lesson in learning how to pray for our children.

- Living like Christ's Child – means to pray for REALITY IN THEIR SPIRITUAL LIFE: is seeing them genuinely saved, loving God's Word, living in victory, thinking of heaven, finding sin repulsive, staying tender toward God.
- Looking Christ like – means to pray for INTEGRITY IN THEIR PERSONAL LIFE: is seeing them maintaining a clear conscience, learning to stand alone, seeking to stay pure, cultivating a servant's heart, never becoming bitter in trials.
- Loving One Another -- means to pray for STABILITY IN THEIR RELATIONAL LIFE: which is seeing them cultivating a love for their brothers and sisters, learning to trust God with hard situations and not to rebel, each loving the way God made them as men and women, waiting to meet God's chosen life partner for them.
- Laying Hold on Eternal Life – means to pray for VITALITY IN THEIR ETERNAL LIFE.

1. **THIS MEANS SEEING THEM CHOOSING A LIFE OF CONTENTMENT.**

Philippians 4:11 Not that I speak in respect of want: for *I have learned*, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. (KJV) CONTENTMENT is a habit of life that helps us avoid things that deeply offend and grieve our Heavenly Father.

- The desire for things more than God
- The desire for pleasure more than godliness
- The desire for satisfaction through things more than to be satisfied by God.
- The desire for better things and other things that others have more than thanking God for what we have.
- The desire for the rewards of the physical world more than a desire for eternal rewards.

2. **THIS MEANS SEEING THEM CHOOSING A LIFE OF CONSECRATION. 1**

Timothy 6:9-12 But *those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare*, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But you, O man of God, *flee these things and pursue* righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, and gentleness. Fight the good fight of faith, *lay hold on eternal life*, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. (NKJV)

Now, let's learn the verses we pray from to see Consecration in our children.

**CONSECRATION BELIEVES THAT LOSERS ARE KEEPERS.**

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Matthew 16:24-27 Then Jesus said to His disciples, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. 25 For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. 26 For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? 27 For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works.

**CONSECRATION IS RETURNING TO THE LORD THE TITLE DEED TO ALL WE OWN.**

Luke 14:26-33 “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. 27 And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple. 28 For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has enough to finish it— 29 lest, after he has laid the foundation, and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, 30 saying, ‘This man began to build and was not able to finish.’ 31 Or what king, going to make war against another king, does not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? 32 Or else, while the other is still a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks conditions of peace. 33 So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple.

**CONSECRATION IS GIVING OUR BODIES, MINDS, AND EVERYTHING ELSE TO THE LORD.**

Romans 12:1-2 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. 2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

**CONSECRATION IS BELIEVING THAT WE WERE BOUGHT AND PAID FOR BY THE LORD.**

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? 20 For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s.

**CONSECRATION IS GIVING OUR SELF BACK TO GOD.**

2 Corinthians 8:5 And not only as we had hoped, but they first gave themselves to the Lord, and then to us by the will of God.

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[1] This is an adaptation of Paul Doherty's inside cover summary of his book *The Mysterious Death of Tutankhamun*, New York: Carrol & Graf Publishing, 2002.

[2] Wiersbe, Warren W., *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books) 1997.

[3] Randy Alcorn, *The Treasure Principle*. Sisters, OR: Multnomah Publishers, Inc., 2001, p.34-36.

[4] Randy Alcorn, *The Treasure Principle*. Sisters, OR: Multnomah Publishers, Inc., 2001, p.34-36.

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## Learning Life Long Commitment

WFF: Message Thirty-Eight (021201AM)

We have come to our fourth and final element of how to Raise Godly Families – One Prayer at a Time. This is the area Paul commands us as he says “Lay Hold on Eternal Life”. We have been examining just how to do that and have found that we must lay hold on contentment, and consecration, and now – on commitment! May I challenge you with Laying Hold on Commitment this morning? Our text is Luke 9.57-62

What I am about to say to you is common knowledge. In fact all of us who ever traveled on a highway have learned exactly what I am about to share. But to underline our text in your minds, I'll remind you of an old truth most of us learn in High School.

I once reverted back to my earlier life. At age 21 I took the Colorado Motor vehicle test and became an official Colorado school bus driver. I drove a big yellow bus around Boulder, Colorado for 3 weeks that summer. Many years later I climbed aboard a 40 foot long diesel powered bus weighing 42,000 pounds and for 32 hours I guided it along 2000 miles of roads at an average speed of 92.11 FEET PER SECOND.

My bus was 100 ½ inches wide, the lanes of the roads were 144 inches – so I had a comfortable 21 ½ inches of space between me and either concrete walls or other steel vehicles flying alongside of my 21 ton bullet hurtling down the ribbon of road at 92.11 FEET PER SECOND.

Why the details of driving? Because the 42000 pound steel bullet traveling at 92 FPS is kept in that 21-½ inch tolerance corridor by a steering wheel. From the moment I start that bus rolling until after it is fully stopped – I am committed. What exactly does that mean?

- When I hear a noise behind me I have just about ½ of a second to glance that way before my eyes fly back and get riveted again on the world spinning under my tires at blinding speeds. **That's Commitment!**
- When a small, sweet voice of one of the children at my side makes me reach over with one hand to hug them, but the other hand never leaves the wheel. **That's Commitment!**
- When my gracious and lovely wife slips to one knee beside me and says here is something for you to eat, I smile, put out my hand and try to take whatever she has brought me but always with one eye locked onto the road ahead of me and one hand firmly grasping the wheel. **That's Commitment!**
- Commitment causes me to find everything secondary to whatever I am committed to. Nothing is allowed to distract me, nothing is allowed to draw me away for more than one second before my eyes and mind and body get back to being riveted on the road ahead. **That's Commitment!**

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What Jesus calling out and asking for in our text? Is it nothing less than what you and I do every time we drive? We listen, talk, eat, think, even take notes or go over our work – but always with a total focus upon the road ahead. Jesus asks us focus our attention on His Call upon our lives. Now, let me introduce you to a man who was committed to Christ's calling on his life. His name was David Livingstone.

The shadow of a sixty-year-old man was silhouetted against the canvas of the tent. The flickering candle cast a golden aura inside as he knelt beside a small wood and canvas cot. Rhythmic tropical rain lightly pelted the tent as he prayed beside his bed. The prayer was one he had written out many years before. If you were able to hear that night what God heard it would have sounded much like this:

**O Lord since Thou hast died, To give Thyself for me, No sacrifice would seem to great,  
For me to make for Thee.**

Outside the native porters, guides and cooks who had followed this man for nearly 20 years through the jungle heard the low sound of his voice communing with God as he always had done before bed. Then the candle flickered out and they also retired to sleep through the rainy night.

The next morning the cold and stiff body of David Livingstone was still kneeling beside the cot when his beloved native brothers found him. He was so thin from the countless bouts with malaria, his skin darkened by the years of Equatorial African sun was loosely draped over the bones of his earthly tent now vacant. His spirit had soared immortal, making its flight from the darkness of a disease ridden, weak and failing body to the realm of light and life in the presence of Jesus his King to whom he had consecrated his life.

### **Who Was David Livingstone? (1813-1873)?**

- David Livingstone<sup>[1]</sup> was born in the Scottish city of Blantyre in 1813.
- At age ten he began working fourteen-hour days in the cotton mill to help support his impoverished family. There he learned by snatching sentences from a book on his spinning jenny, followed by two hours of night school. These disciplines kept him from being totally uneducated.
- He was converted at twelve, and had a profound spiritual awakening at twenty and resolved to be a medical missionary in China. From that point onward Livingstone studied Greek, theology, and medicine at Glasgow, returning to the mill during vacations to help pay expenses.
- Qualified in medicine, he was sent by the London Missionary Society in 1840 to South Africa, since the Opium War had closed China. Livingstone's heart had been fired by missionary Robert Moffat's words about having seen "the smoke of a thousand villages" where no missionary had ever been.

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- Livingstone and his wife, Mary, Moffat's daughter, stayed in three homes in three years, ever moving further up-country. He was evangelist, doctor, teacher, builder, gardener, shoemaker, and carpenter. But all the time his eyes were on the "unknown north" beyond the fearsome Kalahari Desert.
  - In 1852 Livingstone sent his wife and children home before he embarked on a four-year, six-thousand-mile journey that took him to Angola's Atlantic coast, then east to the Indian Ocean at Mozambique. During long weary journeys, debilitating illnesses, danger from wild animals and hostile tribes, he never relaxed his self-imposed discipline, but made observations, studied languages, kept his famous *Diaries*, and prepared scientific reports that brought him fame. He retained his humility, writing in 1853: "I will place no value on anything I have ... except in relation to the Kingdom of Christ."
  - When Livingstone's wife died in 1861, he threw himself fiercely into his work. He disappeared from sight for ten years; and when found by Henry Morton Stanley of the *New York Herald* in 1871, Livingstone refused to go home. Two days later he wrote in his diary: "March 19, my birthday. My Jesus, my King, my Life, my all, I again dedicate my whole self to Thee. Accept me, and grant, O gracious Father, that ere the year is gone I may finish my work. In Jesus' name I ask it. Amen." A year later his servants found him on his knees in his tent -- dead.
  - David Livingstone, the renowned and noble missionary to Africa, wrote <sup>[2]</sup> in his journal, People talk of the sacrifice I have made in spending so much of my life in Africa. Can that be called sacrifice, which is simply paid back as a small part of the great debt owing to our God, which we can never repay? . . . Away with such a word, such a view, and such a thought! It is emphatically no sacrifice. Say rather it is a privilege. Anxiety, sickness, suffering or danger now and then, with a foregoing of the common conveniences and charities of this life, may make us pause and cause the spirit to waver and sink; but let this only be for a moment. All these are nothing when compared with the glory, which shall hereafter be revealed in and for us. I never made a sacrifice. Of this we ought not talk when we remember the great sacrifice, which He made who left His Father's throne on high to give Himself for us.
  - At his death in 1873, such was their love for him that his native assistants bore his body fifteen hundred miles to the coast. One of them was among the huge crowd at the funeral in Westminster Abbey. Some words on Livingstone's tombstone there summarize his achievements: "For thirty years his life was spent in an unwearied effort to evangelize the native races, to explore the undiscovered secrets, to abolish the desolating slave trade of Central Africa."

With that background listen again through the tent as you can dimly see in the dark jungles of Africa the shadow of a sixty-year-old man silhouetted against the canvas of the tent. The flickering candle cast a golden aura inside as he knelt beside a small wood and canvas cot. Rhythmic tropical rain lightly pelted the tent as he prayed beside his bed. The prayer was one he had written out many years before. If you were able to hear that night what God heard it would have sounded much like this:

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*O Lord since Thou hast died, To give Thyself for me,  
No sacrifice would seem to great, For me to make for Thee.  
Lord send me anywhere, Only go with me;  
Lay any burden on me, Only sustain me.  
Sever any tie, Save the tie that binds me to Thy heart.  
Lord Jesus my King, I consecrate my life Lord to Thee!  
I only have one life, and that will soon be past;  
I want my life to count for Christ, What's done for Him will last.  
I follow Thee my Lord, And glory in Thy Cross;  
I gladly leave the world behind, And count all gain as loss.  
Lord send me anywhere, Only go with me;  
Lay any burden on me, Only sustain me.  
Sever any tie, Save the tie that binds me to Thy heart.  
Lord Jesus my King, I consecrate my life Lord to Thee!*

Parenting is life long. Praying keeps us on the front lines of our children's lives – all through our lives. Successful parenting of a godly family only has two requirements: get started in prayer and never quit that praying.

Before we are parents ***we are praying***, while we are up to our ears in those child filled years ***we are praying***, and after they launch out into their own lives ***we are praying***.

My philosophy of great parenting is that you raise a godly family – one prayer at a time.

Prayer is the key to raising, nurturing, and launching children that please the Lord. This morning is a practical, how to lesson in learning how to pray for our children.

- We must pray for REALITY IN THEIR SPIRITUAL LIFE: is seeing them genuinely saved, loving God's Word, living in victory, thinking of heaven, finding sin repulsive, staying tender toward God.
- We must pray for INTEGRITY IN THEIR PERSONAL LIFE: is seeing them maintaining a clear conscience, learning to stand alone, seeking to stay pure, cultivating a servant's heart, never becoming bitter in trials.
- We must pray for STABILITY IN THEIR RELATIONAL LIFE: which is seeing them cultivating a love for their brothers and sisters, learning to trust God with hard situations and not to rebel, each loving the way God made them as men and women, waiting to meet God's chosen life partner for them.

Laying Hold on Eternal Life – means to pray for VITALITY IN THEIR ETERNAL LIFE.

**1. THIS MEANS SEEING THEM CHOOSING A LIFE OF CONTENTMENT.**

Philippians 4:11 Not that I speak in respect of want: for ***I have learned***, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. (KJV) CONTENTMENT is a habit of life that helps us avoid things that deeply offend and grieve our Heavenly Father.

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- The desire for things more than God  
The desire for pleasure more than godliness
  - The desire for satisfaction through things more than to be satisfied by God.
  - The desire for better things and other things that others have more than thanking God for what we have.
  - The desire for the rewards of the physical world more than a desire for eternal rewards.

## 2. THIS MEANS SEEING THEM CHOOSING A LIFE OF CONSECRATION. 1

Timothy 6:9-12 But **those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare**, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But you, O man of God, **flee these things and pursue** righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, and gentleness. Fight the good fight of faith, **lay hold on eternal life**, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. (NKJV)

## 3. THIS MEANS SEEING THEM CHOOSING A LIFE OF COMMITMENT PERSONALLY KNOWING, SERVING, LOVING AND OBEYING THE LORD

- 1 Chronicles 28:9 " As for you, my son Solomon, **know the God of your father**, and **serve Him with a loyal heart and with a willing mind**; for the LORD searches all hearts and understands all the intent of the thoughts. **If you seek Him, He will be found by you**; but if you forsake Him, He will cast you off forever. (NKJV)
- 1 Chronicles 29:19 "And **give my son Solomon a loyal heart** to keep Your commandments and Your testimonies and Your statutes, to do all these things, and to build the temple for which I have made provision." (NKJV)
- 3 John 4 **I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth**. (KJV)

Now turn with me to II Peter 3. Here Peter lists the areas of commitment he was charging those early believers to grasp.

1. WE MUST PUT OUR HAND TO THE PLOW AND COMMIT TO KEEP ALERT -- A LACK OF COMMITMENT CLOUDS OUR MINDS. 2 Peter 3:10-11 But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up 11 [Seeing] then [that] all these things shall be dissolved, what manner [of persons] ought ye to be in [all] holy conversation and godliness
2. WE MUST PUT OUR HAND TO THE PLOW AND COMMIT TO BUILD FIREPROOF: A LACK OF COMMITMENT CLUTTERS OUR LIVES. This should Discourage Materialism and encourage us to Live expectantly 2 Peter 3:12-13 Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? 13

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Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. (KJV)

3. WE MUST PUT OUR HAND TO THE PLOW AND COMMIT TO LOOK UP: A LACK OF COMMITMENT CLOSERS OUR EYES. This should develop an Expectant Life; Live Purely 2 Peter 3:14 Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless. (KJV)
4. WE MUST PUT OUR HAND TO THE PLOW AND COMMIT TO STUDY THE BOOK: A LACK OF COMMITMENT CROWDS OUT OUR BIBLES. This should help us to Guard our heart and encourage us to Live maturely 2 Peter 3:17 Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness. (KJV)
5. WE MUST PUT OUR HAND TO THE PLOW AND COMMIT TO OBEY JESUS: A LACK OF COMMITMENT CORRODES OUR WILLS. This should encourage us to Grow Spiritually and to Live Growingly 2 Peter 3:18 But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen. (KJV)

### **PRAY FOR THEM TO LEARN DIVINE PRIORITIES.**

- GOD WANTS US FRUITFUL: Matthew 13:22 "Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful. (NKJV)
- GOD WANTS NO EXCUSES: Luke 14:16-24 Then He said to him, "A certain man gave a great supper and invited many, 17 "and sent his servant at supper time to say to those who were invited, 'Come, for all things are now ready.' 18 "But they all with one accord began to make excuses. The first said to him, 'I have bought a piece of ground, and I must go and see it. I ask you to have me excused.' 19 "And another said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to test them. I ask you to have me excused.' 20 "Still another said, 'I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.' 21 "So that servant came and reported these things to his master. Then the master of the house, being angry, said to his servant, 'Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in here the poor and the maimed and the lame and the blind.' 22 "And the servant said, 'Master, it is done as you commanded, and still there is room.' 23 "Then the master said to the servant, 'Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. 24 'For I say to you that none of those men who were invited shall taste my supper.' " (NKJV)
- GOD WANTS US UNENTANGLED: 2 Timothy 2:4 No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier. (NKJV)

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- <sup>[1]</sup> Douglas, J. D., Comfort, Philip W. & Mitchell, Donald, Editors, *Who's Who in Christian History*, (Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.) 1992.
  - <sup>[2]</sup> *Livingstone's Private Journal: 1851–53*, ed.. I. Schapera [London: Chatto & Windus, 1960], pp. 108, 132.

## Secrets of Life Long Consecration to Christ

### WFF: Message Thirty-Nine (021208AM)

God's Word has a powerful illustration of how we should pray for our families. Remember we are to be Raising Godly Families – One Prayer at a Time.

Open with me to one of the truly great prayers of a father for his son. This prayer is in I Chronicles 28:9.

*1 Chronicles 28:9 " As for you, my son Solomon, **know the God of your father, and serve Him with a loyal heart and with a willing mind;** for the LORD searches all hearts and understands all the intent of the thoughts. **If you seek Him, He will be found by you;** but if you forsake Him, He will cast you off forever. (NKJV)*

Now as we turn over to I Chronicles 29, let me tell you about David as he prayed for his son Solomon.

- David wasn't perfect but he prayed.
- David made many mistakes but he always loved the Lord.
- David's children may not all have turned out to be saints but he was God's man.
- David might have failed here and there as a father – but in God's sight he was a man after God's own heart.

So here is a grand lesson for us as we seek to Raise Godly Families – One Prayer at a Time. Listen to David as he prays that Solomon Gives his life back to the Lord.

The Lord says David was very special. We wonder how does God figure that? To answer that and to see the larger lesson of giving our life to God back up and look at the entire life of David.

- As a boy King Saul offers great rewards for anyone who would face Goliath. David says keep all that I'll go for the Name of the Lord. (I Samuel 17)
- As a young man David has trophies of his great triumphs, but those he lays before the Lord at the Tabernacle. (I Samuel 21.9)
- At the end of his life David confesses something. While he was winning every battle, conquering and plundering every kingdom around Israel, he had been

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following a plan. David was storing up all the treasures he could for the Lord!  
Look at 1<sup>st</sup> Chronicles 22.14:

*Indeed I have taken much trouble to prepare for the house of the Lord one hundred thousand talents of gold and one million talents of silver, and bronze and iron beyond measure, for it is so abundant. I have prepared timber and stone also, and you may add to them.*

Did you catch that? David had a fabulously successful 40-year career in two locations (Hebron and Jerusalem 1<sup>st</sup> Chronicles 29.27), which netted him incredible financial gain. But all the way through his whole heart was the Lord's. So he treasured up all that he could and gives it to the Lord. Here is the tally in terms we can understand in late 2002:

- A talent weighs a hundred pounds. So David says I have saved 100,000 talents of Gold, which equals 5,000 tons of gold. Which equals 10,000,000 pounds of gold, which equals 160,000,000 ounces of gold which totals at Fridays close \$53 BILLION DOLLARS.
- One million talents of silver would be 50,000 tons of silver, or 100 million pounds or over \$7 BILLION DOLLARS.
- So David was the wealthiest man of all time until he gave it to the Lord and Solomon inherited the kingdom. The Buffets, Gates, Fords and Rockefellers all pale in comparison. Most of their wealth is mere paper not gold & silver!

	Ounces	Gold	Silver
Ounce	1	\$327.00	\$4.65
Pound	16	\$5,232.00	\$74.40
Talent (100#)	1,600	\$523,200.00	\$7,440.00
Ton (2000#)	32,000	\$10,464,000.00	\$148,800.00
666 talents	1,065,600	\$348,451,200.00	\$4,955,040.00
100 T. Talents	160,000,000	\$52,320,000,000.00	\$744,000,000.00
Million Talents	1,600,000,000		\$7,440,000,000.00

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We just found out one of David's biggest secrets. This is one of the secrets of David's life that is often overlooked. Every part of David's life was devoted to the Lord. His whole life was given to the Lord. Even though he sinned at times, failed at times, and struggled at times, he was supremely devoted to the Lord. Look back at the first few verses of 1<sup>st</sup> Chronicles 29. Here David reveals his special stash. His secret treasures. These he also gives to the Lord.

If you compare 22.14 with 29.3-4 you can add up that David gave the Lord before his life ended over \$60,000,000,000 in gold and silver. That is an amazing sum for any era of the world, but especially for a shepherd boy! It is almost as if David knew already what Jesus would later promise. He said that those who sacrifice on earth would receive "a hundred times as much" in heaven (Matthew 19:29). That's 10,000 percent – an impressive return!

This changes our whole understanding of treasures. True treasures are what we keep beyond this life. False treasures are what we have only for the moment. Now turn with me to Psalm 49:16-17

*Do not be afraid when one becomes rich, When the glory of his house is increased;*

*For when he dies he shall carry nothing away; His glory shall not descend after him.*

How do we pray and train and lead our children to give their lives back to God? We pray that they treasure the Lord and see life as their treasure to give back to him. This chorus says it all.

*All I have belongs to you,  
For all I have has come from you.  
Nothing I own, nothing I possess,  
Is by my own hands, its by Your Faithfulness.  
So please take this offering,  
From a heart of Thanksgiving.  
For You've given all I have.*

A life given back to God as an offering is exactly the theme of one of the most impactful books I have read this year. A few weeks ago while on the plane flying to Jordan I was reading through a pile of books and articles that I save for long stretches of time. In one sitting of maybe half an hour my heart was stirred by the simple and powerful message of a small book by Randy Alcorn called **The Treasure Principle**. I would like to share the 6 key points of this book:

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❖ **Treasure Principle Key #1: *God owns everything. I'm His money manager.***

- Job 31:24-28 **If I have made gold my hope**, or have said to the fine gold, Thou art my confidence; 25 If I rejoiced because my wealth was great, and because mine hand had gotten much; 26 If I beheld the sun when it shined, or the moon walking in brightness; 27 And my heart hath been secretly enticed, or my mouth hath kissed my hand: 28 This also were an iniquity to be punished by the judge: **for I should have denied the God that is above.** (KJV)
- Job 41:11 Who has preceded Me, that I should pay him? **Everything under heaven is Mine.** (NKJV)
- Psalm 24:1 **The earth is the LORD's, and all its fullness, The world and those who dwell therein.** (NKJV)
- Psalm 50:10-12 For every beast of the forest is Mine, And the cattle on a thousand hills. 11 I know all the birds of the mountains, And the wild beasts of the field are Mine. 12 "If I were hungry, I would not tell you; **For the world is Mine, and all its fullness.** (NKJV)
- Matthew 6:21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.
- Matthew 16:27 For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what he has done."
- Acts 20:35 I have shown you in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'

"When <sup>[1]</sup> we come to grasp that we are stewards, not owners of our money, it totally changes our perspective. Suddenly I'm not asking, "How much of *my* money shall I, out of the goodness of *my* heart, give to God?" Rather, I'm asking, "Since all of 'my' money is really yours, Lord, how would you like me to invest your money today?"

When I truly realize that God has a claim not on a few dollars to throw in an offering plate, not on 10 percent or 50 percent but *100 percent* of "my" money, it is revolutionary. Suddenly I am God's Steward, God's Money Manager. I am not God. Money is not God. God is God. He is in his place, and I am in mine.

Not only does God own everything, God controls everything. Again, the implications are enormous. I don't have to own everything. I don't have to control everything. It is in better hands than mine. And when catastrophe strikes I can honestly adopt the posture of John Wesley, when he said, "No. The Lord's house burned down. That means one less responsibility for me."

As Wesley did, I must remind myself of both God's role and mine to gain perspective in the face of loss or turmoil. What a life-changing and freeing perspective is God's ownership and sovereignty when the house is robbed, the car is totaled, the bike is stolen ... and even when the diagnosis is cancer.

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When we come to Christ, God puts all his resources at our disposal. He also expects us to put all our resources at his disposal. This is what stewardship-and life-is all about."

Someone<sup>[2]</sup> once said, "We're most like God when we're giving." Gaze upon Christ long enough, and you'll become more of a giver. Give long enough, and you'll become more like Christ. Giving jump-starts our relationship with God. It opens our fists so we can receive what God has for us. When we see what it does for others and for us, we open our fists sooner and wider when the next chance comes.

- God says, "If a man shuts his ears to the cry of the poor, he too will cry out and not be answered" (Proverbs 21:13).
- In Isaiah 58:6-10, God says that His willingness to answer our prayers is directly affected by whether we are caring for the hungry, needy, and oppressed. Want to empower your prayer life? Give.

**A true steward AFFIRMS THAT JESUS HAS THE RIGHT OF DISPOSAL.** Matthew 19:21 Jesus said to him, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me." (NKJV)

He is the owner, we are only employees. Christ asks that He be above all our treasures on earth be they money or possessions.

**A true steward OBEYS WHAT God asks AND gives.** Luke 12:33-34 Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will not be exhausted, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. 34 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. (NIV)

**A true steward has unrivaled love for Christ as the desire of our life** Luke 14:25-26 Large crowds were traveling with Jesus, and turning to them he said: 26 "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters -- yes, even his own life -- he cannot be my disciple. (NIV) Matthew 10:37 "He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. (NKJV)

**A true steward has UNRESERVED SURRENDER for Christ** Luke 14:33 "So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple. (NKJV) THIS DEALS WITH PERSONAL POSSESSIONS!

**A true steward AFFIRMS All we have has come from the Lord** 1 Corinthians 4:7 For who makes you differ from another? And what do you have that you did not receive? Now if you did indeed receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?

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The believers in Corinth were doing what they pleased with their bodies and their lives. And why not? They said, "It's my life." Paul said, "No, it's not your life. You own nothing, not even yourself. When you came to Christ you surrendered the title to your life. You belong to God, not yourself. He is the only one who has the right to do what he wants with your life-your body, your sexual behavior, money, possessions, everything. You owe him your full obedience."

**A true steward AFFIRMS that THE LORD WANTS US TO GIVE OURSELVES BACK TO HIM** 2 Corinthians 8:5 And they did not do as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us in keeping with God's will. (NIV)

This was a very sobering week for me as I immersed myself in this whole topic of God and mammon. The world has two parts: God's and not God's. What ever is not God's is mammon. So anything not given to God becomes mammon...Wow -- that is a thought to ponder. What have we sought to retain the ownership of -- is a way we despise the Lord.. If we were to interview the Rich Businessman of Luke 12 we would find that God called him a fool because he thought all that stuff was his. What would he say about his life now? What I had in life was mine temporarily, what I kept to the end I lost forever!

**A true steward realizes that SOME REFUSE TO THEIR OWN PERIL.** Luke 12:20-21 "But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?' 21 "This is how it will be with anyone who stores up things for himself but is not rich toward God." (NIV)

**Jesus teaches us that some hold on to things with grasping clenched fists and lose them.** He advises the way to keep things longer than you can hold your breath. His plan is for us is to open our hands, hold those treasures palms upward and say, " You are the Giver of all that I have. You alone are the Owner of all things. I am Your servant forever. I will be a steward for you of all these possessions. When You want anything back just tell me, they are Yours!" Such an attitude changes us from how much of MY money should I give to how much of HIS money should I keep!

Stewardship is resisting SATAN'S STRATEGY. Since money is one of the essentials of the work of the Kingdom, it is not surprising that the great adversary does all in his power to prevent it from finding its way into God's treasury, and for that he has many tricks in his bag.

1. BY SPENDING: He encourages over commitment in buying: purchasing more than one can afford on time payments, so that there is little left over to give to God.
2. BY UPGRADING: He plays on our competitive instincts and incites us to constantly upgrade our standard of living, so that increases in income are already committed. When John Wesley was earning 30 British Pounds a year, he lived

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on 26 British Pounds and gave the rest to God. When his salary was raised to 60 British Pounds, he lived on 26 British Pounds and gave the rest to God.

3. BY WAITING: He dries up the fountains of generosity in the heart by suggesting postponement of giving to some future time. The stifling of a generous impulse today makes it easier for us to do the same tomorrow.
4. BY LEVERAGING: He so arranges things that the assets of the generous man become frozen or over-committed, that he cannot give what he genuinely wishes to give. Expanding business too rapidly often demands reinvestment on a scale that leaves little for giving.
5. BY KEEPING IT TO THE END: We live in such an age of uncertainty. Many elderly fear that their savings will be exhausted before they expire. Many others want to pass the wealth on to their children. This causes us to be guilty of undue stacking. We all need to be sure we give all we can in our lifetime, and have the joy of seeing our money work for God. God promises a reward for "deeds done in the body," not out of it. To be generous with God from right motives brings its reward here as well as hereafter.

To be giving and sacrificing is to be Christlike and blessed. It is as wise to prayerfully plan to sacrifice as it is to think Henry Flagler was wise when he trusted John D. Rockefeller for those few shares at the infancy of his new company Standard Oil. Flagler's shares went on to be worth hundreds of millions of dollars in the 1920's! What a wonderful investment he made. Want to be just as fortunate? Then get Christ's heart for this world, be moved with compassion and ask for the grace of giving and the Lord will work wonders through your treasures given Him of any size!

The hymn, "Take My Life" reflects the stewardship of the godly Frances Ridley Havergal (1836-1879) who wrote the lines we so often sing without due seriousness of commitment: "Take my silver and my gold, Not a mite would I withhold." It is a matter of record that this hymn was autobiographical.

Frances Ridley Havergal did what she sang. In her writings is this personal testimony: "'Take my silver and my gold' now means shipping off all my ornaments-including a jewel cabinet which is really fit for a countess-to the Church Missionary Society... I don't think I need to tell you I never packed a box with such pleasure." This was giving with hilarity!

❖ **Treasure Principle Key #2: *My heart always goes where I put God's money.***

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<sup>[1]</sup> Alcorn, *Money, Possessions, and Eternity*.

<sup>[2]</sup> Randy Alcorn, *The Treasure Principle*. Sisters, OR: Multnomah Publishers, Inc., 2001, p.30-32.

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# Why Should I Hunger for God?

WFF: Message Forty (000723AM)

Mark 2:18-22

We are going to study a fascinating area of God's Word - BIBLICAL FASTING. How is your appetite today? I'm not referring to the consumptive society in which we live where more food is thrown out each day than half the rest of the world has to eat. No, I'm talking about your hunger for God. How is it?

1. In the Old Testament we see biblical fasting is an urgent call to get serious about knowing God.
2. In the New Testament we see biblical fasting is an ancient spiritual discipline to reschedule one's life with God at the center instead of dining, relaxing, amusing, accumulating, advancing, securing, and a multitude of other things that are not wrong - just deadly to intimacy with the Almighty.
3. This morning we narrow our focus to this one thought: How did the early Church of Acts and the Epistles demonstrate this hunger for God? We shall see that their hunger shaped their lives, their ministry, their worship, and their outreach. In the early Church we see biblical fasting is a powerful way to yield every part of one's life to God's supremacy.
4. So we can study and learn about biblical fasting in God's Word: in the Old Testament, in New Testament, from the early Church, and tonight as those who live for Christ in 21<sup>st</sup> Century America. In Tulsa Y2K we see biblical fasting is an immediate way to declare your allegiance to God's way and glory in every day of your life!

How are you doing in the total yielding of your life to Christ? Most of us would say as we look around at our lives and others', that we are all right. But Jesus gave a different test. He said don't look around at others; look inside. He asks, "Does your hungering after God cause you to choose to abstain from food?" This practice is called fasting. Fasting, or the voluntary abstinence from food, is a spiritual discipline, which has fallen upon hard times in modern Christianity. In fact, a look at the Library of Congress's computerized list of all books known to be published in America shows that not one Christian book on fasting was published from the 1860's, or Civil War era, to the start of the Space Age in the late 50's! That is a century in the English-speaking world that neglected entirely the discipline Christ said would characterize His Church's hungering after God.

- ❖ Isn't it amazing that perhaps the greatest tool to grow intimate with God and dispel spiritual apathy is so neglected?
- ❖ Isn't it tragic that what may be the key to seeing wayward children and grandchildren come back to God is so neglected?
- ❖ Isn't it hard to believe that God's described way to see Him move upon oppressed and

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afflicted in a liberating way is so neglected?

Probably we don't think about fasting, hear about fasting, or practice fasting because we are indulging ourselves in America like no nation has ever done in the history of the planet Earth! And that is the very reason we need to fast.

Jesus warned of an end-times church that would think they were rich (materially) and forget that they were impoverished (spiritually). Is this idea Jesus presents in Mark 2 relevant? You decide as we think about 21<sup>st</sup> Century America in Tulsa, July 2000!

One gifted writer has described our society's problem as OVERLOAD. See if you can see what he meant. And then think with me where you show up on a diagnostic test that detects this deadly condition called overload. Do you have any of these symptoms?

- **CHOICE OVERLOAD** - "In 1975, there were 9,000 supermarket items on the shelves; in 1978, there were 11,767 items in the average supermarket; in 1992, the number rose to 24,53; and by 1996, 30,000." This includes over 186 different choices of breakfast cereal you can find at your grocery store. A satellite dish can serve you up 1,500 movie choices per month. Futurist Allan Toffler warns, "We are, in fact, racing toward 'over choice.' " "One thing have I desired of the Lord..." (Ps 27:4); God says, "Seek Me first and most..." (Mt. 6:33)
- **DECISION OVERLOAD** - "Every day we have more tough decisions to make and less time to do it in. The trivial ones are objectionable just because of how many there are [what flavor, which topping, mint or tartar control, low fat, low sodium, diet or regular...]. But we also are facing new choices generations past never dreamed of: whether or not to wait to have children; whether to move and change jobs; whether both dad and mom should work outside the home; whether we should put grandma in the home or not. Too many decisions, trivial or not, in too short a time is vintage overload." "If thine eye be single..." (Mt 6:22)
- **FATIGUE OVERLOAD** - We are a tired society. Even leisure is often exhausting. With our generator indicator flashing discharge, it's little wonder our batteries are drained. Our weary, withered state is not God's plan. It's not the fault of activities or friends; it's the result of overload. Jesus said rest for our souls...
- **FOOD OVERLOAD** as the Surgeon General reports, more Americans are overweight today than at any time in history; at the same time 40,000 children die each day from starvation and preventable disease around the world. These are among the one billion fellow humans who live in conditions of absolute poverty (no adequate food, shelter, clothing, or medical care); 400 million are severely malnourished including 200 million children!
- **HURRY OVERLOAD** - "Haste is a modern ailment. It is also fashionably American. Our lives are nonstop, lived at a breathless pace. We walk fast, talk fast, eat fast, and then excuse ourselves by saying, 'I must run.'" Alexander Solzhenitsyn accusingly said, "Hastiness and superficiality - these are the psychic diseases of the 20th century." "Wait patiently for the Lord..." (Psalm 25:5; 27:14; 37:7,9,34; 62:5; 123:2) "Be still and Know Me!"

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- **INFORMATION OVERLOAD** - A single edition of the NY Times has more information than a seventeenth century Britisher would have encountered in a lifetime. There are new periodicals coming out faster than one per day; there are over 30 TV channels and stations for every night of the year! And 98% of Americans have TV; the average US home has 2, and both are on 7 hours a day.
  - **POSSESSION OVERLOAD** - We have more 'things per person' than any other nation in history. Closets are full, storage space is used up, and cars can't fit into garages. Having first imprisoned us with debt, possessions then take over our houses and occupy our time. This begins to sound like an invasion. Everything I own owns me. Why would I want more? Jesus said care of things makes your heart grow cold.

Now let's be specific. When was the last time you fasted? Not for medical reasons, not for weight loss, not because you were too busy to make a meal - no, when was the last time you practiced the biblical discipline of fasting for purely the **spiritual** reason God designed it for: Because you were so much in love with the Lord, you wanted to spend extra, precious time with HIM?

Before we jump into our text of Mark 2:18-22, may I ask you some other questions?

- Would you like to revitalize your spiritual life?
- Would you like to heighten your awareness of God?
- Would you like to experience God in such a deep and intimate way that you find yourself absolutely satisfied and contented in a way God's Word calls perfect peace?

Then Christ's words this morning are for you. Our text contains **the most important words in the Bible on fasting**. And these words can change your life if you understand them!

Fasting as described in the Bible is not to be confused with the peaceful political protests of Gandhi or others. Spiritual fasting is also nothing like the monastic hermit who tortured his body with no food and lay out in the sun and rain, hoping for some spiritual merit to be earned by all that. No, fasting was rather a spiritual exercise or discipline. Note with me what the Bible records:

Biblical fasting was part of **SEEKING GOD'S DIRECTION AND PROTECTION BY PRAYER** as noted in Ezra 8:21-23: "Then I **proclaimed a fast** there at the river of Ahava, that we **might humble ourselves before our God**, to seek from Him the right way for us and our little ones and all our possessions. 22. For I was ashamed to request of the king an escort of soldiers and horsemen to help us against the enemy on the road, because we had spoken to the king, saying, 'The hand of our God is upon all those for good who seek Him, but His power and His wrath are against all those who forsake Him.' 23. So we fasted and entreated our God for this, and He answered our prayer."

Biblical fasting was part of **ACKNOWLEDGING SIN BEFORE GOD** in Ezra 10:6: "Then Ezra rose up from before the house of God, and went into the chamber of Jehohanan the son of

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Eliashib; and when he came there, **he ate no bread and drank no water**, for he mourned because of the guilt of those from the captivity.”

Biblical fasting was part of INTENSE PRAYER in Nehemiah 1:4: “So it was, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned for many days; **I was fasting and praying** before the God of heaven.”

Biblical fasting was part of DAVID’S HUMBLING HIMSELF BEFORE THE LORD in Psalm 35:13: “But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth; I **humbled myself with fasting**; And my prayer would return to my own heart.”

Biblical fasting was part of GOD’S REQUIREMENT FOR THOSE GENUINELY REPENTING AND TURNING TO HIM WITH ALL THEIR HEART in Joel 2:12-13a: “‘Now, therefore,’ says the Lord, ‘Turn to Me with all your heart, **With fasting**, with weeping, and with mourning. 13. So rend your heart, and not your garments; Return to the Lord your God.’”

So, biblical fasting has many purposes. Is it commanded? Yes, to those under the Old Testament, once a year at the Day of Atonement. No, to us this side of the cross. It is not commanded, but it was expected as we saw by Jesus. And it was practiced, as we see, by those of the New Testament Church era. So how about it? What was Christ teaching in our text? Let’s go over these five verses and see.

### **Mark 2:18-22:**

*The disciples of John and of the Pharisees were fasting.*

We know that the Pharisees did this on Mondays and Thursdays, market days in biblical Israel, to be seen by the crowds so this question was probably asked on a Monday or Thursday.

*Then they came and said to Him, ‘Why do the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast, but Your disciples do not fast?’ 19. And Jesus said to them, ‘Can the friends of the bridegroom fast while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them they cannot fast.*

Wow, Jesus here calls Himself the promised Groom, as in Matthew 25, coming to betroth His Bride and then returning later for the marriage. Biblical weddings were marked by an entire week of feasting. Brides and grooms were treated like kings and queens and often given crowns to wear. For poor country people, weddings were often the greatest days of their lives. And, in Christ’s words, those were what the disciples were experiencing in His earthly ministry)

***20. But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them,***

Here is one of the many prophecies Jesus made pointing to the cross, and His ascension to the Father’s right hand for the period of time we call the Church Age. Jesus was away and we await Him)

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*and then they will fast in those days.*

Now comes the New Testament fast; it is for those who await the One they love, who is taken away to Heaven. While we wait for the Son we fast. Because we long for Him, we fast!

**21. “No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth**

Christianity of the New Covenant Church after the cross

*on an old garment;*

The Old Testament Judaism

***or else the new piece pulls away from the old, and the tear is made worse. 22. And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; or else the new wine bursts the wineskins, the wine is spilled, and the wineskins are ruined. But new wine must be put into new wineskins.***

In the context of fasting, this means that there was a whole new attitude and action surrounding fasting on this side of the cross: our waiting and longing for Jesus.

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# What is Hungering for God?

WFF: Message Forty-One (000730AM)

Mark 2:18-22

We are continuing our study of a fascinating area of God's Word - BIBLICAL FASTING. To best understand fasting in God's Word we may need another way to describe biblical fasting, and that would be to ask: "How is your Hunger for God?" or "How are you doing in the total yielding of your life to Christ today?"

Most of us would say, as we look around at our lives and others', that we are all right. But Jesus gave a different test. He said don't look around at others; look inside. He asks, "Does your hungering after Jesus Christ, His Word, His way, His coming, His righteousness, His will, and His supremacy in your life cause you to choose joyfully and willingly to abstain from food?"

This longing after Jesus with a heart of love and devotion is called biblical fasting. And biblical fasting, or the voluntary abstinence from good and right things such as food, is a spiritual discipline which has fallen upon hard times in modern Christianity. So this morning I repeat our task:

1. In the Old Testament we see biblical fasting is an urgent call to get serious about knowing God.
2. In the New Testament we see biblical fasting is an ancient spiritual discipline to reschedule one's life with God at the center instead of dining, relaxing, amusing, accumulating, advancing, securing, and a multitude of other things that are not wrong - just deadly to intimacy with the Almighty.
3. This morning we narrow our focus to this one thought: How did the early Church of Acts and the Epistles demonstrate this hunger for God? We shall see that their hunger shaped their lives, their ministry, their worship, and their outreach. In the early Church we see biblical fasting is a powerful way to yield every part of one's life to God's supremacy.
4. So we can study and learn about biblical fasting in God's Word: in the Old Testament, in New Testament, from the Early Church, and as those who live for Christ in 21<sup>st</sup> Century America. In Tulsa Y2K we see biblical fasting is an immediate way to declare our allegiance to God's way and glory in every day of our lives!

Now let's be specific. When was the last time you fasted? Not for medical reasons, not for weight loss, not because you were too busy to make a meal - no, when was the last time you practiced the biblical discipline of fasting for purely the **spiritual** reason God designed it for: Because you were so much in love with the Lord, you wanted to spend extra, precious time with HIM?

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- Would you like to heighten your awareness of God?
- Would you like to experience God in such a deep and intimate way that you find yourself absolutely satisfied and contented in a way God's Word calls perfect peace?

Then Christ's words this morning are for you. Our text contains **the most important words in the Bible on fasting**. And these words can change your life if you understand them!

Mark 2:18-22: "***The disciples of John and of the Pharisees were fasting.*** (We know that the Pharisees did this on Mondays and Thursdays, market days in biblical Israel, to be seen by the crowds so this question was probably asked on a Monday or Thursday.)

***Then they came and said to Him, 'Why do the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast, but Your disciples do not fast?' 19. And Jesus said to them, 'Can the friends of the bridegroom fast while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them they cannot fast.*** (Wow, Jesus here calls Himself the promised Groom, as in Matthew 25, coming to betroth His Bride and then returning later for the marriage. Biblical weddings were marked by an entire week of feasting. Brides and grooms were treated like kings and queens and often given crowns to wear. For poor country people, weddings were often the greatest days of their lives. And, in Christ's words, those were what the disciples were experiencing in His earthly ministry) ***20. But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them,*** (Here is one of the many prophecies Jesus made pointing to the cross, and His ascension to the Father's right hand for the period of time we call the Church Age. Jesus was away and we await Him.) ***and then they will fast in those days.*** (Now comes the New Testament fast; it is for those who await the One they love, who is taken away to Heaven. While we wait for the Son we fast. Because we long for Him, we fast!) ***21. "No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth*** (Christianity of the New Covenant Church after the cross) ***on an old garment;*** (The Old Testament Judaism) ***or else the new piece pulls away from the old, and the tear is made worse. 22. And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; or else the new wine bursts the wineskins, the wine is spilled, and the wineskins are ruined. But new wine must be put into new wineskins."*** (In the context of fasting, this means that there was a whole new attitude and action surrounding fasting on this side of the cross: our waiting and longing for Jesus.)

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- ❖ What is the best way to look forward to a good meal? Stop eating!
- ❖ What is the best way to get hungry for food? Stop eating.
- ❖ What is the best way to get your taste buds all mouth wateringly ready to eat? Stop eating!

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Now, do you remember from our study of 1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians a couple years ago, what was the heartbeat of the early church? Expecting Christ's return. Do we ever grow weary and lessen that passion? Yes. So what is Christ's way to get us to long for His coming? Look for His coming? Wait for His coming? Stop eating, fast, deny ourselves, feel the pain of deprivation, show our allegiance to Him (demonstrated in fasting) as higher than even life (demonstrated in eating). Think with me about these verses, and ask yourself: Do you really long for Jesus every day? If not, fasting is for you!

*Philippians 3:19-21: "Whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame—who set their mind on earthly things. 20. For our **citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ**, 21. who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself."*

*1 Thessalonians 1:10: "And to **wait for His Son from heaven**, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come."*

*2 Timothy 4:8: "Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to **all who have loved His appearing**."*

*Titus 2:11-13: "For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, 12. teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, 13. **looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ**,"*

*Hebrews 9:28: "so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. **To those who eagerly wait for Him** He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation."*

*1 John 3:2-3: "Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. 3. And everyone who **has this hope in Him** purifies himself, just as He is pure."*

*Revelation 22:20: "He who testifies to these things says, 'Surely I am coming quickly.' Amen. **Even so, come, Lord Jesus!**"*

## WHEN DO WE FAST?

God has not laid down lengths, days, manners, and details. Rather, He says to us that His grace teaches us. Where did the Lord say that? In Titus 2:11-13: "For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, 12. teaching us (This is an ongoing process; it is called sanctification) that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts (both of which will be attacked by genuine biblical fasting), we should live soberly, righteously, and godly (benefits of being more

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in tune with the Lord than the world) in the present age, 13. looking for the blessed hope (the basis of Christ's call for us to be fasting) and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ (that for which we hunger the most - Our Great God)."

Biblical fasting was part of A NORMAL LIFE AS A CHRISTIAN in Matthew 6:16: "Moreover, **when you fast**, do not be like the hypocrites, with a sad countenance. For they disfigure their faces that they may appear to men to be fasting. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward."

Biblical fasting was part of WORSHIPING THE LORD in Luke 2:36-37: "Now there was one, Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, and had lived with a husband seven years from her virginity; 37. and this woman was a widow of about eighty-four years, who did not depart from the temple, **but served God with fastings and prayers night and day**."

Biblical fasting was part of CHRIST'S METHOD OF PREPARATION FOR FACING THE DEVIL'S TEMPTATIONS in Luke 4:2: "being tempted for forty days by the devil. And **in those days He ate nothing**, and afterward, when they had ended, He was hungry."

Biblical fasting was part of SEEKING THE GUIDANCE OF THE LORD in Acts 13:2: "As they ministered to the Lord **and fasted**, the Holy Spirit said, 'Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.'"

Biblical fasting was part of SENDING OUT MISSIONARIES in Acts 13:3: "Then, **having fasted and prayed**, and laid hands on them, they sent them away."

Biblical fasting was part of APPOINTING SPIRITUAL LEADERS in Acts 14:23: "So when they had appointed elders in every church, **and prayed with fasting**, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed."

Biblical fasting was part of THE REGULAR LIFE OF SPIRITUAL MINISTRY in Paul's account of his life in 2 Corinthians 11:27: "in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, **in fastings often**, in cold and nakedness—"

So, biblical fasting has many purposes. Is it commanded? Yes, to those under the Old Testament, once a year at the Day of Atonement. No, to us this side of the cross. It is not commanded, but it was expected as we saw by Jesus. And it was practiced, as we see, by those of the New Testament Church era. So how about it? What was Christ teaching in our text? Let's go over these five verses and see.

Biblical fasting was part of SEEKING GOD'S DIRECTION AND PROTECTION BY PRAYER as noted in Ezra 8:21-23: "Then I **proclaimed a fast** there at the river of Ahava, that we **might humble ourselves before our God**, to seek from Him the right way for us and our little ones and all our possessions. 22. For I was ashamed to request of the king an escort of soldiers and horsemen to help us against the enemy on the road, because we had spoken to the

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king, saying, ‘The hand of our God is upon all those for good who seek Him, but His power and His wrath are against all those who forsake Him.’ 23. So we fasted and entreated our God for this, and He answered our prayer.”

Biblical fasting was part of ACKNOWLEDGING SIN BEFORE GOD in Ezra 10:6: “Then Ezra rose up from before the house of God, and went into the chamber of Jehohanan the son of Eliashib; and when he came there, **he ate no bread and drank no water**, for he mourned because of the guilt of those from the captivity.”

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Biblical fasting was part of GOD’S REQUIREMENT FOR THOSE GENUINELY REPENTING AND TURNING TO HIM WITH ALL THEIR HEART in Joel 2:12-13a: “‘Now, therefore,’ says the Lord, ‘Turn to Me with all your heart, **With fasting**, with weeping, and with mourning. 13. So rend your heart, and not your garments; Return to the Lord your God.’”

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The Lord’s Supper is a look back where we remember the great work of Christ’s cross nearly 2,000 years ago. Note these past events: Christ died, Christ rose, Christ ascended to God’s Right Hand, Christ took my penalty upon Himself, Christ imputed His righteousness upon me, sin was dealt with, guilt was passed away, sin’s shackles were broken, Satan was defeated, the fear and power of death was destroyed, eternal life was given, and the destiny of Hell was blotted out of the future for all who came.

Biblical fasting on the other hand looks ahead, on the basis of the past work of Christ’s cross to the future of His return. And we who love our Bridegroom long for His Coming and express that loving, longing, delight by declaring nothing but Him can satisfy!

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# How Can I Hunger for God?

## WFF: Message Forty-Two (000806AM)

### Mark 2:20-22

One of the key attitudes we find displayed by the 1<sup>st</sup> Century editions of God's saints is that they considered themselves exiles on earth, and citizens of Heaven.

This produced not a detachment from earthly life or other people; rather it led to such a lacking of love for things that these early saints actually had abundant and overflowing time to love and seek and win their neighbors.

Now for a moment, think of all the time we spend gathering, protecting, and caring for our THINGS. Then think of what value that collecting, protecting, and caring will have in Heaven at Christ's throne versus the same time, energy, and strength poured out in loving passion for the souls of our neighbors. Would Tulsa be shocked if 250 families at Tulsa Bible Church started thinking of others more than their own THINGS! As one man well stated, "The absence of our fasting is the measure of our contentment with the absence of Christ."i

Three weeks ago we began a study from Mark 2:18-22 entitled "A Hunger for God" and saw this longing after Jesus with a heart of love and devotion is called biblical fasting. And biblical fasting, or the voluntary abstinence from good and right things such as food, is a spiritual discipline, which has fallen upon hard times in modern Christianity. So this morning I repeat our four-lesson task:

1. In the Old Testament we see biblical fasting is an urgent call to get serious about knowing God.
2. In the New Testament we see biblical fasting is an ancient spiritual discipline to reschedule one's life with God at the center instead of dining, relaxing, amusing, accumulating, advancing, securing, and a multitude of other things that are not wrong - just deadly to intimacy with the Almighty.
3. This morning we narrow our focus to this one thought: How did the early Church of Acts and the Epistles demonstrate this hunger for God? We shall see that their hunger shaped their lives, their ministry, their worship, and their outreach. In the early Church we see biblical fasting is a powerful way to yield every part of one's life to God's supremacy.
4. So we can study and learn about biblical fasting in God's Word: in the Old Testament, in New Testament, from the early Church, and then as those who live for Christ in 21st Century America. In Tulsa Y2K we see biblical fasting is an immediate way to declare our allegiance to God's way and glory in every day of our lives!

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Listen to this brief glimpse from early Church history as we jump into our study this morning of God's Word's New Testament portrait of the early Church's hunger for God.

About A.D. 133 Aristeides, a teacher of philosophy, presented a defense of Christianity to Emperor Hadrian. From it we get a glimpse of what the early Christians were like and why the church grew the way it did—like wildfire—in those centuries.

*Now the Christians, O King...have the commandments of the Lord Jesus Christ himself engraven on their hearts, and they observe, looking for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. They do not covet men's goods; and love their neighbors; they despise not the widow, and grieve not the orphan. He that hath distributeth liberally to him that hath not. If they see a stranger, they bring him under their roof and rejoice over him, as if it were their own brother; for they call themselves brethren, not after the flesh, but after the spirit and in God. And if there is among them a man that is poor and needy, and they have not an abundance of necessities, they fast two or three days that they may supply the needy with their necessary food. For Christ's sake they are ready to lay down their lives. So it was spread abroad, "Behold how they love one another."*

What shall we be known for? Let it be that we are willing to die for Christ, and even more, that we are willing to live for him in loving his people—and his enemies. The early Christians fasted so that they would have more to give to the needy, which means they did not have a lot stored up. O Lord, help us see Christ, be satisfied with Christ, and show Christ as they did.

How do you know that you need to fast as a born again Christian? Jesus gives us the answer in our text we have been studying for the past three weeks. In Mark 2:18-22 Jesus said His children would long for Him until His return. So when do we need to fast? When we have lost the intense longing for Christ's return!

Then Christ's words this morning are for you. Our text contains **the most important words in the Bible on fasting**. And these words can change your life if you understand them!

## **Mark 2:20-22**

**20. "But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them,** (Here is one of the many prophecies Jesus made pointing to the Cross, and His ascension to the Father's right hand for the period of time we call the Church Age. Jesus was away and we await Him.)

**And then they will fast in those days** (Now comes the New Testament fast; it is for those who await the One they love, who is taken away to Heaven. While we wait for the Son, we fast. Because we long for Him, we fast!)

**21. No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth** (Christianity of the New Covenant Church after the cross) **on an old garment;** (The Old Testament Judaism) **or else the new piece pulls away from the old, and the tear is made worse. 22. And no one puts new wine**

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**into old wineskins; or else the new wine bursts the wineskins, the wine is spilled, and the wineskins are ruined. But new wine must be put into new wineskins.”** “The patch of unshrunk cloth and the new wine represent the new reality that has come with Jesus - the Kingdom of God is here. The Bridegroom has come. The Messiah is in our midst. And that is not temporary. He is not here and gone. The kingdom of God did not just come with Jesus and then just vanish out of our world. Jesus died for our sins once for all. He rose from the dead once for all. The Spirit was sent into the world as the real presence of Jesus among us. The Kingdom of God is the present reigning power of Christ in the world subduing hearts to the King and creating a people who believe Him and serve Him in faith and holiness. The Spirit of the Bridegroom is gathering and purifying a Bride for Christ. This is the gospel of Christ and the ‘mystery of the Kingdom,’ this is the new wine.”<sup>i</sup>

God’s Word says we must be mastered only by Christ and nothing else. The evidence of being brought under the power of something is that we need it to make it through our day. What do you need to make it through a day? That will be a list of the items that have cast their influential mastering power across your life.

What pushes out your hunger for experiencing the intimacy of fellowship with the Lord in your life? Do you seek food first? entertainment first? the latest news first? the status of your investments first? the web and your computer first? the television, radio, music first? your collections, investments, shopping first? your sports, body building, health needs first? All of these are alone good and worthy of time but not at God’s expense, He is to be sought first and deepest of all!

Biblical fasting uncovers and exposes whatever it is that has mastered our lives in place of Christ.

1 Corinthians 6:12: “All things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.”

The more we experience intimacy in fellowship with Jesus Christ, the more we hunger for Him, and the greater our longings become to be with Him in Heaven. Then we see our focus in our lives begins to change. The more we long for our Great God and Savior:

The greater becomes our *looking for our Bridegroom’s return from Heaven*,  
The greater becomes our *hating any beachhead of sin in our lives*,  
The *greater* becomes our *investing our time in Christ’s Body, His Church*,  
The greater becomes our *seeking the evangelizing of lost people around the world*,  
The greater becomes our *sensing of Satan’s lies in the media and culture of this world*,  
The greater becomes our *asking for God’s Kingdom to come on Earth*,  
The greater becomes our *walking each day pleasing God*,  
The greater becomes our *desiring to be filled with the knowledge of God’s will*

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And on and on it goes in our lives. Actually, anything less than this growing surrender to the Lord through spiritual hungering and thirsting after God, means that our appetite has been ruined through all the little things that have filled us up. It means we have neglected the greatest food - our Father and His Kingdom - for the lesser food of His gifts in life. That spells spiritual famine, weakness, and failure.

Jesus warned that a great enemy to His children would be “desires for other things” (Mark 4:19). Jesus left us with the only weapon that will lead us into a victorious, deepening hunger for intimacy and daily fellowship with our Creator. That weapon is biblical fasting and we can measure our hunger level for God by our hunger after those other things. God is only glorified by seeking Him first!

Matthew 6:33: “But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.”

Philippians 3:8: “Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ”

Insightful author and pastor John Piper says, “The greatest enemy of hunger for God is not poison but apple pie. It is not the banquet of the wicked that dulls our appetite for Heaven, but endless nibbling at the table of the world. It is not the x-rated video, but the prime time dribble of triviality we drink in every night. For all the evil Satan can do, when God describes what keeps us from the banquet of His love, it is a piece of land, a yoke of oxen, and a wife (Luke 14:18-20). The greatest adversary of love to God is not His enemies but His gifts. And the most deadly appetites are not for the poison of evil, but for the simple pleasures of earth. For when these replace an appetite for God Himself, the idolatry is scarcely recognizable, and almost incurable”.<sup>i</sup>

Are you incurably hungering after God or this world? Are you incurably delighting in God’s Word or trivial pursuits? The greatest destroyers of intimate hunger for God may be things that are good and right in their place like coffee and lawns and hobby and travel and retirement planning and mall walking and TV watching and computer mastering. But any that take God’s first place, and become easier to turn to than God and His Word and His intimate communion, are then deadly destroyers of our hungering and thirsting after God.

So the kingdom of God, the reign of God as supreme over all of our lives is our goal in fasting. We want Him to rule our appetites, not us; we want Him to rule our affections, not us; we want Him to rule over our choices, not us. We want God’s rule in this church, not ours. His goals, not ours. That is the test; that is seeking first the kingdom, the glory, the rule, the supremacy of our Father in Heaven. Then we come before Him seeking His glory not ours in praying, asking, and fasting. It changes how we pray.

✓ Now when we ask for Him to lead us into the conquest of those old habits that grip and

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enslave us, the roadblocks that stand in our path to spiritual maturity - it is so He may rule in our lives and be glorified.

- ✓ When we cry out for wayward or unconverted children or spouses to come back - it is so He may rule in our lives and be glorified.
- ✓ When we prepare for growth and plan for needs in our church as we fast and pray - it is so He may rule in our church and be glorified.

How did the 1<sup>st</sup> Century saints live that way and we so often don't? Do you remember from our study of 1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians a couple years ago, what was the heartbeat of the early church? Expecting Christ's return. Do we ever grow weary and lessen that passion? Yes. So what is Christ's way to get us to long for His coming? look for His coming? wait for His coming? Stop eating, fast, deny ourselves, feel the pain of deprivation, show our allegiance to Him (demonstrated in fasting) as higher than even life (demonstrated in eating). Think with me about these verses, and ask yourself: Do you really long for Jesus every day? If not, fasting is for you!

One of the key attitudes we find displayed by God's saints is that they were exiles on earth and citizens of Heaven. This produced not a detachment from earthly life or other people; rather it led to such a lacking of love for things that these early saints actually had abundant time to love and seek and win their neighbors. Think of all the time we spend gathering, protecting, and caring for our THINGS. Then think of what value that collecting, protecting, and caring will have in Heaven at Christ's throne versus the same time, energy, and strength poured out in loving passion for the souls of our neighbors. Would Tulsa be shocked if 250 families at Tulsa Bible Church started thinking of others more than their own THINGS! As one man well stated, "The absence of our fasting is the measure of our contentment with the absence of Christ."i

### **The Fasting-Minded Hearts of the New Testament Saints:**

Philippians 3:19-21: "whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame—who set their mind on earthly things. 20. For our **citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ**, 21. who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself."

1 Thessalonians 1:10: "and to **wait for His Son from heaven**, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come."

2 Timothy 4:8: "Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to **all who have loved His appearing**."

Titus 2:11-13: "For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, 12. teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, 13. **looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ**,"

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Hebrews 9:28: “so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. **To those who eagerly wait for Him** He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation.”

1 John 3:2-3: “Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. 3. And everyone who **has this hope in Him** purifies himself, just as He is pure.”

Revelation 22:20: “He who testifies to these things says, ‘Surely I am coming quickly.’ Amen. **Even so, come, Lord Jesus!**”

The Lord’s Supper is a look back where we remember the great work of Christ’s cross nearly 2,000 years ago. Note these past events: Christ died, Christ rose, Christ ascended to God’s right hand, Christ took my penalty upon Himself, Christ imputed His righteousness upon me, sin was dealt with, guilt was passed away, sins shackles were broken, Satan was defeated, the fear and power of death was destroyed, eternal life was given, and the destiny of Hell was blotted out of the future for all who came.

Biblical fasting, on the other hand, looks ahead, on the basis of the past work of Christ’s cross, to the future of His return. And we who love our Bridegroom long for His coming and express that loving, longing delight by declaring nothing but Him can satisfy!



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# When Should I Hunger for God?

WFF: Message Forty-Three (000806PM)

## Mark 2:20-22

Three weeks ago we began a study from Mark 2:18-22 entitled “A Hunger for God” and saw this longing after Jesus with a heart of love and devotion is called biblical fasting. And biblical fasting, or the voluntary abstinence from good and right things such as food, is a spiritual discipline which has fallen upon hard times in modern Christianity. So this morning I repeat our four lesson task:

### WHEN DO WE FAST?

God has not laid down lengths, days, manners, and details. Rather, He says to us that His grace teaches us. Where did the Lord say that? In Titus 2:11-13: “For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, 12. teaching us (This is an ongoing process; it is called sanctification) that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts (Both of which will be attacked by genuine biblical fasting), we should live soberly, righteously, and godly (benefits of being more in tune with the Lord than the world) in the present age, 13. looking for the blessed hope (the basis of Christ’s call for us to be fasting) and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ (that for which we hunger the most - our great God).

1. In the Old Testament we see biblical fasting is an urgent call to get serious about knowing God.
2. In the New Testament we see biblical fasting is an ancient spiritual discipline to reschedule one’s life with God at the center instead of dining, relaxing, amusing, accumulating, advancing, securing, and a multitude of other things that are not wrong - just deadly to intimacy with the Almighty.
3. This morning we narrow our focus to this one thought: How did the early Church of Acts and the Epistles demonstrate this hunger for God? We shall see that their hunger shaped their lives, their ministry, their worship, and their outreach. In the early Church we see biblical fasting is a powerful way to yield every part of one’s life to God’s supremacy.
4. So we can study and learn about biblical fasting in God’s Word: in the Old Testament, in New Testament, from the early Church, and then tonight as those who live for Christ in 21<sup>st</sup> Century America. In Tulsa Y2K we see biblical fasting is an immediate way to declare our allegiance to God’s way and glory in every day of our lives!

Are you incurably hungering after God or this world? Are you incurably delighting in God’s Word or trivial pursuits? The greatest destroyers of intimate hunger for God may be things that are good and right in their place like coffee and lawns and hobby and travel and retirement planning and mall walking and TV watching and computer mastering. But any that take God’s

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1. In the Old Testament we see biblical fasting is an urgent call to get serious about knowing God.
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- ❖ Biblical fasting was part of ACKNOWLEDGING SIN BEFORE GOD in Ezra 10:6: "Then Ezra rose up from before the house of God, and went into the chamber of Jehohanan the son of Eliashib; and when he came there, **he ate no bread and drank no water**, for he mourned because of the guilt of those from the captivity."
- ❖ Biblical fasting was part of INTENSE PRAYER in Nehemiah 1:4: "So it was, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned for many days; **I was fasting and praying** before the God of heaven."
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- ❖ Biblical fasting was part of WORSHIPING THE LORD in Luke 2:36-37: "... and this woman was a widow of about eighty-four years, who did not depart from the temple, **but served God with fastings and prayers night and day.**"
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- ❖ Biblical fasting was part of APPOINTING SPIRITUAL LEADERS in Acts 14:23: "So when they had appointed elders in every church, **and prayed with fasting**, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed."
- ❖ Biblical fasting was part of THE REGULAR LIFE OF SPIRITUAL MINISTRY in Paul's account of his life in 2 Corinthians 11:27: "in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, **in fastings often**, in cold and nakedness."

The Kingdom of God, the reign of God as supreme over all of our lives is our goal in fasting. We want Him to rule our appetites, not us; we want Him to rule our affections, not us: we want Him to rule over our choices, not us. We want God's rule in this church, not ours. His goals, not ours. That is the test; that is seeking first the kingdom, the glory, the rule, the supremacy of our Father in Heaven. Then we come before Him seeking His glory, not ours, in praying, asking and fasting. It changes how we pray.

- ✓ Now when we ask for Him to lead us into the conquest of those old habits that grip and enslave us, the roadblocks that stand in our path to spiritual maturity - it is so that He may rule in our lives and be glorified.
  - ✓ When we cry out for wayward or unconverted children or spouses to come back - it is so that He may rule in our lives and be glorified.
  - ✓ When we prepare for growth and plan for needs in our church as we fast and pray - it is so that He may rule in our church and be glorified.
3. This morning we narrowed our focus to this one thought: How did the early Church of Acts and the Epistles demonstrate this hunger for God? We shall see that their hunger shaped their lives, their ministry, their worship, and their outreach. In the early Church we see biblical fasting is a powerful way to yield every part of one's life to God's supremacy.

How did the first century saints live that way and we so often don't? Do you remember from our study of 1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians a couple years ago, what was the heartbeat of the early church? Expecting Christ's return. Do we ever grow weary and lessen that passion? Yes. So what is Christ's way to get us to long for His coming? Look for His coming? Wait for His coming? Stop eating, fast, deny ourselves, feel the pain of deprivation, show our allegiance to Him

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(demonstrated in fasting) as higher than even life (demonstrated in eating). Think with me about these verses, and ask yourself: Do you really long for Jesus every day? If not, fasting is for you!

One of the key attitudes we find displayed by God's saints is that they were exiles on earth and citizens of Heaven. This produced not a detachment from earthly life or other people; rather, it led to such a lacking of love for things that these early saints actually had abundant time to love and seek and win their neighbors. Think of all the time we spend gathering, protecting, and caring for our THINGS. Then think of what value that collecting, protecting, and caring will have in Heaven at Christ's throne versus the same time, energy, and strength poured out in loving passion for the souls of our neighbors. Would Tulsa be shocked if 250 families at Tulsa Bible Church started thinking of others more than their own THINGS! As one man well stated, "The absence of our fasting is the measure of our contentment with the absence of Christ."<sup>i</sup>

Listen to the fasting-minded hearts of the New Testament saints:

Philippians 3:19-21: "whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame—who set their mind on earthly things. 20. For our **citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ**, 21. who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.

1 Thessalonians 1:10: "and to **wait for His Son from heaven**, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come."

2 Timothy 4:8: "Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to **all who have loved His appearing**."

Titus 2:11-13: "For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, 12. teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, 13. **looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ**,"

Hebrews 9:28: "so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. **To those who eagerly wait for Him** He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation."

1 John 3:2-3: "Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. 3. And everyone who **has this hope in Him** purifies himself, just as He is pure."

Revelation 22:20: "He who testifies to these things says, 'Surely I am coming quickly.' Amen. **Even so, come, Lord Jesus!**"

4. So we can study and learn about biblical fasting in God's Word: in the Old Testament, in

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New Testament, from the early Church, and then tonight as those who live for Christ in 21<sup>st</sup> Century America. In Tulsa Y2K we see biblical fasting is an immediate way to declare our allegiance to God's way and glory in every day of our lives!

### WHEN DO WE FAST?

God has not laid down lengths, days, manners, and details. Rather, He says to us that His grace teaches us. Length of fasts in God's Word:

#### Day

- ✓ Leviticus 16:29: "This shall be a statute forever for you: In the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, you shall afflict your souls, and do no work at all, whether a native of your own country or a stranger who dwells among you."
- ✓ Judges 20:26: "Then all the children of Israel, that is, all the people, went up and came to the house of God and wept. They sat there before the Lord and fasted that day until evening; and they offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the Lord."

#### Seven Days

- ✓ 1 Samuel 31:13: "Then they took their bones and buried them under the tamarisk tree at Jabesh, and fasted seven days."

Twenty-one Days (three weeks)

- ✓ Daniel 10:3: "I **ate no pleasant food, no meat or wine came into my mouth, nor did I anoint myself at all**, till three whole weeks were fulfilled."

#### Forty Days

- ✓ Exodus 34:2: "So be ready in the morning, and come up in the morning to Mount Sinai, and present yourself to Me there on the top of the mountain."
- ✓ Deuteronomy 9:9: "When I went up into the mountain to receive the tablets of stone, the tablets of the covenant which the Lord made with you, then I stayed on the mountain forty days and forty nights. I neither ate bread nor drank water."
- ✓ 1 Kings 19:8: "So he arose, and ate and drank; and he went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights as far as Horeb, the mountain of God."

#### In the 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 10<sup>th</sup> Months

- ✓ Zechariah 7:3-5: "and to ask the priests who were in the house of the Lord of hosts, and the prophets, saying, 'Should I weep in the fifth month and fast as I have done for so many years?' 4. Then the word of the Lord of hosts came to me, saying, 5. 'Say to all the people of the land, and to the priests: 'When you fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh months during those seventy years, did you really fast for Me—for Me?'"
- ✓ Zechariah 8:19: "Thus says the Lord of hosts: 'The fast of the fourth month, The fast of the fifth, The fast of the seventh, And the fast of the tenth, Shall be joy and gladness and cheerful feasts For the house of Judah. Therefore love truth and peace.'"

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Jesus taught that fasting is an inward sign of an inward condition, unlike the hypocritical Pharisees who saw it as an outward sign of an inward condition.

Today 40,000 children died from starvation and preventable disease around the world. That is over 12 million who die every year -- that's 23 boys and girls every minute -- of hunger or diseases related to hunger. More importantly, the hungry are the ones that Jesus, when He walked the earth, demonstrated a special love and concern for. They are the ones that He had compassion for.

Today one billion fellow humans live in conditions of absolute poverty (no adequate food, shelter, clothing, or medical care); They are the over 1 billion people on earth who live on less than \$1 a day -- on the edge of survival. That's 1 in every 5 human beings. Sadly, in our world today, 1/4 of the world's people share 85% of the world's resources; 3/4 share the remaining 15%. There is enough food to feed the world's population if it were distributed differently.

Today 400 million fellow humans are severely malnourished, including 200 million children!

In the United States, nearly 1 in 5 children lives in poverty, and 1 in 6 children goes hungry for a lack of food. Meanwhile, more than half of the world's population lives on less than \$2 a day, and about 1.7 billion people lack access to clean water.

### **Who can participate in the 30 Hour Famine?**

Fasting is a physical benefit for most people. There are some exceptions, however. It may not be safe for children under twelve years of age, diabetics, pregnant or nursing women, those with eating disorders, and others with recent surgeries or specific medical problems to fast for an extended period of time. If you have any health-related questions or concerns about your participation in the 30 Hour Famine, please consult your physician.

### **Are there alternatives to fasting?**

If someone wants to participate but is unable to do so because of health concerns, they may alter their fast or choose a different form of fasting. (i.e. giving up TV-watching for a week, etc.)

### **Isaiah 58:6-12 Gives a Divine Fasting Manual:**

<b>Biblical fasting leads us to do:</b>
Liberate Captives (6a) - FrontLine Prayer Corps

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Feed Hungry (7a) - Project Amos
House Homeless (7b) -
Clothe Naked (7c) - Clothing Drives
Feel for Oppressed (7d) - Visit John 3:16
Refuse Prejudice (9b) - Stop laughing and telling jokes
Love the Needy (10) - Plan to go and see them and give!

<b>Biblical fasting helps us to have:</b>	<b>As Jesus said:</b>
Enlightened Living (8a)	"not walk in darkness...but have the light of life" (John 8:12)
Strengthened Living *8b)	"I have food to eat ye know not of..." (John 4:32)
Holy Living (8c)	"who hunger and thirst after righteousness" (Mt. 5:6)
Secured Living (8d)	"Lo I am with you always..." (Mt. 28:20)
Godward Living (9a)	"And whatever you ask...I will do it" (John 15:16)
Confident Living (11a)	"My peace I give unto you..." (John 14:27)
Satisfied Living (11b)	"Life, and life more abundant..." (John 10:10)
Renewed Living (11c)	"never thirst...out of him flow rivers of living water..." (John 6:35; 7:37)
Rewarded Living (12)	"lay up for yourselves treasures in Heaven..." (Mat 6:20)

### **Isaiah 58:6-12:**

*"Is this not the fast that I have chosen:  
To loose the bonds of wickedness,  
To undo the heavy burdens,  
To let the oppressed go free,  
And that you break every yoke?  
7. Is it not to share your bread with the hungry,  
And that you bring to your house the poor who are cast out;  
When you see the naked, that you cover him,  
And not hide yourself from your own flesh?  
8. Then your light shall break forth like the morning,  
Your healing shall spring forth speedily,  
And your righteousness shall go before you;  
The glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard.  
9. Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer;  
You shall cry, and He will say, 'Here I am.'  
If you take away the yoke from your midst,  
The pointing of the finger, and speaking wickedness,  
10. If you extend your soul to the hungry  
And satisfy the afflicted soul,  
Then your light shall dawn in the darkness,*

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*And your darkness shall be as the noonday.  
11. The Lord will guide you continually,  
And satisfy your soul in drought,  
And strengthen your bones;  
You shall be like a watered garden,  
And like a spring of water, whose waters do not fail.  
12. Those from among you  
Shall build the old waste places;  
You shall raise up the foundations of many generations;  
And you shall be called the Repairer of the Breach,  
The Restorer of Streets to Dwell In.”*

Where do we ever start? Well, in the Book of Acts when there was famine, the church brought gifts of sacrificial giving and asked them to distribute it. If your heart is touched and your family wishes to start a regular or irregular fasting ministry here are some opportunities:

Since 1989 there have been 1,000,000 Jews airlifted from Russia by the Israeli government. Almost half are children and of them half live in base poverty in old and dilapidated buildings. One great ministry to start with would be to give food, school, clothing, and blanket packages to help them. Each packet contains relief and a Russian-Hebrew Bible!

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# Jesus Defines the Sabbath

## WFF: Message Forty-Four (000813AM)

### Mark 2:23 – 28

Mark is the eye-witness reporter who recorded the story of Peter following Jesus through three plus years of incredible ministry!

***Jesus is seen transparently in the Gospel by Mark.*** In the pages of this book we are treated to Jesus weary, Jesus grieved, Jesus sorrowing; in other words, we are repeatedly brought face to face with the human emotions of Jesus. And we are witnesses to the astonishment of the multitudes.

***Jesus is seen constantly in action in the Gospel by Mark.*** By Mark's use of the historical present tense at least 150 times in this book we see Jesus always in action. It is: Jesus *comes*, Jesus *says*, and Jesus *heals*—All of these are in the present tense.

***Jesus is seen constantly using divine power in the Gospel by Mark.*** If you look closely, you will find that there are more miracles recorded in Mark than in the other Gospels, despite its being far shorter. The style Mark uses is a vivid "Eyewitness News Reporter Format." Mark moves along with a vivid and fast-moving story of Jesus the Powerful Servant.

- ✓ In fact, Mark uses the Greek word for *immediately* some forty-two times, while Matthew only has seven occurrences, and Luke, just one.
- ✓ Mark uses the conjunction *and* in an unusually frequent manner. He starts twelve of his sixteen chapters with *and* which adds to the rush of action.
- ✓ Mark chronicles Christ's life as what we would call "super busy." Jesus is recorded in 3:20 and 6:31 as even having trouble finding time to eat.

Mark records Christ's using His power as He was showing His authority. You can trace the first two chapters of this Gospel around those demonstrations of Christ's Authority. We have already seen the first eight in Mark. We focused on Christ's authority as God's servant. (And as Christ's servants, we should acknowledge His authority.)

In chapter 1, we see the first six declarations of Christ's authority -

1. v. 9-11 = Christ's authority came from God  
- **HE CAME**
2. v. 12-13 = Christ's authority was over Satan  
- **HE CONQUERED**
3. v. 14-15 = Christ's authority to proclaim God's gospel  
- **HE DECLARED**
4. v. 21-26 = Christ's authority even over the spirit world and demons  
- **HE COMMANDED**

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5. v. 29-31 = Christ authority over disease and sickness  
- **HE HEALED**
  6. v. 40-42 = Christ's authority over defilement and decay  
- **HE CLEANSED**

Then in chapter two -

7. v. 1-17 = Christ's authority over sin  
- **HE FORGAVE.** "He can save, cleanse, keep, and He will! God can do anything but fail."
8. v. 18-28 = Christ's authority over tradition  
- **HE EXPLAINED**

As we continue Walking through the Gospel by Mark we will find that Jesus now turns His attention from the Biblical Fasting to the Biblical Purpose of the Sabbath Day. Please follow along as I read Mark 2:23 –28.

*Mark 2:23-28: Now it happened that He went through the grain fields on the Sabbath; and as they went His disciples began to pluck the heads of grain. 24. And the Pharisees said (**were they hiding in the fields? Were they following them all the time? How did they know?**) to Him, "Look, why do they do what is not lawful on the Sabbath?" 25. But He said to them, "Have you never read what David did when he was in need and hungry, he and those with him: 26. "how he went into the house of God in the days of Abiathar the high priest, and ate the showbread, which is not lawful to eat, except for the priests, and also gave some to those who were with him?" 27. And He said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. 28. "Therefore the Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath."*

Note: It was on the Sabbath! To us that means little or nothing, but in Christ's day, it was everything! Listen to Jewish historians:

The Sabbath was divinely instituted as a sign of the covenant between God and His people Israel (**Exodus 31:13, 17**). Its observance marked Israel as a set-apart people.

There was no institution among the Jews regarded with more veneration and scrupulosity than that of the Sabbath. It was a divinely ordained and beneficent part of the Mosaic economy, designed for the rest of man for his worship and service to God. Its purpose was to protect the underlings and oppressed in a nation afflicted with greed. Beginning with

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sunset on Friday, announced by three trumpet blasts from the Temple and synagogue, it ended at sunset on Saturday. All food must be prepared, all vessels washed, all lights kindled, and all tools laid aside. There were restrictions laid down in the Mosaic Law; but the Rabbis had elaborated from these a vast array of injunctions and prohibitions, making of the Sabbath law a veritable bondage. Moses said, “Thou shalt not do any work.”

The Rabbis made out a system of thirty-nine works, which done rendered the offender subject to death by stoning. Derived from these “father-works” were numerous “descendant-works.” One of the “father-works” was ploughing; a son of this was “digging.” Wearing false teeth was a “descendant” of “carrying a burden.” Among the descendants of “reaping” were the “plucking of a head of wheat” or the “pulling out of a gray hair” from one’s head. Lengthy rules were formulated about what kinds of knots one might tie on the Sabbath. The camel-driver’s and sailor’s knots might not be tied or unloosed. Two letters of the alphabet might not be written together. To kindle or extinguish a fire was a great description, not being justified even in case of the emergency of sickness. The Sabbath had become a grievous burden by the thousands of such restriction and rules too numerous to mention.

As you follow along in Mark 2:23-28, let me remind you of the moment in Christ's ministry this event takes place. So much of Bible study is looking at the context, the frame in which the Holy Spirit chose to direct Christ's life and ministry for God's glory. Our text happens right after our Lord Jesus Christ has just walked north to Galilee from Jerusalem. Those days in Jerusalem are recorded in John 5:1-47.

As we turn there, you remember the story, At the pool of Bethesda He had healed the paralytic man who had been sick thirty-eight years. To see what is going on, please follow along with me through John 5.

After the teachings about fasting we looked at last time, Jesus left Capernaum and traveled south to Jerusalem. Only the Apostle John tells us what happened next. While in Jerusalem Jesus healed the lame man who laid by the Pool of Bethesda for thirty-eight years. But the attention grabber was that He did that on the Sabbath. Sabbath Day and Christ is our focus of study in God’s Word this morning.

John 5 records the halfway mark of Christ's earthly ministry. We are midway through the second year of His three-year public ministry. This second year of His ministry, was a

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year of great public popularity.<sup>i</sup> His fame had grown rapidly in Galilee and the jealousy of the Pharisees was already thoroughly aroused now in all parts of the country north and south. Thus as we study through the next chapters, we will see His activity during this year would be intense and His fame was destined to ring through all the land.

Nearly all this second year He ministered in Galilee, but there was a feast, presumably the Feast of the Passover in Jerusalem, which He attended before returning to Capernaum. Note the event and the response of the religious leaders in this chapter.

John 5:1-2: After this there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. 2. Now there is in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate a pool, which is called in Hebrew, Bethesda, having five porches. **(Now this is quite a verse to encourage your conviction is God's Word. This spot was buried for 1,800 years after Jerusalem was destroyed, and late in the 19<sup>th</sup> century it was dug up just where the inspired Word said it was!)**

John 5:5: Now a certain man was there who had an infirmity thirty-eight years. **(Here was a real test of Christ's power to heal.)**

John 5:9: And immediately the man was made well, took up his bed, and walked. And that day was the Sabbath. 10. The Jews therefore said to him who was cured, "It is the Sabbath; it is not lawful for you to carry your bed." **(Here was a real test of Christ's power and authority to do so on the Sabbath.)**

John 5:16-18: For this reason the Jews persecuted Jesus, and sought to kill Him, because He had done these things on **the Sabbath**. 17. But Jesus answered them, "My Father has been working until now, and I have been working." 18. Therefore the Jews sought all the more to kill Him, because He not only broke **the Sabbath**, but also said that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God.

John 5:28: "Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice. **(Now there is a reason to either be very secure or quite insecure; there is nowhere you can hide or get away from Jesus!)**

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John 5:40: "But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life. **(They were UNRESPONSIVE.)**

John 5:42: "But I know you, that you do not have the love of God in you. **(They were UNLOVING.)**

John 5:46: "For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote about Me. **(They were UNBELIEVING.)**

John 5:47: "But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?" **(They were thus UNSAVED.)**

So where are we going? Here is our path for studying the Sabbath:

1. First, **SABBATH PURPOSES**: What did **Jesus say about the Sabbath**? As Lord of Sabbath He said one thing: The Sabbath was made for man to worship God. It was not a prison, a straight jacket, a death squad to hunt Sabbath breakers; no, it was a delightful offer of spiritual communion with God.
2. Second, **SABBATH PROMISES**: **Do we need to rest and to cease from our wearying schedules**? Yes, and that is what this Old Testament picture teaches us New Testament saints! God offers rest!
3. Third, **SABBATH LAWS**: **Should we really meet on Sunday** or on the Sabbath Day, which is Saturday?
4. Fourth, **SABBATH BLESSINGS** **How do we apply all this to our lives**? How do we cultivate a rest, a cessation from weariness in our lives? How do we make worship of the Lord special on our Day of Gathering, the Lord's Day?
5. Fifth, **SABBATH THIEVES**: What **takes away the blessings** and promises of the rest God offers? This morning we start this examination of what robs us of the blessings of a personal Sabbath rest.
6. Sixth, **SABBATH PLANS**: What are **some simply wonderful plans** we can make to heighten our worship, our communion with God? Some real blessings can come with some small changes and some preparations.
7. Seventh, **SABBATH PICTURES**: What are **the illustrations** that Jesus, His apostles, and all the Old Testament saints used to show the plan of God? They are God's holidays, the feasts, and each is a wonderful picture and pathway to deepening our devotion to Jesus.
8. Finally, **SABBATH REST**: What does God want more than anything? Our minds.

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What is the key to our spiritual success? A mind that rests upon and is fixed upon the Lord God Almighty!

## **How to Slow Life Down**

### **WFF: Message Forty-Five (000820AM)**

Jesus lived the perfect life, accomplished more than any human ever did, and yet Jesus was never in a HURRY! He was **PURPOSED** but never **PUSHED**. He was **FOCUSED** but never **FRANTIC**. He was **RESOLVED** but never **RUSHED**!

Did you notice the pace of your life today as you met with God? Perhaps we all need to slow down and reflect on the following.

The paradox of our time in history is that we have:

- taller buildings but shorter tempers;
- wider freeways but narrower viewpoints;
- We spend more but have less;
- We buy more but enjoy it less.

- We have bigger houses and smaller families;
- more conveniences but less time;
- We have more degrees but less sense;
- more knowledge but less judgment;
- more experts but more problems;
- more medicine but less wellness.

- We drink too much, smoke too much, spend too recklessly,
- laugh too little, drive too fast, get too angry too quickly,
- stay up too late, get up too tired,
- read too little of God's Word, watch TV too much,
- fast too rarely, give too little, and pray too seldom.

- We have multiplied our possessions but reduced our values.
- We talk too much, love too seldom, and hate too often.
- We've learned how to make a living but not a life;
- We've added years to life, not life to years.
- We've been all the way to the moon and back but have trouble crossing the street to meet the new neighbor.
- We've conquered outer space but not inner space;
- We've done larger things but not better things;

- We've cleaned up the air but polluted the soul;
- We've split the atom but not our prejudice;

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We write more but learn less;  
We plan more but accomplish less.

We've learned to rush but not to wait;  
We have higher incomes but lower morals;  
We have more food but less appeasement;  
We build more computers to hold more information to produce more copies than ever but have less communication;  
We've become long on quantity but short on quality.

These are the times of fast foods and slow digestion;  
tall men and short character;  
steep profits and shallow relationships.  
These are the times of world peace (?) but domestic warfare;  
more leisure but less fun;  
more kinds of food but less nutrition.

These are days of two incomes but more divorce;  
of fancier houses but broken homes.

These are days of quick trips, disposable diapers,  
throw away morality, one-night stands, overweight bodies,  
and pills that do everything from cheer, to quiet, to kill.

It is a time when there is much in the show window and nothing in the stockroom;  
So it is time to look again at God's offer of REST!

Have you noticed that the world all around us is going faster and faster each day? And yes, we in turn are also speeding up. But some important questions we need to ask are:

When does faster become too fast?  
Is there a speed limit to life?  
What happens when we exceed it?  
Does God give us a ticket?

This week this has been my target of study and meditation. As I have thought long and hard about the issue of our rushed society, I have concluded that hurrying is as much responsible for the problem of personal and societal breakdown as any other single factor. Here are some truths to ponder:

- ❖ Virtually all our relationships are damaged by hurry.
- ❖ Many families are being starved to death by velocity.
- ❖ Our children lie wounded on the ground, run over by our high-speed good intentions.

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That is why we need to turn again to God's Word. I would like to introduce our study this morning in Isaiah 58. You might ask why would we in the New Testament Era, the Church Age of Grace, start studying an important Biblical topic in the Old Testament?

As you reflect on just the book of Isaiah, I think you will be able to answer that question yourself!

- ✓ ISAAH is the **fifth longest book in the Bible**, with 66 chapters, 1,292 verses, and 37,044 words.
- ✓ ISAAH is **quoted from or alluded to 472 times by 23 New Testament books**.
- ✓ ISAAH **contains more references to salvation** than any other Old Testament book (The word salvation appears 33 times in the writing of the prophets, and of these, 26 instances occur in Isaiah.)
- ✓ ISAAH contains the **only Old Testament prophecy concerning the virgin birth of Christ** (cf. Isaiah. 7:14 with Matthew. 1:21-23).
- ✓ ISAAH is **a miniature model of the Bible**: the Bible has 66 books → Isaiah has 66 chapters; the Old Testament has 39 books → the first section of Isaiah has 39 chapters; the New Testament has 27 books → the last section of Isaiah has 27 chapters; the 39 Old Testament books record the history and sin of Israel → so does Isaiah 1-39; the New Testament introduces Christ and His ministry → so does Isaiah 40-66.
- ✓ ISAAH contains **the two furthest reaching events in all of history**: The most ancient event is the fall of Satan (14:12-17) and the most future event, the creation of the new heavens and earth (66:22).
- ✓ ISAAH has **more to say about** the GREATNESS OF GOD (40,43), the HORRORS OF THE TRIBULATION (24), the WONDERS OF THE MILLENNIUM (35), and the MINISTRY OF CHRIST (53) than any other book in the Bible.
- ✓ ISAAH also contains one of **the Old Testament's clearest statements on the Trinity** (48:16).
- ✓ ISAAH 53 is probably **the most important chapter in the Old Testament**, as it is quoted from or alluded to 85 times in the New Testament. Jesus said that Isaiah saw His glory and spoke of Him (John 12:41).
- ✓ ISAAH makes **the Old Testament's clearest prophecy about an individual**. The Persian King Cyrus and his decree are both mentioned by Isaiah 150 years before Cyrus was even born! (See Isaiah. 44:28; 45:1.)

Should New Testament saints know Isaiah? Certainly we should if we want to be grounded in Biblical doctrine! So what does Isaiah 58 say? Delight in God through fasting (our previous study) and a cessation of endless activity for intimacy with God (our current study on the Sabbath) by setting aside your agenda on a regular basis, → and God will fill your life with delightful spiritual blessings!

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God's Word describes salvation from front to back, cover to cover as a rest. When is the last time you characterized your life as simple, restful, tranquil, peaceful, and quiet? Join me **as we stand and listen** to what God says in Isaiah 58:13-14. That is what Jesus meant when He said, "The Sabbath was made for man."

Let us turn to Mark 2:28 as we look at the Biblical teaching on the Sabbath. Jesus clearly sets the tone for the controversies of the day and speaks to us to this day on the Sabbath.

1. First, SABBATH PURPOSES: What did **Jesus say about the Sabbath**? As Lord of Sabbath He said one thing: The Sabbath was made for man to worship God. It was not a prison, a straight jacket, a death squad to hunt Sabbath breakers; no, it was a delightful offer of spiritual communion with God.
2. Second, SABBATH PROMISES: **Do we need to rest and to cease from our wearying schedules**? Yes, and that is what this Old Testament picture teaches us New Testament saints! God offers rest!
3. Third, SABBATH LAWS: **Should we really meet on Sunday** or on the Sabbath Day, which is Saturday?
4. Fourth, SABBATH BLESSINGS: **How do we apply all this to our lives**? How do we cultivate a rest, a cessation from weariness in our lives? How do we make worship of the Lord special on our Day of Gathering, the Lord's Day?
5. Fifth, SABBATH THIEVES: What **takes away the blessings** and promises of the rest God offers? This morning we start this examination of what robs us of the blessings of a personal Sabbath rest.
6. Sixth, SABBATH PLANS: What are **some simply wonderful plans** we can make to heighten our worship, our communion with God? Some real blessings can come with some small changes and some preparations.
7. Seventh, SABBATH PICTURES: What are **the illustrations** that Jesus, His apostles, and all the Old Testament saints used to show the plan of God? God's holidays, the feasts, and each is a wonderful picture and pathway to deepening our devotion to Jesus..
8. Finally, SABBATH REST: What does God want more than anything? Our minds. What is the key to our spiritual success? A mind that rests upon and is fixed upon the Lord God Almighty!

**Do we need to rest and to cease from our wearying schedules**? Yes, and that is what this Old Testament picture teaches us New Testament saints! God offers rest! Not too long after Christ's teaching on the Sabbath rest He invited His disciples to enjoy the serenity, tranquility, and solitude of rest. Look at Mark 6:31:

And He said to them, "Come aside by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while." For there were many coming and going, and they did not even have time to eat.

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As Jesus and the disciples needed to cease from their labors and to rest, so should we regularly cease. Our spiritual lives also need a time of reflection, a time of rest, a time of renewal, and a time to refocus. As noted author Kent Hughes says, "The seven day pattern is best for the soul, for properly observed in worship it brings Heaven's cadence to all of life."

Where are we today in America? Aren't we often far from rest? How far? Let me share a few insights that those who spend their lives watching our culture have noted.

Listen again to a popular paraphrase of Isaiah 58:13-14 as we turn back to that original passage to close this morning:

13. If you keep the Sabbath holy, not having your own fun and business on that day, but enjoying the Sabbath, speaking of it with delight as the Lord's holy day, and honoring the Lord in what you do, not following your own desires and pleasure nor talking idly— 14. then the Lord will be your delight, and I will see to it that you ride high and get your full share of the blessings I promised to Jacob, your father. The Lord has spoken. (TLB)

Isaiah 30:15 For thus says the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel: "In returning and rest you shall be saved; In quietness and confidence shall be your strength." But you would not,

Isaiah 48:18 Oh, that you had heeded My commandments! Then your peace would have been like a river, and your righteousness like the waves of the sea.

Do you see rest, quietness, and confidence - or weariness, pandemonium, and upheaval in daily life? Societal commentators see us far from the quietness and deep in the pandemonium.

❖ **First, how are you dealing with the change and stress which derail us from seeking God's promised quietness?**

- The only trouble with success is that the formula for achieving it is the same as the formula for a nervous breakdown. --CHUCK SWINDOLL
- Although people will pay to fix their stress, they are not about to change the lifestyle that is causing it. – DAVID C. MCCASLAND

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- Stress may be the spice of life or the kiss of death. – ROBERT ELLIOT, M.D., CARDIOLOGIST
  - Things get worse under pressure – MURPHY’S LAW OF THERMODYNAMICS.
  - “Ironically, the people of the future may suffer not from an absence of choice, but from a paralyzing surfeit of it,” explained ALVIN TOFFLER. “They may turn out to be victims of that peculiarly super-industrial dilemma: over choice...the point at which the advantages of diversity and individualization are canceled by the complexity of the buyer’s decision-making process.” i
  - Writer ROBERT KANIGEL understands change and stress.  
 “Here’s the problem: While choices multiply, we stay pretty much the same. Our bodies and minds remain the bottleneck through which choice must pass. We still have the same brains our forebears did, still only twenty-four hours a day to use them. We still need time and energy to listen, look, absorb, distinguish, and decide. The opportunity to choose among many options is, of course, a good thing. But maybe you can have too much of a good thing? Even of choice itself? Each choice saps energy, takes time, makes a big deal out of what isn’t.i
  - So much of daily living is now involved with the making of trivial decisions based on this incredible profusion of choice. As THOREAU wrote in *WALDEN*, “Our life is frittered away by detail.”

Isaiah 30:15 For thus says the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel: “In returning and rest you shall be saved; In quietness and confidence shall be your strength.” But you would not,

❖ **Second, how are you dealing with the ceaseless pressures of debt that rob our taking advantage of God's promised quietness or tranquility?**

Another reason we need to cease all and rest weekly is that it keeps us aware of the debt frenzy all around us.

- We will loan you enough money to get you completely out of debt. – SIGN IN A LOAN OFFICE
- More than a billion people around the world live on less than a dollar a day. – RON SIDER
- Interest works night and day, in fair weather and in foul. It gnaws at a man’s substance with invisible teeth. – HENRY WARD BEECHER
- Today, our lives are addictively intertwined in the economic system, and the credit-debt mentality has been fully normalized. “Someone has described a modern American as a person who drives a bank-financed car over a bond-financed highway on credit card gas to open a charge account at a

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department store so he can fill his savings-and-loan-financed home with installment-purchased furniture.”<sup>i</sup>

Isaiah 48:18 Oh, that you had heeded My commandments!  
Then your peace would have been like a river, and your  
righteousness like the waves of the sea.

❖ **Third, how are you dealing with Hurry and Rushi as they always displace God's time for us to rest?**

- “America. The land of the rushed,” complains small town journalist Peg Zaemisch. “We have proudly defined our American lifestyle as ‘life in the fast lane.’ Now, we rush to construct passing lanes, so we can get around those pokie-schmokies in the fast lane...do they think we’ve got all day? We’ve become a country of out-of-breath, red-faced folks, racing around with our hair permanently blowing back.” Zaemisch vows to tame her “catch-a-bullet-in-my-teeth schedule –just as soon as I get off this deadline.”<sup>i</sup>
- Even our sentences are peppered with such words as *time crunch*, *fast food*, *rush hour*, *frequent flyer*, *expressway*, *overnight delivery*, and *rapid transit*. The products and services we use further attest to our hurry: We send packages by Federal Express, use a long distance company called **Sprint**, manage our personal finances on **Quicken**, schedule our appointments on a **DayRunner**, diet with **SlimFast**, and swim in trunks made by **Speedo**.
- “The society in which we live today would have us believe, or at least hope, that life will be okay if we can just get it packaged right and served to us on the run,” observes publisher Bob Benson. <sup>i</sup>
- Speed. Hurry. We pay a price for the pace at which we live. The late French historian Jacques Ellul commented, “No one knows where we are going, the aim of life has been forgotten, the end has been left behind. Man has set out at tremendous speed – to go *nowhere*.”<sup>i</sup>
- These days, speed is of the essence,” observes David Sharp of *USA Today*. “Anything that can’t keep up becomes the cultural equivalent of road kill.” <sup>i</sup>
- “Yes, the world is going faster. And yes, we in turn are also going faster. But the important question one asks is this: When does faster become too fast? Is there a speed limit to life? What happens when we exceed it? Does God give us a ticket? I have thought long and hard about the issue of speed and have come to believe that it is as much responsible for the problem of personal and societal dysfunction as any other single factor. Virtually all of our relationships are damaged by hurry. Many families are being starved to death by velocity. Our children lie wounded on the ground, run over by our high-speed good intentions.”

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- Seminary president and author Chuck Swindoll claims our era is “the age of the half-read page, the quick hash and the mad dash, the bright night with the nerves tight, the plane hop with the brief stop, the lamp tan in a short span, the brain strain and the heart pain, the catnaps until the spring snaps..the land where the fun’s gone.”<sup>i</sup>

Isaiah 30:15: For thus says the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel: “In returning and rest you shall be saved; In quietness and confidence shall be your strength.” But you would not,

Isaiah 48:18: Oh, that you had heeded My commandments! Then your peace would have been like a river, and your righteousness like the waves of the sea.

Isaiah 58:13-14:

If you turn away your foot from the Sabbath,  
From doing your pleasure on My holy day,  
And call the Sabbath a delight,  
The holy day of the Lord honorable,  
And shall honor Him, not doing your own ways,  
Nor finding your own pleasure,  
Nor speaking your own words,  
14. Then you shall delight yourself in the Lord;  
And I will cause you to ride on the high hills of the earth,  
And feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father.  
The mouth of the Lord has spoken.

#### **PRESCRIPTIONS<sup>i</sup> FOR HEALING THE HURRY SICKNESS**

As the world around us accelerates, our energies wane. But we are not defenseless victims. The following suggestions will help replace frenzy with peace and rest.

**Rx 1-- *Consciously Slow the Pace of Life*** - I recently saw a T-shirt that read: “It’s not the pace of life that worries me. It’s the sudden stop at the end.” After contemplation, I decided the exact opposite is true. “The sudden stop at the end” means a home going that, quite frankly, I look forward to. But *the pace of life is deadly!* Is it possible to consciously slow our pace? Of course it is. We just have to say *no* more often. It is not

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easy, but it is necessary—and it is right. Every year the world spins faster. So put on the brakes and obey the speed limit of your soul. The green pastures and still waters yet await us—but not in the direction the treadmill is spinning.<sup>i</sup>

**Rx 2 – *Make Technology Work for You and Not against You* - Remember:**

Timesaving technologies don't save time. Instead, they compress and consume time. Recognizing that technology is responsible for much of our time-urgency problem, it is appropriate to be skeptical. Clocks, watches, alarms, computers, answering machines, cell phones, pagers, and fax machines often create more time problems than they solve. Use them judiciously. Always make technology work for you and not against you. If you can't control it, don't trust it. "The high-tech world of clocks and schedules, computers and programs, was supposed to free us from a life of toil and deprivation," explains technology critic Jeremy Rifkin in *Time Wars*, "yet with each passing day the human race becomes more...exploited and victimized."<sup>i</sup> Leaving a workshop where I had just spoken, a dentist took off his watch and flipped it into the swimming pool. You might not wish to be quite this dramatic. But, then again...

**Rx 3-- *Throw Away the Alarm Clock* –** Psychiatrist Paul Meier provocatively asserts, "If you wake up to an alarm every morning, there is a good chance that you are out of the will of God." Radical thinking! But he is simply trying to shock us into rethinking the will of God in light of the original equipment provided at creation. An alarm clock was not a part of the package. Instead, God caused our bodies generally to wake up when we have had enough sleep. Now, however, that natural process never gets a chance to complete itself.

**Rx 4-- *Repent of the Pride of Busyness* --** The busier we appear, the greater the respect afforded us. While the person sitting on a lawn swing is scorned, the speed-of-light jet jockey is venerated. "The clock dictates the tempo of our lives," explains Mayo Gilson, M.D. "We all hurry, involving others in our hurry. Paradoxically, we point at our lack of time with a certain pride, as if that lack has something to do with our importance as a person. <sup>i</sup> There is a trap here, and pride is its name. Before we can slow down and allow God to set things right in our hearts, we have some confessing to do. It is not busyness that we should honor in our midst, but love. Busyness and love are not the same. One is speed; the other is God.

**Rx 5 -- "*Ruthlessly Eliminate Hurry*"--** When John Ortberg moved from California to Illinois to assume a position at the rapidly growing Willow Creek Community Church, he first asked a wise mentor for advice. "You must ruthlessly eliminate hurry from your life," said his friend. Ortberg wrote down the advice and then waited for the next suggestion. "There is nothing else," explained the sage.<sup>i</sup> Three aspects of this truth strike me: How *simple* it is, how *difficult* it is, and how *ruthless* it is. *Ruthless* is indeed the best word to use in this context, because no other degree of intention is sufficient to accomplish such a goal.

The Sabbath:

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- They had the temple
  - They had the sacrifices
  - They had the priesthood
  - They had the feasts and holy months
  - They had the Scriptures
  - They had the Sabbath

For the 1<sup>st</sup> century Pharisee, God was lost in the ceremony. Could it be for us in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century He is obscured by the dust our hurried lives kick up?

So, Christ confronts head on a tradition that had grown into a monster, and again vividly demonstrates He is God. What about those who say Saturday is the day or you can't do anything on Sunday like sell things or play games, etc? Let me sketch just briefly the Christian and Sunday!

Why Sabbath? We need to watch or our daily routine can crowd out God and worship! Also symbols can help us. Some problems are solved by careful thought, rearranging priorities, discussion, and good counsel; others only by prayer!

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## Our Amazingly Jewish Heritage

WFF: Message Forty-Six (000820PM)

Please turn with me to Romans 14:5. As we turn there, let me say that it is a real challenge to divide rightly the Word when good and godly men have come down on every side of the Sabbath concept. Just a brief reading in this realm shows how wondrous have been the lives, ministries, and writings of these great men of God and teachers of His Word.

### OUR AMAZINGLY JEWISH HERITAGE

We are looking at a city made by God called the New JERUSALEM.  
It has 12 Gates named after the 12 JEWISH Apostles,  
There are 12 Foundations named after the 12 Tribes of ISRAEL,  
God sits on a hill called ZION,  
And we are heading to a Feast with ABRAHAM, ISAAC and JACOB already SEATED!

The challenge is this, we should not forget that:

- ✓ We serve the King of the Jews.
- ✓ We are members of a church founded by Jewish leaders; our highest authority is a Jewish Bible.
- ✓ Our God is Jewish for "Salvation is of the Jews" is what no less than God in human flesh, our Lord Jesus said in John 4:22.
- ✓ All of our benefits are derivative from the Abrahamic covenant. We are grafted in the true olive tree, from the root of Abraham as Romans 11 exhaustively explains.

While we have been freed from the law, we still can enjoy the benefits of creation. So the Sabbath is intended as a time of devotion, not a subjection to burdensome rules. It is for the benefit of man, to be taken advantage of. As a demonstration of God's love, and a partaking of His blessing, the seventh day apparently has not been permanently set aside. We find it in the Millennium (Ezekiel 40-48) and in the New Heavens and Earth (Isaiah 66).

In our culture we enjoy two free days each week, in any case. The first-day worship is an opportunity to follow the example of the New Testament Church and honor Christ's resurrection. The seventh-day Sabbath is also still available to us as an opportunity, yet not under the law:

*One man esteemeth one day above another; another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. - Romans 14:5.*

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Now, before we go to Mark 2:23-28 this evening, look with me please at Mark 3:1. What a blessing it must have been for Christ and the apostles as they stopped in for synagogue or temple worship services. The following was the order of the Psalms in the daily service of the temple.

1. Sunday: On the first day of the week they sang Psalm 24, "The earth is the Lords," etc., in commemoration of the first day of creation, when "God possessed the world, and ruled in it."
2. Monday: On the second day they sang Psalm 48, "Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised," etc., because on the second day of creation "the Lord divided His works, and reigned over them."
3. Tuesday: On the third day they sang Psalm 82, "God standeth in the congregation of the mighty," etc., "because on that day the earth appeared, on which are the Judge and the judged."
4. Wednesday: On the fourth day Psalm 94 was sung, "O Lord God, to whom vengeance belongeth," etc., "because on the fourth day God made the sun, moon, and stars, and will be avenged on those that worship them."
5. Thursday: On the fifth day they sang Psalm 81, "Sing aloud unto God our strength," etc., "because of the variety of creatures made that day to praise His name."
6. Friday: On the sixth day Psalm 93 was sung, "The Lord reigneth," etc., "because on that day God finished His works and made man, and the Lord ruled over all His works."
7. Saturday: Lastly, on the Sabbath they sang Psalm 92, "It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord," etc., "because the Sabbath was symbolical of the millennial kingdom at the end of the six thousand years dispensation, when the Lord would reign over all, and His glory and service fill the earth with thanksgiving."

The seven feasts are an elegant demonstration of God's prophetic timetable. Briefly, our Lord was crucified on Passover, buried on Unleavened Bread, raised on First Fruits, and sent the Holy Spirit on Pentecost. Those are the feasts we have seen fulfilled. Evidently in up-coming days He will hold the Rapture on the Feast of Trumpets and return in His Second Coming on the Day of Atonement. Finally, the triumphant Feast of Tabernacles will characterize the Kingdom itself.

God's redemptive New Testament timetable is pictured in the feasts of Leviticus 23.

The first great feast mentioned in that chapter is Passover. The killing of the Passover lamb pictured the death of Jesus Christ, the ultimate Passover Lamb (1 Cor. 5:7).

A second feast was the Feast of Unleavened Bread, celebrated on the day after Passover. During that feast, an offering of the first fruits of the grain harvest was made. Leviticus 23:15 commands that offering to be made on the day after the Sabbath. The

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Sadducees and Pharisees differed on what that Sabbath was. The Sadducees interpreted it as the weekly Sabbath, and hence the grain offering would always be on a Sunday. The Pharisees interpreted the Sabbath as the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. According to that interpretation, the grain offering would always fall on the same day of the month but not the same day of the week. Until the destruction of the Temple in A.D. 70, the Sadducees' interpretation was normative for Judaism (F. F. Bruce, *The Book of the Acts* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971], 53 n. 3). Hence, the day the first fruits were offered would have been on Sunday. That provides an apt picture of the Lord Jesus Christ's resurrection as the "first fruits of those who are asleep" (1 Cor. 15:20).

Fifty days after the first Sunday following Passover, the Feast of Pentecost was celebrated (Lev. 23:15ff.). At Pentecost another offering of first fruits was made (Lev. 23:20). Completing the cycle of the typical fulfillment of the feasts, the Spirit came on Pentecost as the first fruits of the believers' inheritance (cf. 2 Cor. 5:5; Eph. 1:13–14). Further, those gathered into the church on that day were the first fruits of the full harvest of believers to come. God sent the Spirit on Pentecost, then, following the pattern of Leviticus 23, not in response to any activity of men.<sup>i</sup>

The weekly Sabbath: God orders our times (Lev. 23:1–3). The weekly Sabbath wasn't one of the annual feasts (Ex. 20:8–11), but it was an important day for the Jewish people, and they were expected to honor it. To dishonor it meant death (Num. 15:32–36). God gave the Sabbath to Israel for several reasons.

1. For one thing, it provided needed rest and refreshment for the people, the farm animals, and the land. ("Sabbath" comes from a Hebrew word that means "to rest, to cease from labor.") Based on Genesis 2:1–3, the weekly Sabbath reminded the Jews that Jehovah God was the Creator and they were but stewards of His generous gifts.
2. The Lord also ordained Sabbath years and the Year of Jubilee to keep the Jews from exploiting the land and impoverishing it (Lev. 25). God's tender concern for His creation is seen in the Sabbath laws.
3. The Sabbath was also a special sign between God and His covenant people (Ex. 31:12–17). Other peoples might work on the seventh day and treat it like any other day, but the Israelites rested on the seventh day and thereby gave witness that they belonged to the Lord (Neh. 13:15–22; Isa. 58:13–14). Nehemiah made it clear that the Sabbath law wasn't given to Israel until they arrived at Sinai (Neh. 9:13–14), while Psalm 147:19–20 indicates that the law was never given to the Gentile nations. Although believers today aren't commanded to "remember the Sabbath Day" (Rom. 14:1ff; Col. 2:16–17), the principle of resting one day in seven is a good one.

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Jesus actually never broke the Sabbath by any of His or His disciples' actions. And He declared as Lord of the Sabbath, it was His place and purpose to supercede and fulfill the Sabbath by the institution of the Lord's Day. This was accepted and followed by the early church and attested to in the New Testament.

So why do we worship and meet on Sunday? In six specific ways we see this supercession of Sunday replacing Saturday:

1. Christ's resurrection was on the 1<sup>st</sup> day or Sunday in Matthew 28:1; Mark 16:1; Luke 24:1; and John 20:1.
2. Christ's meeting with and revelation to the Emmaus Road disciples in Luke 24:13-35 was on the 1<sup>st</sup> day or Sunday.
3. Christ's confirmation of Thomas also took place a week following the 1<sup>st</sup> Lord's Day on the 1<sup>st</sup> day or Sunday in John 20:19, 26.

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4. Christ's promised coming of the Holy Spirit most likely fell on a 1<sup>st</sup> day of the week or Sunday if we check the Templei chronology held by the Sadducees.
  5. Christ's Church chose to meet on the 1<sup>st</sup> day or Sunday in Acts 20:7 for breaking of bread and in I Corinthians 16:2 for collections to be taken up. And these seem to be regularly occurring.
  6. Christ's meeting with John on Patmos was a special time when the 1<sup>st</sup> day or Sunday was called the Lord's Day in Revelation 1:10.

As we page through the history of the Church, we find an almost complete ignoring of any references to the Sabbath day. By the time of the Reformation the reformers were universal in their stated belief that the Lord's Day was not the same as the Sabbath day and that the Sabbath law had been superceded by the Lord's Day.

However, latter generations of one branch of the reformed movement changed all that. In the 1648 Westminster Confession the English Puritans wrongly identified the Sabbath day as Sunday and called it the Christian Sabbath. This view has no support from God's Word just from the Puritan theologians. Although there are many similarities between the Sabbath and the Lord's Day in the weekly nature of each, the commemoration of God's work in the Passover (Deuteronomy 5:15) and Christ's resurrection, and the emphasis each have upon worship, the similarities end there. Just as we are bound by God's Word to regular, corporate worship (Hebrews 10:24-25), we are not commanded to rest like the Old Testament Sabbath demanded. Rest for us in this Age of Grace is a humble, prayerful choice, which God says will bring many precious rewards. God offers us rest, renewal, refreshment, and refocus - He doesn't force it upon us!

After the Resurrection the Sabbath is only mentioned three times and then only in reference to the Jews' meeting at synagogues. See Mark 2:27

## **# 1 WORSHIP THE RISEN CHRIST**

The New Testament Church picked Sunday as the day of worship. Acts 2:46 – Everyday but this was to honor Christ's resurrection – Matthew 28:1; Mark 16:2; Luke 24:1; John 20:1,19;

Note Specifically:

Acts 20:7 first day

I Corinthians 16:2 first day

## **#2 DON'T JUDGE**

However – Beware of anyone who makes Sunday your Sabbath. Galatians 4:10; Colossians 2:16

What was Christ saying? Mark 2:23

- God made the Sabbath for intimacy with Him by us

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- New Testament we have reality Christ
  - Sunday is the day we focus as an assembled Church upon Him and His Word
  - Obey Him, meet necessities, do good and don't judge

So what do we celebrate on Sunday, the Lord's Day? The Lord's Supper is a look back where we remember the great work of Christ's cross nearly 2,000 years ago. Note these past events:

- Christ died, Christ rose, and Christ ascended to God's right hand,
- Christ took my penalty upon Himself, Christ imputed His righteousness upon me,
- Sin was dealt with, guilt was passed away, and sin's shackles were broken,
- Satan was defeated, the fear and power of death was destroyed, eternal life was given, and the destiny of Hell was blotted out of the future for all who came.

Contrary to the claims of some today, Christians are not required to worship on the **Sabbath day**. It, like the other Old Covenant holy days Paul mentions, is not binding under the New Covenant. There is convincing evidence for that in Scripture.

1. First, the Sabbath was the sign to Israel of the Old Covenant (Ex. 31:16-17; Neh. 9:14; Ezek. 20:12). Because we are now under the New Covenant (Heb. 8), we are no longer required to keep the sign of the Old Covenant.
2. Second, the New Testament nowhere commands Christians to observe the Sabbath.
3. Third, in our only glimpse of an early church worship service in the New Testament, we find the Church meeting on Sunday, the first day of the week (Acts 20:7).
4. Fourth, we find no hint in the Old Testament that God expected the Gentile nations to observe the Sabbath, nor are they ever condemned for failing to do so. That is certainly strange if He expected all peoples to observe the Sabbath.
5. Fifth, there is no evidence of anyone's keeping the Sabbath before the time of Moses, nor are there any commands to keep the Sabbath before the giving of the law at Mount Sinai.
6. Sixth, the Jerusalem Council did not impose Sabbath keeping on the Gentile believers (Acts 15).
7. Seventh, Paul warned the Gentiles about many different sins in his epistles, but never about breaking the Sabbath.
8. Eighth, Paul rebuked the Galatians for thinking God expected them to observe special days (Including the Sabbath) (Gal. 4:10-11).
9. Ninth, Paul taught that keeping the Sabbath was a matter of Christian liberty (Rom. 14:5).
10. Tenth, the early church fathers, from Ignatius to Augustine, taught that the Old Testament Sabbath had been abolished and that the first day of the week

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(Sunday) was the day when Christians should meet for worship. That disproves the claim of some that Sunday worship was not instituted until the fourth century.

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## Enjoying a Personal Sabbath Rest

WFF: Message Forty-Seven (000827AM)

Can you imagine how exasperating it was to camp in tents for 40 years, and to camp in the wilderness of Sinai 3,500 years ago, and to camp living around perhaps over three million Israelite also living in tents?

Just to feed 3 million people would take 1300 railroad boxcars of food each day, or a daily train 9 1/2 miles long! Can you imagine the deafening buzz of all those people talking, walking, bartering, gathering, cooking, cleaning, and caring for their campsites?

But on the Sabbath all the sounds and din of worldly toil would cease. And for one day they were given the opportunity to listen and to hear the still small voice of God. The dust of all those feet rushing in every direction subsided so that a clear view of the heavenly horizons could come into view.

God taught them to set one day in seven aside for worship so that all the nations around them would see that they were a God-seeking people. This was demonstrated by the sacrifices they had to make to worship God (both schedule and livestock). As F. B. Meyer, the devotional-writing, Baptist pastor from England in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, said, "No nation can allow a permanent invasion of the Rest-Day without invalidating its claim to be a God-Honoring people." God made it clear that He claims the thoughts and time of His people by a weekly pause.

Now think of Jesus who lived the perfect life, accomplished more than any human ever did, and yet Jesus was never in a HURRY! He was Purposed but never PUSHED. He was Focused but never FRANTIC. He was Resolved but never RUSHED!

Turn to Mark 2:27-28 as we look at the essential Biblical teaching on the Sabbath. The Sabbath was made for man and Jesus clearly sets the tone for the controversies of the day and speaks to us to this day on the Sabbath.

1. First, SABBATH PURPOSES: What did **Jesus say about the Sabbath**? As Lord of Sabbath He said one thing: The Sabbath was made for man to worship God. It was not a prison, a straight jacket, a death squad to hunt Sabbath breakers; no, it was a delightful offer of spiritual communion with God.
2. Second, SABBATH PROMISES: **Do we need to rest and to cease from our wearying schedules**? Yes, and that is what this Old Testament picture teaches us New Testament saints! God offers rest!

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3. Third, SABBATH LAWS: **Should we really meet on Sunday** or on the Sabbath day, which is Saturday?
  4. Fourth, SABBATH BLESSINGS: **How do we apply all this to our lives?** How do we cultivate a rest, a cessation from weariness in our lives? How do we make worship of the Lord profitable on our Day of Gathering, the Lord's Day?
  5. Fifth, SABBATH THIEVES: What **takes away the blessings** and promises of the rest God offers? Legalism, law keeping, distractions, and lawmaking!
  6. Finally, SABBATH PLANS: What are **some simply wonderful plans** we can make to heighten our worship, our communion with God? Some real blessings can come with some small changes and some preparations. Sunday preparations, family Bible times, studying Biblical backgrounds, and celebrating Biblical events all are wonderful plans we can make to sharpen our focus on our great God.
  7. Seventh, SABBATH PICTURES what are **the illustrations** that Jesus, His apostles, and all the Old Testament saints used to show the plan of God? God's holidays, the feasts, and each is a wonderful picture and pathway to deepening our devotion to Jesus.
  8. Finally, SABBATH REST: What does God want more than anything? Our minds. What is the key to our spiritual success? A mind that rests upon and is fixed upon the Lord God Almighty!

SABBATH BLESSINGS. **How do we apply all this to our lives?** How do we cultivate a rest, a cessation from weariness in our lives? How do we make worship of the Lord special on our Day of Gathering, the Lord's Day? Not too long after Christ's teaching on the Sabbath rest He invited His disciples to enjoy the serenity, tranquility, and solitude of rest. Look at Mark 6:31

And He said to them, "Come aside by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while." For there were many coming and going, and they did not even have time to eat.

As Jesus and the disciples needed to cease from their labors and rest, so should we regularly cease. Our spiritual lives also need a time of reflection, a time of rest, a time of renewal, and a time to refocus. Do you see rest, quietness, and confidence - or weariness, pandemonium, and upheaval in daily life?

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God's Word describes salvation from front to back, cover to cover as a rest. When is the last time you characterized your life as simple, restful, tranquil, peaceful, and quiet? Join me **again as we listen** to what God says in Isaiah 58:13-14. That is what Jesus meant when He said, "The Sabbath was made for man." So what does Isaiah 58 say? Delight in God through fasting (our previous study) and a cessation of endless activity for intimacy with God (our current study on the Sabbath) by setting aside your agenda on a regular basis → and God will fill your life with delightful spiritual blessings!

Isaiah 58:13-14: If you turn away your foot from the Sabbath, From doing your pleasure on My holy day, And call the Sabbath a delight, The holy day of the Lord honorable, And shall honor Him, not doing your own ways, Nor finding your own pleasure, Nor speaking your own words, 14. Then you shall delight yourself in the Lord; And I will cause you to ride on the high hills of the earth, And feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father. The mouth of the Lord has spoken.

### ***A Personal Sabbath Rest Is Christ's Prescription for Healing the Hurry Sickness of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Church -***

As the world around us accelerates, our energies wane. But we are not defenseless victims. The following suggestions will help replace frenzy with peace and rest.

### ***A Personal Sabbath Rest Helps Us Find Stillness as We Bow before God -***

"Be still and know that I am God" (Ps. 46:10 NIV). Before hurrying past that profound command, let's turn it over in our minds several times.

*Cease striving and know that I am God.*

*Stand silent! Know that I am God!* [TLB]

*Let be and be still, and know—recognize and understand—that I am God.* [AMP]

*"Give in", he cries, "admit that I am God."* [Moffat]

*"Stop fighting, " he says, "and know that I am God."* [TEV]

*Step out of the traffic! Take a long, loving look at me, your High God, above everything.* [The Message]

However, if we may prefer to read it, this is an emphatic imperative addressed to God's own people. People of every race, color, culture, and era...people of any level of maturity and age - people who are employed or unemployed, single or married, with or

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without children, all people whose God is the Lord. We are commanded to stop (literally) rest, relax, let go, and make time for Him.

The scene is one of stillness and quietness, listening and waiting before Him. Such foreign experiences in these busy times! Nevertheless, knowing God deeply and intimately requires such discipline. Silence is indispensable if we hope to add depth to our spiritual life. It “guards the fire within our souls... silence makes us pilgrims,”<sup>i</sup> writes one who advocates protracted, uninterrupted periods of quietness. It sharpens the keen edge of our souls, sensitizing us to those ever-so-slight nudgings from our heavenly Father. Noise and words and frenzied, hectic schedules dull our senses, closing our ears to His still, small voice and making us numb to His touch. One scholar and author does a splendid job of analyzing then illustrating the downside of what he calls “our wordy world.”

There was a time not too long ago without radios and televisions, stop signs, yield signs, merge signs, bumper stickers, and the ever-present announcements indicating price increases or special sales. There was a time without the advertisements which now cover whole cities with words. In such a world who can maintain respect for words? <sup>i</sup>

**A Personal Sabbath Rest Helps Us Cultivate Serenity: the Discipline of Solitude –** Solitude has been called “the furnace of transformation.” <sup>i</sup> I don’t have in mind mere personal privacy for a twelve-second pit stop where we get a quick fix to reenter the race. It is more than that. It is an oasis of the soul where we see ourselves, others, and especially our God in new ways. It is where much of the “clutter” I mentioned earlier is identified and exterminated, thanks to the merciless heat of the “furnace.” Soul surgery transpires as serenity replaces anxiety. Another author describes solitude in practical, searching terms:

In solitude I get rid of my scaffolding: no friends to talk with, no telephone calls to make, no meetings to attend, no music to entertain, no books to distract, just me—naked, vulnerable, weak, sinful, deprived, broken—nothing.<sup>i</sup>

And there is where the scalpel of God's Word cuts and removes what needs to be eliminated so that I may know God. Hebrews 4:12-13.

**A Personal Sabbath Rest Helps Us in Offering Ourselves in Surrender to God - Trusting the Lord Completely: The Discipline of Surrender.**

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We have reared a generation of strong-willed, belligerent, independent young men and women. Surrender is not a word in their vocabulary. Too bad, since it is the key that unlocks the vault of God's best and deepest treasures. He patiently waits for us to yield, to quit fighting Him, to allow His plan to run its course, to turn to Him for our security and significance. As He witnesses our doing that, he begins to reveal Himself and His will in greater depth.

God says to us: Surrender your rights.	"Are you kidding? I'll sue!"
God says to us: Surrender your future.	"No way. My mind's made up!"
God says to us: Surrender your will.	"Not me. I give in to no one!"
God says to us: Surrender your dreams.	"Never. I've worked too hard!"
God says to us: Surrender to your mate.	"Me? Get a life!"
God says to us: Surrender your finances.	"What? I'm planning to retire!"

There is a wonderfully challenging book by one of the early leaders at Wheaton College, Dr. Edman. You will probably shake your head with understanding when I read the following words. Nothing better describes the give-and-take struggle of our early years as a Christian. They are words from a collection of Puritan prayers and devotions.

*When thou wouldst guide me  
I control myself.  
When thou wouldst be sovereign  
I rule myself.  
When thou wouldst take care of me  
I suffice myself.  
When I should depend on thy providings  
I supply myself.  
When I should submit to thy providence  
I follow my will.  
When I should study, honor, trust thee,  
I serve myself;  
I fault and correct thy laws  
to suit myself,*

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*Instead of thee I look to  
Man's approbation,  
And am by nature an idolater.  
Lord, it is my chief design to bring my  
heart back to Thee.i*

### **A Personal Sabbath Rest Helps Us in True Preparation for Worship: Preparationi**

The answer to the problem begins with Saturday preparation. (Any men who interpret the following as women's work are wrong. Both husband and wife should share responsibility for the practical and spiritual preparations for the Lord's Day.) It is advisable that young families have their clothing clean and laid out on Saturday night, and even that the breakfast be decided upon. The whereabouts of Bibles and lessons should be known, and even better, ought to be collected and ready. There should be an agreed-upon time to get up which leaves plenty of time to get ready for church. Going to bed at a reasonable hour is also a good idea. Spiritually, prayer about the Lord's Day is essential –prayer for the service, the music, the pastors, one's family, and oneself. i

The Puritans understood this well. As one of their great preachers, George Swinnock, quaintly expressed it:

Prepare to meet thy God, O Christian! Betake thyself to thy chamber on the Saturday night...The oven of thine heart thus baked, as it were, overnight, would be easily heated the next morning; the fire so well raked up when thou wentest to bed, would be the sooner kindled. when thou should rise. If thou wouldst thus leave thy heart with God on the Saturday night, thou shouldst find it with him in the Lord's Day morning. i

On Sunday everyone needs to get up on time, eat at a set hour, and leave plenty early, ideally after a short time of family prayer asking that God will be glorified and speak to each family member. If you do this, Sunday worship will ascend to new heights.

### **On Saturday**

I have asked Christ to make me sensitive tomorrow to needs of people in the body who are hurting.

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I have solved the “Sunday clothes hassle” by making sure that what I will wear is ready today.

I have spent time in confession so all will be right between myself and my Lord when we meet tomorrow.

I have determined to get to bed early so I will be refreshed and ready for church tomorrow.

I have planned on sustaining the delight of this time with Christ and his people by guarding against Sunday afternoon infringements.

### *On Sunday*

I have gotten up in plenty of time so I will not feel rushed.

I have programmed my morning so I will not just arrive at church on time, but get there early.

I have eaten a good breakfast, so an empty stomach will not detract from my worship.

I have my bible in hand plus a pen and paper for taking notes.

I have left for church with a great sense of expectancy because I know Christ will be there.<sup>i</sup>

Finally, we must also understand that the discipline of worship is the way to bounding *gladness* in worship. As Eugene Peterson has so well said: “Worship is an *act* which develops feelings for God, not a *feeling* for God which is expressed in an act of worship.”<sup>i</sup> Let us plan a pattern of personal Sabbath rest for the purpose of worship!

### ***A Personal Sabbath Rest Helps us Cultivate the Discipline of Simplicity in our Lives by Reordering One’s Private World.***

#### **The Decision**

to reorder one’s private world

to be still

to cultivate serenity

to trust the Lord completely

#### **The Discipline**

simplicity

silence

solitude

surrender

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**The Decision** to reorder one's private world **Is The Discipline of** simplicity. **The Decision** to be still **Is The Discipline of** silence. **The Decision** to cultivate serenity **Is The Discipline of** solitude. **The Decision** to trust the Lord completely **Is The Discipline of** surrender.

**A Personal Sabbath Rest: *Helps Us in Genuine Expectancy of God's Presence* -**

This knowledge of God through his Word ought to heighten our expectations and instill healthy fear and reverence. As Annie Dillard wrote:

On the whole, I do not find Christians, outside of the Catacombs, sufficiently sensible of conditions. Does anyone have the foggiest idea what sort of power we so blithely invoke? Or as I suspect, does no one believe a word of it?...It is madness to wear ladies' straw hats and velvet hats to church; we should all be wearing crash helmets. Ushers should issue life preservers and signal flares; they should lash us to our pews. For the sleeping god may wake someday and take offense, or the waking god may draw us out to where we can never return. i

**A Personal Sabbath Rest: *Helps Us Preserve Our Experience of the Depths of God in Our Lives* -**

How can we preserve our hearts for the Lord's Day? Edith Schaeffer tells how. When living in Villars, Switzerland, the church bells would toll every Saturday at 4:30 P.M. as a reminder to prepare for the Lord's Day. The bells were ignored by most but were a poignant reminder of a more enlightened day.

The point is, we need to begin thinking about the Lord's Day *before* Saturday night. Parents, and I mean both men and women:

- ✓ How much more meaningful the day would be if clothing were laid out and food decided upon and if everyone headed to bed at a reasonable time.
- ✓ How much better the Lord's Day would be if Christian families just took two minutes on Saturday evening to pray for God's blessing on the worship events of the day.
- ✓ How much better if we fasted from TV in preparation. And on Sunday morning,

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- ✓ How far better it would be if a wife never heard, “Honey, you got the kids ready yet? I’m going to be late,” but instead something like, “Dear, the boys are ready, and so am I.”

The Sabbath:

- They had the temple
- They had the sacrifices
- They had the priesthood
- They had the feasts and holy months
- They had the Scriptures
- They had the Sabbath

**For the 1<sup>st</sup> century Pharisee, God was lost in the ceremony. Could it be for us in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century He is obscured by the dust our hurried lives kick up?**

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## How to END Hurry in My Life

### WFF: Message Forty-Eight (000903AM)

Waiting on God is a massive theme in God's Word. A personal Sabbath is a time of planned, focused waiting upon God. But often that time gets stolen from our plans!

The Holy Spirit chose eight different Hebrew words to paint the picture of the God who seeks us to come silently before Him and to listen to Him through His Word. A personal Sabbath feeds our patience, strengthens our obedience, focuses our spirit, and renews our strength. As Isaiah said, "like an eagle" we soar to the heights of God's presence.

The truth is that waiting on God has been the foundation for spiritual growth for the past five thousand years. Yet over the last thirty years our generation has been robbed of this important truth. And it is now to the point that many don't even see what has been lost. Are you wiped out, tired, fatigued, exhausted, and locked in to hurrying to and fro with no rest in sight? Then "waiting upon the Lord" may be the answer to our loss of a personal resting in the Lord.

*They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength." Isaiah 40:31 (KJV).*

One noted pastor wrote, "I found myself hurrying God, I just kind of fit Him in wherever He needed to be fit in. And one day God's Word showed me God was not going to fit around my schedule. I had to fit my schedule around His. That changed my whole life." The truth is, if we will not recover the discipline of waiting, God is under no moral obligation to speed up His timetable to accommodate our urgency. We will find Him in all His peace, refreshment, and sweetness when we seek Him with all our heart (Deut. 4:29) and "Rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him." (Psalm 37:7 KJV).

Let's see the offer God makes as we turn together this morning to the last verse of Isaiah 40 and listen to the offer God has made to you and me.

### **Biblical Teaching on the Sabbath**

Now we return to Mark 2:27-28, as we look at the Biblical teaching on the Sabbath. Jesus clearly sets the tone for the controversies of the day and speaks to us to this day on the Sabbath.

1. First, SABBATH PURPOSES: What did **Jesus say about the Sabbath**? As Lord of Sabbath He said one thing: The Sabbath was made for man to worship God. It was not a prison, a straight jacket, a death squad to hunt Sabbath breakers; no, it was a delightful offer of spiritual communion with God.

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2. Second, SABBATH PROMISES: **Do we need to rest and to cease from our wearying schedules?** Yes, and that is what this Old Testament picture teaches us New Testament saints! God offers rest!
  3. Third, SABBATH LAWS: **Should we really meet on Sunday** or on the Sabbath Day, which is Saturday?
  4. Fourth, SABBATH BLESSINGS: **How do we apply all this to our lives?** How do we cultivate a rest, a cessation from weariness in our lives? How do we make worship of the Lord special on our Day of Gathering, the Lord's Day?
  5. Fifth, SABBATH THIEVES: What **takes away the blessings** and promises of the rest God offers? This morning we start this examination of what robs us of the blessings of a personal Sabbath rest.

- ✓ First, LOVELESS OBEDIENCE robs us of the promised Sabbath rest.
- ✓ Second, PASSIONLESS SEEKING robs us.
- ✓ Next time we will see that MEDIA OVERLOAD STEALS OUR REST: A Personal Sabbath Rest: *Helps us root out the contamination of the media:* Research has demonstrated that we store three trillion “videotape” images in our brain by the time we are thirty years old. But, worrisomely, we have no volitional control over selective forgetting. Once the images are there, we must then live with the consequences of that visual imprint.
- ✓ SUPERFICIALITY STEALS OUR REST: A Personal Sabbath Rest: *Helps us root out the contamination of superficiality in our culture-*
- ✓ LEGALISM STEALS OUR REST: A Personal Sabbath Rest: *Helps us counter the claims we are required to worship on the Sabbath day.*
- ✓ BUSYNESS STEALS OUR REST: A Personal Sabbath Rest: *Helps us repent of the pride of busyness -* The busier we appear, the greater the respect afforded us. While the person sitting on a lawn swing is scorned, the speed-of-light jet jockey is venerated.
- ✓ HURRY STEALS OUR REST: A Personal Sabbath Rest: *Helps us “ruthlessly eliminate hurry”*
- ✓ THE CEASELESS PRESSURES OF DEBT STEAL OUR REST: Debt can rob our taking advantage of God's promised quietness or tranquility?

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6. Sixth, SABBATH PLANS: What are **some simply wonderful plans** we can make to heighten our worship, our communion with God? Some real blessings can come with some small changes and some preparations.
  7. Seventh, SABBATH PICTURES what are **the illustrations** that Jesus, His apostles, and all the Old Testament saints used to show the plan of God? God's holidays, the feasts, and each is a wonderful picture and pathway to deepening our devotion to Jesus.
  8. Finally, SABBATH REST: What does God want more than anything? Our minds. What is the key to our spiritual success? A mind that rests upon and is fixed upon the Lord God Almighty!

The first thief that steals our personal Sabbath rest is loveless obedience to God. When Jesus said that all the Law was fulfilled by love, He meant it. In our text Jesus reminds the loveless obeyers (the Pharisees) in v. 27 that the original purpose of the Sabbath was for man and in v. 28 that we must obey our Lord Jesus as Lord over the Sabbath. This morning, this side of the Cross, how can we do that? We learn this by listening to Jesus, Turn back to Matthew 22 for a moment. He said all of God's Law was fulfilled by love:

*Matthew 22:37-40: Jesus said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind." 38. This is the first and great commandment. 39. And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' 40. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets."*

Does that mean He was doing away with the 10 Commandments for His disciples, the Church, and us today? No! Christ fulfilled them! Love is God's standard and He doesn't change! Christ was pointing to God's love behind the law. Galatians 5:14: For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

Now, we need to apply practically the Ten Words or commandments. Turn for a moment to Exodus 20:3-17 and let's see the fourth commandment in context of love and why all ten still reinforce God's love. Now, if we love God we should do these things for Him!

Now here's the hard part. Do we spend more of our focus on improving our minds and bodies or souls? It's so easy to get into the *run-us-and-the-kids-to* syndrome that they are too tired to be in God's presence. What are you teaching by your example about loving God?

1. **LOVE FOR GOD GUARDS HIS PLACE IN OUR LIVES: so as His children we remain true to Him.** (Commandment #1) *"Thou shalt have no other gods*

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*before Me*" (v3). Love is loyal, not fickle. God is just saying, "Will you love Me enough not to leave Me for some other god?" Love doesn't make other gods or turn its back on the one true God...it's loyal.

2. **LOVE FOR GOD GUARDS HIS WORSHIP: so as His children we stay faithful to Him.** (Commandment #2) *"Thou shalt not make unto thee any carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them; for I, the Lord thy God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generations of them that hate Me; and sowing mercy unto thousands of them that love Me, and keep My commandments"* (vv. 4-6).
3. **LOVE FOR GOD GUARDS HIS NAME: so as His children we guard God's holiness.** (Commandment #3) *"Thou shalt not take the Name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh His name in vain"* (v7).
4. **LOVE FOR GOD GUARDS HIS TIME FOR INTIMACY: so as His children we seek intimacy with Him.** (Commandment #4) *"Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labor and do all thy work; but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God; in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates; for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day; wherefore, the Lord blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it"* (vv8-11). Love draws aside for intimacy. God is saying, "If you love Me, you won't just go live your life apart from Me, you'll draw near to Me. You'll want to be with Me and fellowship with Me, so you'll drop all your activities one day a week and just spend it with Me." Love is intimate.

So love is: The first four commandments are just talking about loving God. In fact, Jesus summed it all up in Mark 12:30 when He said, *"And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength; this is the first commandment."* Now, the last six commandments define love toward men:

5. **LOVE FOR GOD SEEKS TO HONOR PARENTS.** (Commandment #5) *"Honor thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee"* (v12). Love is not lawless, nor is it rebellious – it is respectful and honoring. One of the great characteristics of love is that it always seeks to say the best about everyone. It also seeks to aid, to help, to assist, and to honor. Love is respectful.

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6. **LOVE FOR GOD PROTECTS LIFE.** (Commandment #6) *“Thou shalt not kill”* (v13). True love would never murder another. Love is harmless...it hurts no one.
  7. **LOVE FOR GOD SEEKS PURITY.** (Commandment #7) *“Thou shalt not commit adultery”* (v14). Love always seeks the purity of another. Adultery defiles but love seeks only purity.
  8. **LOVE FOR GOD GIVES NOT TAKES.** (Commandment #8) *“Thou shalt not steal”* (v.15). Love gives; it doesn’t take. Love is unselfish.
  9. **LOVE FOR GOD SPEAKS THE TRUTH.** (Commandment #9) *“Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor”* (v16). If you lie against your neighbor, you’re trying to hurt him, but if you love him, you’ll only tell the truth.
  10. **LOVE FOR GOD STAYS CONTENT.** (Commandment #10) *“Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor’s house; thou shalt not covet thy neighbor’s wife nor his manservant, nor his maidservant nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is thy neighbor’s”* (v17).

Love toward God is loyal, faithful, reverent, and intimate; toward men it’s respectful, harmless, pure, unselfish, truthful, and content. Jesus summed up the last six commandments in Mark 12:31 with the following statement: *“Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.”* You see, even the Ten Commandments tell us to be like God. We are to love like God loves. So loveless obedience robs us.

Now turn back to Job 23:12: I have not departed from the commandment of His lips; I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my necessary food.

Psalm 27:4: One thing I have desired of the Lord, That will I seek: That I may dwell in the house of the Lord All the days of my life, To behold the beauty of the Lord, And to inquire in His temple.

So here is another thief that steal this personal rest and waiting upon God, robbing us of our personal Sabbath rest. One of the most obvious one doctor has called **Datacide.i** Here is how he describes the problem:

Everywhere you look, we are surrounded by data. The burgeoning amount of information available has strained all systems attempting to deal with it. A landmark edition of *The New York Times* (13 November 1987) was more than sixteen hundred pages long, contained more than two million lines of type comprised of twelve million words,<sup>i</sup> and weighed twelve pounds. In Germany, the

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annual Frankfurt Book Fair is the world's largest, where seven thousand publishers from eighty countries show each other 350,000 titles. In the average office, sixty percent of each person's time is spent processing documents. The typical business manager is said to read one million words per week.

Using transistors etched onto microchips, computerization has thrown the information age into turbo gear. Every month four quadrillion transistors are produced *more than half a million for every human on the planet* and each costing far less than a staple. More than seven million transistors are etched on each tiny Pentium II chip, in lines one four-hundredth the thickness of a human hair.

It is now possible to cram 11.6 gigabytes of data into one square inch of disk space, which is equivalent to storing an eighteen-story stack of double-spaced typed pages on your thumbnail.

### THE ANTIDOTE FOR DATACIDE

**Use the Test of Time.** Publishers sometimes contend that the jar of mayonnaise in the refrigerator has a longer half-life than most books. Information pollution has a way of dying a fairly quick natural death. Understanding this, devote time to the works that have stood the "test of time." Read the Bible, the saints, the classics, the best of literature. Step up a level or two, from data to information to knowledge to wisdom. There is a difference. The further up the line we ascend, the greater the possibility it will stand the test of time.

Isaiah 40:8: The grass withers, the flower fades, But the word of our God stands forever."

**It Is Okay Not to Know.** "By givingi yourself permission not to know, you can overcome the fear that your ignorance will be discovered. When you can admit to ignorance, you will realize that if ignorance isn't exactly bliss, it is an ideal state from which to learn."

Deuteronomy 4:29: "But from there you will seek the Lord your God, and you will find Him if you seek Him with all your heart and with all your soul.

Matthew 6:22: "The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light.

**Increase Your Information Selectivity.** Remember what Jesus said.

Matthew 10:16: "Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore **be wise as serpents** and harmless as doves.

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**Pitch the Pile.** In nearly every home or office there is a stack of unread journals and magazines. Cancel publications you don't have time to read. Quit stockpiling journals, magazines, newspapers. If you don't have time to read them today, it is purely illusory that you will somehow have time next month. Swenson's suggestion: If the stack is more than six inches high, save the top inch and throw the rest away. If the stack is more than two feet high, throw away the whole pile. Why? The piles can block our view of Jesus!

Hebrews 12:1-2: Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, 2. looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

So we celebrate the One who is Lord of the Sabbath this morning.  
We remember the One who ended the bondage of law-keeping righteousness and poured out upon us richly His perfect righteousness.  
We worship Him who is our promised rest!

Paul cries across the centuries:

Galatians 6:14: But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.

The Lord's Supper is when we remember the great work of Christ. It is our collective glorying in Christ's cross that has loosened death's vice grip and set us free. Note these glorious events:

- ❖ Christ died, Christ rose, and Christ ascended to God's right hand,
- ❖ Christ took my penalty upon Himself, Christ imputed His righteousness upon me,
- ❖ Sin was dealt with, guilt was passed away, and sins shackles were broken,
- ❖ Satan was defeated, the fear and power of death was destroyed, eternal life was given, and the destiny of Hell was blotted out of the future for all who came.

### **Roman Catholic Sunday Legislation**

In the course of Constantine's wars with his rivals to establish himself on the throne, on October 27, 312 A.D., on the eve of the battle of Milvian Bridge just outside of Rome, he is reported to have seen in the sky a vision of the cross with the words: "In this Sign Conquer."

By the end of the Imperial Persecutions (313 A.D.), Christians, then an illegal sect, numbered about half of the population of the Roman Empire. The embracing of this

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growing underground movement could simply have been an extremely clever stratagem for consolidating power.

Emperor Constantine served from 306 - 337 A.D. He ultimately abolished slavery, gladiatorial fights, the killing of unwelcome children, and crucifixion as a form of execution. **The Edict of Toleration, 313 A.D:** By this edict, Constantine granted to "Christians and to all others full liberty of following that religion which each may choose." This was the first edict of its kind in history.

On March 7, 321, Constantine introduced the first civil legislation concerning Sunday:

"Let all the judges and town people, and the occupation of all trades rest on the venerable day of the sun."

In 325 A.D., Constantine issued a general exhortation to all his subjects to embrace Christianity. He ordered 50 Bibles to be prepared under the direction of Eusebius, on the finest vellum and by skillful artists.

### **The "Christian Sabbath" View**

This view holds that Sunday is the Christian Sabbath, the observance of which is a moral obligation based on the 4th commandment of the Decalogue. This view emphasizes the divine institution of the Sabbath at the close of creation. God's blessing and sanctification of the seventh day is taken to mean that He intended one day in seven to be observed by all men in all ages as a sacred day of rest and worship.

It is regarded as a moral command of universal and perpetual obligation. It is held that Jesus affirmed that He was "Lord even of the Sabbath" and therefore had the authority to change the day of its observance. It is usually held that this change took place during the 40 days between Christ's resurrection and ascension when He spoke to them concerning the kingdom of God Acts 1:13.

Sabbatarianism is the doctrine of those Christians who believe that Sunday is the Christian Sabbath, to be observed in accordance with the 4th commandment. In its strictest form, it was the creation of the Scottish and English Reformers, especially John Knox. The Scottish Presbyterians and the Puritans brought their views to the colonies, where rigorous "blue laws" were enacted.

Sabbatarians insist that Jesus intended to perpetuate the Sabbath and extend its application to all men. Much stress is placed on His statement, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath," as evidence that Jesus regarded the Sabbath as an institution which is grounded in the very constitution of man, and which was instituted by God from the very beginning not only for Israel but for the whole human

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race. The teachings of Paul regarding the Sabbath are taken to refer only to the Jewish Sabbath and not to the "Christian Sabbath."

The Bible *does* teach that God instituted the Sabbath at the close of creation, and the Sabbath is identified as "*the* seventh day," not as one day in seven.<sup>i</sup> There is both a moral element and a ceremonial element in the 4th commandment. The moral element provides for the worship of God. The ceremonial elements are viewed as applying only to the Israelites.

Jesus Himself treated the Sabbath law as ceremonial when He defended His disciples for plucking grain on the Sabbath. A moral law could never be suspended by circumstances of hunger or by the requirements of merely ceremonial regulation. Paul made no distinction between ceremonial and moral laws when he declared that all external law is abrogated for the Christian.<sup>i</sup>

The basic weakness of this theory is the teaching that a change was made in the day of the week to be observed as the Sabbath. There is not the slightest hint in the New Testament that Jesus transferred the Sabbath to another day of the week.

If one insists on the perpetual and universal obligation of the 4th commandment, and at the same time recognizes that there is no New Testament ground for a change in the day of its observance, the only logical position to which one is forced to maintain is that the seventh day of the week, and not the first day, should be observed as the Sabbath, as the 4th commandment stipulates.

### **The Seventh-Day Sabbath View**

[Christians who believe that the Sabbath should still be observed on Saturday are *also* sometimes called Sabbatarians.] This view, held by the Seventh-Day Baptists, who originated in England in the 17th century, and by Seventh-Day Adventists, who originated in America in the 19th century, insists that the Christians are obligated to keep the seventh day of the week as the Sabbath.

They regard the Ten Commandments as "the Law of God," to be distinguished from the ceremonial laws, which are called "the law of Mosesi." They find evidence for the observance of the seventh day in the New Testament. They appeal to the practice of Jesus and the apostles attending the synagogue on the Sabbathi.

They apply Jesus' prophecy regarding the future flight from Jerusalem and His exhortation that they should pray that their flight should "not be on the Sabbath dayi." (They seem to ignore the possibility that this event might be post-rapture and refers to "those who are in Judea.")

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They also contend that the reference in Revelation to "being in the Spirit on the Lord's day" is a reference to the seventh-day Sabbath.<sup>i</sup> (This author, however, believes that this is actually a reference to the "Day of the Lord" as portrayed by Joel, et al. The aorist tense in the Greek would seem to support the uniqueness of John's experience.)

Actual "evidence" of Sunday worship is circumstantial, and describes actions of observant Jews. The distinctions advanced by the Sabbatarians have no direct Biblical evidence or attendant instruction. And as for compulsory ritualistic commitments, Paul definitely included the Sabbath command among those ordinances, which were done away with in Christ.

The evidence from the early church leaders is clear that they did not regard Sunday as a continuation of the Hebrew Sabbath.

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# How to Get Ready for Sunday

## WFF: Message Forty-Nine (000910AM)

The feasts of God may well be the most comprehensive roadmap ever made to point at Jesus Christ. For example, every year around the world every Jew observes Passover. At that Biblical feast each person holds in his hand a piece of bread. Here is a description of what he holds:

A matzah is a thin unleavened bread, pierced through with holes, marked with stripes, broken carefully from one piece into three, the middle piece or 2<sup>nd</sup> of the unity is hidden or buried throughout the meal and then found or raised from the hiding place.

What does that sound like? The sinless life of Christ (or unleavened bread). "Look upon Him whom they pieced" (bread with holes pierced through it), "with whose stripes we are healed" (bread with brown stripes baked into it), God the Son (second of three pieces), crucified and buried (the middle piece of bread hidden in a cloth), and risen (the middle piece pulled out of its hiding place at the end of the Passover meal).

I invite you to reflect upon the fact that, according to the New Testament, a rabbi of unparalleled character used the festivals of Israel to declare Himself the spiritual Deliverer and Messiah of His people.

- ✓ On PASSOVER, He became our Passover Lamb (paying for our life with His own).
- ✓ During UNLEAVENED BREAD He remained in the grave (putting away sin for us).
- ✓ On FIRSTFRUITS, He rose bodily from the dead to become the evidence of God's ultimate provision and the promise of a last-days resurrection harvest.
- ✓ At the fourth festival, called PENTECOST by Christians, on the 50th day, the book of Acts says that the resurrected Son of David sent His Spirit to unite 3,000 Jewish believers in the body of Messiah. While these Jewish believers became the first members of an international body called the Church, they were themselves first fruits of a future re-gathering pictured in the remaining three holidays.

But even His disciples who were closest to Him and loved Him didn't see the message in the feasts nor understand He was presenting Himself the fulfillment of each one! So after the resurrection, when Jesus walked the road to Emmaus, He shared some wonderful truths with the troubled hearts of two confused disciples. Jesus opened their hearts to understand the Old Testament so that they could see Him from cover to cover

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as never before. In a very real way, He wants to do that with us this morning. Jesus is perhaps most vividly seen in the feasts.

Let's join them on that road and listen to Jesus and ask Him to also help us to start seeing Him everywhere we go in this book! Luke 24:13, 27-32, 44-46, 52-53.

Probably the best known and loved Gospel is the Gospel by John. If you were reading with an awareness of the Feast of God you would find that the overwhelming majority of the content is given to Jesus' ministry at the great feasts of Israel. As a matter of fact, of the 879 verses found in John's gospel, more than 660 are directly related to events occurring at these feasts.

Jesus Christ came to earth as a Jew—one who lived and ministered in the historical and cultural setting of the Jewish nation. And the Old Testament is a backdrop painted with symbols, customs, types, and prophecies that cause the Life of Christ to glow with amazing details. It was as Jesus lived the perfect life on earth as a Jew, that God chose to reveal the rich detail of His promised Son. In no other book do we get such a distinct picture as in the Gospel by John. In John we see that Jesus was the message and fulfillment of each of the seven feasts.

When we listen to what He said and what He did at each feast, we find that each takes on a new depth of meaning. "While the minds of the people were occupied with the sounds and ceremonies of Israel's great national festivals, Jesus Christ stepped forward to make astonishing statements about Himself, His Father, His relationship to the eternal Word, what they must do about Him, and the consequences of their decision." Also each of Christ's sign miracles confirmed His credentials as God's promised Messiah foreshadowed in the symbolism of the feasts.

Could this ancient cycle of Jewish holidays hold forgotten secrets? As a student of the Scriptures for all my life, the more I think about the festivals of Israel, the more intrigued I become. There's something here many of us haven't seen before –

- ❖ something of God.
- ❖ something of ourselves.
- ❖ something of our dependence upon God.
- ❖ something of the Jewish roots of the Christian faith.
- ❖ something of a Messiah who fulfills the spirit of a national calendar and tradition.

The book of Leviticus mentions nine Sabbath-based festivals, which included:

1. the weekly Sabbath (v. 23:3);
2. the Passover (vv. 4-8);
3. the Feast of First fruits (vv. 9-14);
4. Pentecost (vv. 15-22);

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5. the Feast of Trumpets (vv. 23-25);
  6. the Day of Atonement, Yom Kippur (vv. 26-32);
  7. the Feast of Tabernacles (vv. 33-44);
  8. the Sabbatical year (25:2-7); and
  9. the year of Jubilee (vv. 8-55), when, every fiftieth year, all slaves were freed and all land restored to its original owners.

When Jesus said in Mark 2:28 that He was the Lord of the Sabbath, He gave perhaps the greatest testimony to His messiahship. His claim to be Lord of the Sabbath could only have been interpreted by the Jews of His day as a declaration of deity. Why? Because all of those Sabbath observances were pictures of the final and eternal rest of the children of God, the time when Messiah would come to earth to set His people free and establish His divine kingdom. Every time a Jew celebrated a Sabbath he was reminded that some day he and all his fellow Jews would be released from all bondage—whether the bondage of political oppression, the bondage of continual sacrifices, or the bondage of labor to make a living. The entire Sabbath system pointed to the true, perfect, and eternal rest that Messiah would bring to His people.

We return to Mark 2:23-28 as we look at the Biblical teaching on the Sabbath. Jesus clearly sets the tone for the controversies of the day and speaks to us to this day on the Sabbath.

1. First, SABBATH PURPOSES: What did **Jesus say about the Sabbath**? As Lord of Sabbath He said one thing. The Sabbath was made for man to worship God. It was not a prison, a straight jacket, a death squad to hunt Sabbath breakers; no, it was a delightful offer of spiritual communion with God.
2. Second, SABBATH PROMISES: **Do we need to rest and to cease from our wearying schedules**? Yes, and that is what this Old Testament picture teaches us New Testament saints! God offers rest!
3. Third, SABBATH LAWS: **Should we really meet on Sunday** or on the Sabbath day, which is Saturday?
4. Fourth, SABBATH BLESSINGS: **How do we apply all this to our lives**? How do we cultivate a rest, a cessation from weariness in our lives? How do we make worship of the Lord special on our Day of Gathering, the Lord's Day?
5. Fifth, SABBATH THIEVES: What **takes away the blessings** and promises of the rest God offers?
6. Sixth, SABBATH PLANS: What are **some simply wonderful plans** we can make to heighten our worship, our communion with God? Some real blessings can come with some small changes and some preparations.

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7. Seventh, SABBATH PICTURES: What are **the illustrations** that Jesus, His apostles, and all the Old Testament saints used to show the plan of God? God's holidays, the feasts, and each is a wonderful picture and pathway to deepening our devotion to Jesus.
  8. Finally, SABBATH REST: What does God want more than anything? Our minds. What is the key to our spiritual success? A mind that rests upon and is fixed upon the Lord God Almighty!

Jesus lived the perfect life, accomplished more than any human ever did, and yet Jesus was never in a HURRY! He was Purposed but never PUSHED. He was Focused but never FRANTIC. He was Resolved but never RUSHED! How? Because God's Word builds the entire life of the Old Testament Jewish covenant people around a Sabbath cycle. These various expressions of Sabbath worship had a basic meaning of rest or cessation. This ceasing to worship God became the center of Jewish life. The Sabbath was not merely the last day of the week, it was their entire calendar of feasts and holy days built upon this concept of cessation or Sabbath. The seventh day of the week (Ex. 20:11) and every other Sabbath observance was a time of rest and worship.

So how can we who live at warp speed in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century rest and see the Lord in His Word on a regular basis. The answer to this slowing down we all need begins with Saturday preparation. (Any men who interpret the following as women's work are wrong. Both husband and wife should share responsibility for the practical and spiritual preparations for the Lord's Day.) It is advisable that young families have their clothing clean and laid out on Saturday night, and even that the breakfast be decided upon. The whereabouts of Bibles and lessons should be known, and even better, ought to be collected and ready. There should be an agreed-upon time to get up which leaves plenty of time to get ready for church. Going to bed at a reasonable hour is also a good idea. Spiritually, prayer about the Lord's Day is essential –prayer for the service, the music, the pastors, one's family, and oneself.

Remember how I shared that the Puritans understood this well. As one of their great preachers, George Swinnock, quaintly expressed it:

Prepare to meet thy God, O Christian! Betake thyself to thy chamber on the Saturday night...The oven of thine heart thus baked, as it were, overnight, would be easily heated the next morning; the fire so well raked up when thou wentest to bed, would be the sooner kindled. when thou should rise. If thou wouldst thus leave thy heart with God on the Saturday night, thou shouldst find it with him in the Lord's Day morning.

How can we preserve our hearts for the Lord's Day. Edith Schaeffer tells how. She writes, "when living in Villars, Switzerland, the church bells would toll every Saturday at 4:30 P.M. as a reminder to prepare for the Lord's Day. The bells were ignored by most but were a poignant reminder of a more enlightened day."

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The point is, we need to begin thinking about the Lord's Day *before* Saturday night. Parents, and I mean both men and women:

- ✓ How much more meaningful the day would be if clothing were laid out and food decided upon, and if everyone headed to bed at a reasonable time.
- ✓ How much better the Lord's Day would be if Christian families just took two minutes on Saturday evening to pray for God's blessing on the worship events of the day.
- ✓ How much better if we fasted from TV in preparation. And on Sunday morning,
- ✓ How far better it would be if a wife never heard, "Honey, you got the kids ready yet? I'm going to be late," but instead something like, "Dear, the boys are ready, and so am I."

On Sunday everyone needs to get up on time, eat at a set hour, and leave plenty early, ideally after a short time of family prayer asking that God will be glorified and speak to each family member. If you do this, Sunday worship will ascend to new heights.

#### *On Saturday*

1. I have asked Christ to make me sensitive tomorrow to needs of people in the body who are hurting.
2. I have solved the "Sunday clothes hassle" by making sure that what I will wear is ready today.
3. I have spent time in confession so all will be right between myself and my Lord when we meet tomorrow.
4. I have determined to get to bed early so I will be refreshed and ready for church tomorrow.
5. I have planned on sustaining the delight of this time with Christ and his people by guarding against Sunday afternoon infringements.

#### *On Sunday*

1. I have gotten up in plenty of time so I will not feel rushed.
2. I have programmed my morning so I will not just arrive at church on time, but get there early.
3. I have eaten a good breakfast, so an empty stomach will not detract from my worship.
4. I have my Bible in hand plus a pen and paper for taking notes.
5. I have left for church with a great sense of expectancy because I know Christ will be there.i

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So what can we do to plan God into not only our Sundays but also all the rest of our weeks and months? One very interesting way is to adopt the Biblical holidays, the ones that are mentioned or alluded to in just about every chapter of this book.

Think about it. We so easily talk about and celebrate holidays like Labor Day, Memorial Day, Valentines Day, Columbus Day, Ground Hog and St. Patrick's Day and yet haven't even the slightest awareness this month, yes, September 29<sup>th</sup> 2000, at sundown is the New Year's Day that Jesus, all the Apostles, most of the early church, and all the Old Testament saints celebrated each year! And what was it? It was an annual time to start over. Each family spent time in self examination and reflection. And then in a solemn ceremony they all went to the nearest body of water and with stones in their pockets stood one at a time and threw their stones into the water saying, "My sins are buried in your mercy Oh God!"

This annual cycle begins again every year in the Hebrew month of Nisan. According to Leviticus 23 (see also Exodus 12:1-14), God made the lunar period which corresponds to our March-April to be the first month of every Jewish new year. This was the month God delivered His people from the slave fields and brickyards of Egypt. Ever since, Jewish people throughout the world have remembered this "season of our freedom" on the 14th of Nisan.

The Jewish calendar is built on a series of sevens. The seventh day of the week is the Sabbath, and the seventh week after Passover brings Pentecost. The seventh month brings the Feast of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement, and the Feast of Booths. The seventh year is a Sabbatical year, and after seven Sabbatical years comes the Year of Jubilee. Thus the seven feasts are an elegant demonstration of God's prophetic time table. Briefly, our Lord was crucified on Passover, buried on Unleavened Bread, raised on First Fruits, and sent the Holy Spirit on Pentecost. Those are the feasts we have seen fulfilled. Evidently in up-coming days He will hold the Rapture on the Feast of Trumpets and return in His Second Coming on the Day of Atonement. Finally, the Kingdom itself will be characterized by the triumphant Feast of Tabernacles.

## **THE FEASTS**

**PASSOVER.** The religious year opened with Passover, which pictures the death of Christ. Israel sacrificed the Passover lamb on the 14th and then, under the light of a full moon, left Egypt on the 15th of Nisan. Ever since, observant Jewish people have remembered this deliverance by removing all traces of leaven from their homes. Their actions are more than tradition.

**FIRST FRUITS .** On the day following the Passover Sabbath (a Sunday), the Israelites celebrated First fruits, picturing our Lord's resurrection from the dead. According to Leviticus 23, God linked an anticipation of a future day of harvest, Moses called for a Festival of First fruits to be kept "on the day after the Sabbath." Once Israel was in their

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land, they were to celebrate in the same Passover week three festivals: the first one for their freedom; the last one for their separation from sin. In the middle was this one to remember God's ability to provide for His people. With the offering of the first fruits of the barley harvest, the Lord reminded His people of His ability to provide, as well as of their dependence upon Him for the harvest to come.

**UNLEAVENED BREAD.** The week following Passover was devoted to the Feast of Unleavened Bread when all the leaven was put out of the houses. This illustrates the sanctification of believers as they put sin out of their lives. All of this took place in the first month of the year. As Moses called for the Passover lamb to be sacrificed on the 14th, he required all Israel to observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread starting on the 15th. For the seven days of unleavened bread following Passover, the children of Israel were to remember that God had not only given them freedom but called them to a new way of life.

**WEEKS.** Fifty days after First fruits is the New Testament Pentecost, the coming of the Holy Spirit on the Church. Then God tied a fourth holiday to the first three. The Feast of Weeks (*Shavuot* in Hebrew and *Pentecost* in Greek) was to be kept seven weeks (on the 50th day) after the Passover-week offering of the first fruits. At this festival, the first fruits of the wheat harvest were to be offered to the Lord. It marked the end of a critical period of the annual agricultural cycle during which many unpredictable natural factors could have ruined the crops. Over the centuries observant Jewish people have seen in these four holidays a rich picture of God's provision. And ever since the first century, Jewish Christians have seen not only evidence of God's provision but of the coming of His long awaited Messiah.

**TRUMPETS.** In the seventh month, three feasts were celebrated. The Feast of Trumpets opened the month, reminding us of the gathering of God's people when the Lord returns. Not until the beginning of the seventh month does God call for another festival. Throughout the Jewish world, this first day of the seventh month is known as the Feast of Trumpets, or *Rosh Hashanah*. It is a day of spiritual awakening. The ram's horn (*shofar*) is blown, followed by ten days of repentance and reflection.

The Scottish preacher Alexander Whyte once said that "the victorious Christian life is a series of new beginnings." God gives His people opportunities for new beginnings, and we're foolish if we waste them. Unlike our modern New Year's Day celebrations, the Jews used Rosh Hashanah, the first day of their new year, for prayer, meditation, and confession. They sought to make a new beginning with the Lord. The Hebrew word for *seven* comes from a root word that means *to be full, to be satisfied*. Whenever the Lord "sevens" something, He's reminding His people that what He says and does is complete and dependable. Nothing can be added to it. The basic interpretation of this feast relates to Israel, but we can make an application to the church.

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**DAY OF ATONEMENT.** On the tenth day was the Day of Atonement, illustrating the cleansing of God's people. On the tenth day of the seventh month, the Day of Atonement (*Yom Kippur*) is observed. In Israel it is the highest holy day of the year, and the whole nation comes to a standstill. It is the only festival which is not a feast. It is a fast. On this day Moses instructed the people of God to afflict themselves (in awareness of sin) while waiting on God for personal and national forgiveness.

**TABERNACLES.** Five days later, the last of the seven feasts begins, and from the fifteenth to the twenty-first days, the Jews joyfully celebrated the Feast of Tabernacles, picturing the blessings of the future kingdom. God's people are a scattered people who must be gathered, a sinful people who must be cleansed, and a suffering people who must be given joy. The long period (about three months) between Pentecost and the Feast of Trumpets speaks of this present age of the church, when Israel is set aside because she rejected her Messiah. Known as the Feast of Tabernacles (*Sukkot* in Hebrew), this is Thanksgiving Day in Israel. The Feast of Tabernacles signals the most happy holiday season of the year. The harvest is in; the barns are full; and spiritually sensitive people know that the hard work would not have paid off if God had not given conditions necessary for the harvest. Moses instructed the children of Israel to live in "booths" for seven days during the Feast of Tabernacles to remember their days in the wilderness. For generations to come this annual national "camp-out" would be a rich opportunity not only to remember what God had done for them in the past but to anticipate what He would yet do in the future.

The feasts of Trumpets, Yom Kippur, and Tabernacles form a group picture of what is still ahead.

- ✓ According to the prophets, God will call for the blowing of the *shofar*. FEAST OF TRUMPETS. He Himself will awaken Israel and re-gather her.
- ✓ He will judge His people, give the nation a spirit of repentance, and then cover them with the blood of Messiah's atonement (which the temple sacrifices anticipated). YOM KIPPUR
- ✓ Then, and only then, the feasting will begin. Messiah will enter His temple and, according to Zechariah 14:16-19, all nations will come annually to Jerusalem to celebrate the FEAST OF TABERNACLES.

What a picture of provision, of history, of the work of the Messiah. Seven holidays. Seven reasons to stop, to think, and to remember that everything we have comes from God. Everything good comes from the One who is our Passover, our Unleavened Bread, our First fruit evidence of a resurrection to come. He is the one who has given His Spirit, and who now works in us in anticipation of a future sounding of the *shofar* that will begin the last-phase work of Messiah and fulfill all that the prophets have foreseen.

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So this morning I invite you to make some kind of plans to reflect upon the truth that, according to the New Testament, Jesus a rabbi of unparalleled character, used the festivals of Israel to declare Himself the spiritual Deliverer and Messiah of His people.

- ✓ On PASSOVER, He became our Passover Lamb (paying for our life with His own).
- ✓ During UNLEAVENED BREAD He remained in the grave (putting away sin for us).
- ✓ On FIRSTFRUITS, He rose bodily from the dead to become the evidence of God's ultimate provision and the promise of a last-days resurrection harvest.
- ✓ And at PENTECOST, on the 50th day, the Holy Spirit united 3,000 Jewish believers into the body of Messiah. While these Jewish believers became the first members of an international body called the Church, they were themselves first fruits of a future re-gathering pictured in the remaining three holidays.

Seven holidays. Seven reasons to deepen our confidence in a Provider God. These offer a way to take us back to our spiritual roots and to prepare us for days which will soon come to pass.

"Three times a year shall all thy sons come to present themselves before Me", God had said. And so in Christ's time along the roads of Israel thousands of pilgrims retraced the way to Jerusalem. They again came for refreshment and renewal within the sacred walls of holy Jerusalem. As Acts 2 reminds us, they came from every corner of the Empire. From across the river to the east, Jews from Mesopotamia, Elam, Babylonia, Media, Persia, and Parthia journeyed along the great trade route that arced along the Fertile Crescent and then swung south to bring them to their destination. They followed exactly the roads Abraham had taken as he made his way down to the land that the Lord was to show him. Others would cross the ancient road through the barrenness of the Sinai. As the Pyramids fell into the background sunset, they recalled God's triumph over pharaoh.

Others from the north passed frowning legionnaires who watched pilgrims streaming out of the royal city, Rome, to answer the divine summons. From every land and nation to which they had been dispersed, they trudged with excitement and anticipation gripping their souls. They were in the land of the Book of their fathers to celebrate as all faithful sons of Abraham had done for centuries!

### **THREE TIMES IN A YEAR**

What drove them on? Not culture or mere tradition. They were drawn to the feasts by the very Word of the God of Heaven. Listen to His call to them through Moses:

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Three times in a year shall all thy males appear before the Lord thy God in the place which he shall choose; in the feast of unleavened bread, and in the feast of weeks, and in the feast of tabernacles: and they shall not appear before the Lord empty: Every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the Lord thy God which he hath given thee. (Deuteronomy 16:16–17)

God's Word specifically commanded all faithful Jews to “appear before the Lord” three times in a year, at the feasts of Passover, Pentecost., and Tabernacles. Contained in that call of God were three specific elements:

1. All males were to appear before the Lord.
2. They were not to come empty.
3. Every man was to bring what he was able to give, according to the blessing of God on his life.

The heart of these seekers was filled with anticipation, as God had said:

“And thou shalt rejoice in thy feast, thou, and thy son, and thy daughter, and thy manservant, and thy maidservant, and the Levite, the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, that are within thy gates” (Deuteronomy 16:14).

God had built the Feasts around the four pillars of His Revelation to them as His chosen ones. And each feast displays four primary features:

1. **THEIR GOD OF HISTORY:** The feasts were each a reminder of one facet of God's Word recording His faithfulness to deliver, lead, and provide them with a place and nation.
2. **THEIR GOD OF THE LAND:** Each of the feasts reminded them of the land God had given them, and their need to trust Him for fruitfulness through safety, rains, dews, and harvests.
3. **THEIR GOD OF SACRIFICE:** God was only to be approached by way of a substitutionary sacrifice, so the Temple worship drew spiritually hungry Jews to the altar on Mount Moriah like a magnet.
4. **THEIR GOD OF PROPHECY:** Each of the feasts was a package with past, present, and most of all, future Messianic promises. So the mechanics of each Feast was to paint a picture of Christ the Coming Son of God, Lamb of God, and Savior.

One day a young man stepped from a carpenter's shop to present Himself in the City of David. Placing His credentials, already certified in heaven, before the priests and people, Jesus of Nazareth came to Jerusalem in a different way than all His fellow Jews. They came bringing a gift to God, Jesus came presenting Himself as God's gift to them. He was coming to give Himself for each one who would look to him as the Lamb of God.”

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## **ROSH HASHANAH (TRUMPETS)**

Jesus brought forth His witness at the Feast of Trumpets in Jerusalem. The confirming voice of testimony from the Father in heaven had been placed before the leadership. Now He spoke again. “Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again” (12:28). The Father’s word came in response to Jesus’ plea, “Father, glorify thy name.” The witness-voice referred to the lifting up of the Son (12:32), which was related to two encompassing events. In complete harmony with the theme dominating the feast, He spoke of judgment. But here He dealt with wider elements. “Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out” (12:31). The future of a world system that is hostile to its maker and the future of the world’s “prince,” Satan, is sealed. In anticipation of Christ’s final triumph, He declares, “He shall be cast out.”

Resurrection and life were also important themes for Rosh Hashanah. “And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me” (12:32). The word “from” used here actually means “out of.” Thus Jesus is speaking at one and the same time of His cross, resurrection, ascension, and exaltation at the right hand of the Father. Through His “lifting up” all men will be drawn toward life in Christ. To be sure, all will not come, but the way will be opened.<sup>i</sup>

### **Sound the Trumpets**

John 5:1–47

The northwest suburb of Jerusalem was called Bezetha in Christ's time. Today it was alive with the vigor of a young community. Pushing northward outside the walls were markets, bazaars, and the shops of busy craftsmen.

"Jesus entered Bezetha unnoticed and unattended. He had come to Jerusalem alone. As He moved quietly along, His attention was not drawn to the Antonia, the sheep market, or the great entry gates into the Temple. Deliberately He directed His steps to a place of refuse, not a receptacle for the castoffs of people but a place of people who were cast off—human debris. As he reached His destination He saw spread before Him a shabby array of physical hulks who had fallen prey to malicious diseases—diseases that had dragged them to the point of no return. It was Jerusalem’s repository for hopeless cases. Sightless eyes turned upward imploringly, as crippled limbs and twisted bodies cowered before their conquering infirmities. Babbling sounds came off inarticulate tongues attempting to frame expressions that would not take coherent dimensions in stunted minds. It was a place where maladies varied, but every heart and mind was fixed upon one thing—they were all waiting for a miracle.

Bethesda was a pool around which five porches had been arranged. On these porches, beside the pool, the infirm situated themselves and tarried, “waiting for the moving of the water. For an angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water: whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in was made whole of whatsoever disease he had” (5:3–4).

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But for one who awaited troubled waters, a solution would be found in the presence of the Man who was accustomed to stilling them. “Wilt thou be made whole?” (5:6). This stranger, who from His appearance was obviously a Galilean, was asking something that scarcely required a reply. Was He mocking the old man who had already known more than full measure of ridicule? The head on the tattered mat turned for a look at the One who posed the apparently ludicrous question. Jesus’ face answered his internal query, and the paralytic found himself saying, “Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool: but while I am coming, another steppeth down before me” (5:7). It was a lament the man had raised many times in the wearying search for someone who cared enough to help him obtain his long-sought miracle.

Jesus’ words were few but infused with revitalizing power. “Rise, take up thy bed, and walk” (5:8). The result was immediate and electrifying. His subject sprang to this feet, trembling with joy. As he did, a crowd quickly milled around this one they had known for such a long time. Their old companion in suffering was erect before them. His laments had turned to laughter, his pleas were transformed to praises, his lameness had given way to leaping. Had such a thing ever happened in all of Israel before? It had, indeed, and it would again. Jerusalem would see “greater works than this.” By the time the man had gained his wits and sought out his mysterious benefactor, He was nowhere to be found. Jesus had quietly left the pool to continue His walk to the Temple, there to await the unfolding of the second phase of this astonishing transaction.

For his part, the man obeyed Jesus’ instructions implicitly—he took up his bed and walked. One can imagine this thankful recipient of Jehovah’s mercy hurrying away from the pool toward the massive gates leading to the sanctuary, where he would convey the news of his great good fortune to the priests and throngs of Sabbath worshipers. His euphoric enthusiasm was short-circuited, however, when instead of hosannas, he was accosted by cries of outrage. “It is the sabbath day; it is not lawful for thee to carry thy bed” (5:10). He for whom God had miraculously set aside physical laws in order to bring deliverance from suffering, now found himself being flogged by the inflexible strictures of human traditions. Religious enforcers gathered about with shaking fingers and crude catcalls of condemnatory derision. Befuddled, the man, so quickly robbed of his joy by men who judged themselves more pious than he, attempted to raise a defense. “He that made me whole, the same said unto me, Take up thy bed, and walk” (5:11).

We can be assured that there were lurking suspicions in the minds of his questioners when they asked, “What man is that which said unto thee, Take up thy bed, and walk?” (5:12). *Jesus of Nazareth*, they thought, *must be somewhere about*. It was like Him to despise God’s Sabbath!

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To their disappointment, the man could not name his benefactor—a fact that was singularly important to the purpose of the Messiah, who at that moment may have observed the proceedings. The focus of attention was to be, for the moment, on the man and the miracle, Thus with careful intent Jesus had chosen a man who had lain prostrate before Israel's leadership for nearly four decades. His was a face that was all too familiar among frequenters of the Temple mount. He now stood before them completely whole, as if being forced to the center of the Temple stage for all to see.

It may have been a somewhat dejected figure, now left alone by his interrogators, who wandered across the gleaming stones of the Temple courts. Perhaps it was a hand on his shoulder that turned him about expecting once more to be questioned, or condemned. But no, he was again looking into the face of the author of the uproar, his beneficent Galilean. Before the man could blurt out his thanks, Jesus was speaking. "Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee" (5:14).

We are not told whether Jesus instructed the man to go to the leadership of the Temple and identify Him as the one who had performed the miracle or not. The fact is, the man did so immediately, and the authorities reacted inflamed with the intent to kill.

There is no question that Jesus' act was purposely designed to provoke a confrontation with Jewry's Temple leadership—He had something to say to the nation. We have witnessed the point of *provocation*; now we shall examine the *occasion* and the Messiah's *explanation*.

The air of the Temple courts carried the resounding proclamations of the One who looked into the livid countenances of those who were prepared to stone Him. Their sensitivities, already wounded by His apparent disregard for the Sabbath, were cut deeper still by His words. "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work" (John 5:17). Menacing gestures and ominous murmurings made it only too clear that His opponents understood precisely what Jesus was proposing. He said "that God was his Father, making himself equal with God" (5:18). They were correct. He had claimed to be at one with the Father and in so doing set three great towers of truth in place.

1. JESUS CLAIMED TO BE CHRIST THE MESSIAH: "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work" (5:17). In this statement He claimed *oneness with Jehovah*. "For the Father loveth the Son, and sheweth him all things that himself doeth; and he will show him greater works than these" (5:20). The implication here is clearly one of *co-regency* between Jesus and the Father. In other words, the Temple hierarchy stood in the presence of their King. "That all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father" (5:23). The God-King is *worthy to receive worship*.
2. JESUS CLAIMED TO BE GOD'S SON THE JUDGE: "For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son" (5:22). The recording Spirit is very careful to press the *scope* and *significance* of Jesus as universal Judge.

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Its scope was all inclusive: "But hath committed *all* judgment unto the Son" (5:22). "Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation" (5:28–29). Jesus was explaining that it was an ultimate choice they had to make: "The resurrection of life ... [or] the resurrection of damnation" (5:29). They were to make a personal and eternal choice. Why? Because "every son of Adam will one day hear Christ's voice, shake off the dust of the sepulcher, and quit his tomb. Bodily resurrection is a certainty. Every man will receive his eternal due according to his present choice."

3. JESUS CLAIMED TO BE THE GIVER OF LIFE: "For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and [giveth them life], even so the Son [giveth life] to whom he will" (5:21) "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life" (5:24). "Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live" (5:25). As pilgrims came up to Jerusalem for this feast wondering about their future, what did they hear? Jesus told them that "the hour now is" that anyone separated from God can lay hold on eternal life. They could partake of salvation right then and never fear "coming into judgment," because they had "passed from death to life." The One who was the Way, the Truth, and the LIFE was among them at that very moment.

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# Celebrating Biblical Holidays

## WFF: Message Fifty (000910PM)

The feasts of God may well be the most comprehensive roadmap ever made to point at Jesus Christ. Today we return to Mark 2:23-28 as we look at the Biblical teaching on the Sabbath. Jesus clearly sets the tone for the controversies of the day and speaks to us to this day on the Sabbath.

1. First, SABBATH PURPOSES: What did **Jesus say about the Sabbath**? As Lord of Sabbath He said one thing: The Sabbath was made for man to worship God. It was not a prison, a straight jacket, a death squad to hunt Sabbath breakers; no, it was a delightful offer of spiritual communion with God.
2. Second, SABBATH PROMISES: **Do we need to rest and to cease from our wearying schedules**? Yes, and that is what this Old Testament picture teaches us New Testament saints! God offers rest!
3. Third, SABBATH LAWS: **Should we really meet on Sunday** or on the Sabbath Day, which is Saturday?
4. Fourth, SABBATH BLESSINGS: **How do we apply all this to our lives**? How do we cultivate a rest, a cessation from weariness in our lives? How do we make worship of the Lord special on our Day of Gathering, the Lord's Day?
5. Fifth, SABBATH THIEVES: What **takes away the blessings** and promises of the rest God offers?
6. SABBATH PLANS what are **some simply wonderful plans** we can make to heighten our worship, our communion with God? Some real blessings can come with some small changes and some preparations.
7. SABBATH PICTURES what are **the illustrations** that Jesus, His apostles, and all the Old Testament saints used to show the plan of God? God's holidays, the feasts, and each is a wonderful picture and pathway to deepening our devotion to Jesus..
8. Finally, SABBATH REST what does God want more than anything? Our minds. What is the key to our spiritual success? A mind that rests upon, and is fixed upon the Lord God Almighty!

The Jewish calendar is built on a series of sevens. The seventh day of the week is the Sabbath, and the seventh week after Passover brings Pentecost. The seventh month brings the Feast of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement, and the Feast of Booths. The seventh year is a Sabbatical year, and after seven Sabbatical years comes the Year of Jubilee. Thus the seven feasts are an elegant demonstration of God's prophetic time table. Briefly, our Lord was crucified on Passover, buried on Unleavened Bread, raised on First fruits, and sent the Holy Spirit on Pentecost. Those are the feasts we have seen fulfilled. Evidently in up-coming days He will hold the Rapture on the Feast of Trumpets

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and return in His Second Coming on the Day of Atonement. Finally, the Kingdom itself will be characterized by the triumphant Feast of Tabernacles.

## **The Feasts**

**PASSOVER.** The religious year opened with Passover, which pictures the death of Christ. Israel sacrificed the Passover lamb on the 14th and then, under the light of a full moon, left Egypt on the 15th of Nisan. Ever since, observant Jewish people have remembered this deliverance by removing all traces of leaven from their homes. Their actions are more than tradition.

**FIRSTFRUITS .** On the day following the Passover Sabbath (a Sunday), the Israelites celebrated Firstfruits, picturing our Lord's resurrection from the dead. According to Leviticus 23, God linked an anticipation of a future day of harvest. Moses called for a Festival of Firstfruits to be kept "on the day after the Sabbath." Once Israel was in their land, they were to celebrate in the same Passover week three festivals: the first one for their freedom, the last one for their separation from sin, in the middle this One to remember God's ability to provide for His people. With the offering of the firstfruits of the barley harvest, the Lord reminded His people of His ability to provide, as well as of their dependence upon Him for the harvest to come.

**UNLEAVENED BREAD.** The week following Passover was devoted to the Feast of Unleavened Bread, when all the leaven was put out of the houses. This illustrates the sanctification of believers as they put sin out of their lives. All of this took place in the first month of the year. As Moses called for the Passover lamb to be sacrificed on the 14th, he required all Israel to observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread starting on the 15th. For the seven days of unleavened bread following Passover, the children of Israel were to remember that God had not only given them freedom but called them to a new way of life.

**WEEKS.** Fifty days after Firstfruits is the NT Pentecost, the coming of the Holy Spirit on the Church. Then God tied a fourth holiday to the first three. The Feast of Weeks (*Shavuot* in Hebrew and *Pentecost* in Greek) was to be kept seven weeks (on the 50th day) after the Passover-week offering of the firstfruits. At this festival, the firstfruits of the wheat harvest were to be offered to the Lord. It marked the end of a critical period of the annual agricultural cycle during which many unpredictable natural factors could have ruined the crops. Over the centuries observant Jewish people have seen in these four holidays a rich picture of God's provision. And ever since the first century Jewish Christians have seen not only evidence of God's provision but of the coming of His long awaited Messiah.

**TRUMPETS.** In the seventh month three feasts were celebrated. The Feast of Trumpets opened the month, reminding us of the gathering of God's people when the Lord returns. Not until the beginning of the seventh month does God call for another festival.

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Throughout the Jewish world this first day of the seventh month is known as the Feast of Trumpets, or *Rosh Hashanah*. It is a day of spiritual awakening. The ram's horn (*shofar*) is blown, followed by ten days of repentance and reflection.

The Scottish preacher Alexander Whyte once said, "The victorious Christian life is a series of new beginnings." God gives His people opportunities for new beginnings, and we're foolish if we waste them. Unlike our modern New Year's Day celebrations, the Jews used *Rosh Hashanah*, the first day of their new year, for prayer, meditation, and confession. They sought to make a new beginning with the Lord. The Hebrew word for *seven* comes from a root word that means *to be full, to be satisfied*. Whenever the Lord "sevens" something, He's reminding His people that what He says and does is complete and dependable. Nothing can be added to it. The basic interpretation of this feast relates to Israel, but we can make an application to the church.

**DAY OF ATONEMENT.** On the tenth day was the Day of Atonement, illustrating the cleansing of God's people. On the tenth day of the seventh month, the Day of Atonement (*Yom Kippur*) is observed. In Israel it is the highest holy day of the year, and the whole nation comes to a standstill. It is the only festival which is not a feast. It is a fast. On this day Moses instructed the people of God to afflict themselves (in awareness of sin) while waiting on God for personal and national forgiveness.

**Tabernacles.** Five days later the last of the seven feasts began, and from the fifteenth to the twenty-first days, the Jews joyfully celebrated the Feast of Tabernacles, picturing the blessings of the future kingdom. God's people are a scattered people who must be gathered, a sinful people who must be cleansed, and a suffering people who must be given joy. The long period (about three months) between Pentecost and the Feast of Trumpets speaks of this present age of the Church, when Israel is set aside because she rejected her Messiah. Known as the Feast of Tabernacles (*Sukkot* in Hebrew), this is Thanksgiving Day in Israel. The Feast of Tabernacles signals the most happy holiday season of the year. The harvest is in, the barns are full, and spiritually sensitive people know that the hard work would not have paid off if God had not given conditions necessary for the harvest. During the Feast of Tabernacles Moses instructed the children of Israel to live in "booths" for seven days to remember their days in the wilderness. For generations to come this annual, national "camp-out" would be a rich opportunity not only to remember what God had done for them in the past but also to anticipate what He would yet do in the future.

The feasts of Trumpets, Yom Kippur, and Tabernacles form a group picture of what is still ahead.

- ✓ According to the prophets, God will call for the blowing of the *shofar*. He Himself will awaken Israel and regather her. FEAST OF TRUMPETS.
- ✓ He will judge His people, give the nation a spirit of repentance, and then cover them with the blood of Messiah's atonement (which the temple sacrifices anticipated).

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## YOM KIPPUR

- ✓ Then, and only then, the feasting will begin. Messiah will enter His Temple and, according to Zechariah 14:16-19, all nations will come annually to Jerusalem to celebrate the FEAST OF TABERNACLES.

What a picture of provision, of history, of the work of the Messiah. Seven holidays. Seven reasons to stop, to think, and to remember that everything we have comes from God. Everything good comes from the One who is our Passover, our Unleavened Bread, our Firstfruit evidence of a resurrection to come. He is the one who has given His Spirit, and who now works in us in anticipation of a future sounding of the *shofar* that will begin the last-phase work of Messiah and fulfill all that the prophets have foreseen.

So this morning I invite you to make some kind of plans to reflect upon the truth that, according to the New Testament, Jesus a rabbi of unparalleled character used the festivals of Israel to declare Himself the spiritual Deliverer and Messiah of His people.

- ✓ On PASSOVER, He became our Passover Lamb (paying for our life with His own).
- ✓ During UNLEAVENED BREAD He remained in the grave (putting away sin for us).
- ✓ On FIRSTFRUITS, He rose bodily from the dead to become the evidence of God's ultimate provision, and the promise of a last-days resurrection harvest.
- ✓ And at PENTECOST, on the 50th day, the Holy Spirit united 3,000 Jewish believers into the body of Messiah. While these Jewish believers became the first members of an international body called the Church, they were themselves firstfruits of a future regathering pictured in the remaining three holidays.

Seven holidays. Seven reasons to deepen our confidence in a Provider. God offers a way to take us back to our spiritual roots and to prepare us for days which will soon come to pass.

"Three times a year shall all thy sons come to present themselves before Me," God had said. And so in Christ's time along the roads of Israel thousands of pilgrims retraced the way to Jerusalem. They again came for refreshment and renewal within the sacred walls of holy Jerusalem. As Acts 2 reminds us, they came from every corner of the empire. From across the river to the east, Jews from Mesopotamia, Elam, Babylonia, Media, Persia, and Parthia journeyed along the great trade route that arced along the Fertile Crescent and then swung south to bring them to their destination. They followed exactly the roads Abraham had taken as he made his way down to the land that the Lord was to show him. Others would cross the ancient road through the barrenness of the Sinai. As the pyramids fell into the background sunset, they recalled God's triumph over pharaoh.

Others from the north passed frowning legionnaires who watched pilgrims streaming out of the royal city, Rome, to answer the divine summons. From every land and nation to which they had been dispersed, they trudged with excitement and

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anticipation gripping their souls. They were in the land of the Book of their fathers to celebrate as all faithful sons of Abraham had done for centuries!

### THREE TIMES IN A YEAR

What drove them on? Not culture or mere tradition. They were drawn to the feasts by the very Word of the God of Heaven. Listen to His call to them through Moses:

Three times in a year shall all thy males appear before the Lord thy God in the place which he shall choose; in the feast of unleavened bread, and in the feast of weeks, and in the feast of tabernacles: and they shall not appear before the Lord empty: Every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the Lord thy God which he hath given thee.  
(Deuteronomy 16:16–17)

God's Word specifically commanded all faithful Jews to “appear before the Lord” three times in a year, at the feasts of Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles. Contained in that call of God were three specific elements:

4. All males were to appear before the Lord.
5. They were not to come empty.
6. Every man was to bring what he was able to give, according to the blessing of God on his life.

The heart of these seekers was filled with anticipation, as God had said:

*“And thou shalt rejoice in thy feast, thou, and thy son, and thy daughter, and thy manservant, and thy maidservant, and the Levite, the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, that are within thy gates” (Deuteronomy 16:14).*

God had built the feasts around the four pillars of His revelation to them as His chosen ones. And each feast displays four primary features:

1. **THEIR GOD OF HISTORY:** The feasts were each a reminder of one facet of God's Word recording His faithfulness to deliver, lead, and provide them with a place and nation.
2. **THEIR GOD OF THE LAND:** Each of the feasts reminded them of the Land God had given them, and their need to trust Him for fruitfulness through safety, rains, dews, and harvests.
3. **THEIR GOD OF SACRIFICE:** God was only to be approached by way of a substitutionary sacrifice, so the Temple worship drew spiritually hungry Jews to the altar on Mount Moriah like a magnet.
4. **THEIR GOD OF PROPHECY:** Each of the feasts was a package with past, present, and most of all, future Messianic promises. So the mechanics of each feast were to paint a picture of Christ, the coming Son of God, Lamb of God,

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and Savior.

"One day a young man stepped from a carpenter's shop to present Himself in the City of David. Placing His credentials, already certified in heaven, before the priests and people, Jesus of Nazareth came to Jerusalem in a different way than all His fellow Jews. They came bringing a gift to God; Jesus came presenting Himself as God's gift to them. He was coming to give Himself for each one who would look to him as the Lamb of God."

### **ROSH HASHANAH (TRUMPETS)**

Jesus brought forth His witness at the Feast of Trumpets in Jerusalem. The confirming voice of testimony from the Father in heaven had been placed before the leadership. Now He spoke again: "Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again" (12:28). The Father's word came in response to Jesus' plea, "Father, glorify thy name." The witness-voice referred to the lifting up of the Son (12:32), which was related to two encompassing events. In complete harmony with the theme dominating the feast, He spoke of judgment. But here He dealt with wider elements. "Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out" (12:31). The future of a world system that is hostile to its Maker and the future of the world's "prince," Satan, is sealed. In anticipation of Christ's final triumph, He declares, "He shall be cast out."

Resurrection and life were also important themes for *Rosh Hashanah*. "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me" (12:32). The word *from* used here actually means *out of*. Thus Jesus is speaking at one and the same time of His cross, resurrection, ascension, and exaltation at the right hand of the Father. Through His "lifting up" all men will be drawn toward life in Christ. To be sure, all will not come, but the way will be opened.i

### **Sound the Trumpets**

John 5:1-47

The northwest suburb of Jerusalem was called Bezetha in Christ's time. Today it was alive with the vigor of a young community. Pushing northward outside the walls were markets, bazaars, and the shops of busy craftsmen.

"Jesus entered Bezetha unnoticed and unattended. He had come to Jerusalem alone. As He moved quietly along, His attention was not drawn to the Antonia, the sheep market, or the great entry gates into the Temple. Deliberately He directed His steps to a place of refuse, not a receptacle for the castoffs of people but a place of people who were cast off—human debris. As he reached His destination He saw spread before Him a shabby array of physical hulks who had fallen prey to malicious diseases—diseases that had dragged them to the point of no return. It was Jerusalem's repository for hopeless cases. Sightless eyes turned upward imploringly, as crippled limbs and twisted bodies cowered before their conquering infirmities. Babbling sounds

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came off inarticulate tongues attempting to frame expressions that would not take coherent dimensions in stunted minds. It was a place where maladies varied, but every heart and mind was fixed upon one thing—they were all waiting for a miracle.

Bethesda was a pool around which five porches had been arranged. On these porches, beside the pool, the infirm situated themselves and tarried, “waiting for the moving of the water. For an angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water: whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in was made whole of whatsoever disease he had” (5:3–4).

But for one who awaited troubled waters, a solution would be found in the presence of the Man who was accustomed to stilling them. “Wilt thou be made whole?” (5:6). This stranger, who from His appearance was obviously a Galilean, was asking something that scarcely required a reply. Was He mocking the old man who had already known more than full measure of ridicule? The head on the tattered mat turned for a look at the One who posed the apparently ludicrous question. Jesus’ face answered his internal query, and the paralytic found himself saying, “Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool: but while I am coming, another steppeth down before me” (5:7). It was a lament the man had raised many times in the wearying search for someone who cared enough to help him obtain his long-sought miracle.

Jesus’ words were few but infused with revitalizing power. “Rise, take up thy bed, and walk” (5:8). The result was immediate and electrifying. His subject sprang to this feet, trembling with joy. As he did, a crowd quickly milled around this one they had known for such a long time. Their old companion in suffering was erect before them. His laments had turned to laughter; his pleas were transformed to praises; his lameness had given way to leaping. Had such a thing ever happened in all of Israel before? It had, indeed, and it would again. Jerusalem would see “greater works than this.” By the time the man had gained his wits and sought out his mysterious benefactor, He was nowhere to be found. Jesus had quietly left the pool to continue His walk to the Temple, there to await the unfolding of the second phase of this astonishing transaction.

For his part, the man obeyed Jesus’ instructions implicitly—he took up his bed and walked. One can imagine this thankful recipient of Jehovah’s mercy hurrying away from the pool toward the massive gates leading to the sanctuary where he would convey the news of his great good fortune to the priests and throngs of Sabbath worshipers. His euphoric enthusiasm was short-circuited, however, when instead of hosannas, he was accosted by cries of outrage. “It is the Sabbath day; it is not lawful for thee to carry thy bed” (5:10). He for whom God had miraculously set aside physical laws in order to bring deliverance from suffering, now found himself being flogged by the inflexible strictures of human traditions. Religious enforcers gathered about with shaking fingers and crude catcalls of condemnatory derision. Befuddled, the man, so quickly robbed of his joy by men who judged themselves more pious than he, attempted to raise a

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defense. “He that made me whole, the same said unto me, Take up thy bed, and walk” (5:11).

We can be assured that there were lurking suspicions in the minds of his questioners when they asked, “What man is that which said unto thee, Take up thy bed, and walk?” (5:12). *Jesus of Nazareth*, they thought, *must be somewhere about*. It was like Him to despise God’s Sabbath!

To their disappointment, the man could not name his benefactor—a fact that was singularly important to the purpose of the Messiah, who at that moment may have observed the proceedings. The focus of attention was to be, for the moment, on the man and the miracle. Thus with careful intent Jesus had chosen a man who had lain prostrate before Israel’s leadership for nearly four decades. His was a face that was all too familiar among frequenters of the Temple mount. He now stood before them completely whole, as if being forced to the center of the Temple stage for all to see.

It may have been a somewhat dejected figure, now left alone by his interrogators, who wandered across the gleaming stones of the Temple courts. Perhaps it was a hand on his shoulder that turned him about expecting once more to be questioned or condemned. But no, he was again looking into the face of the author of the uproar, his beneficent Galilean. Before the man could blurt out his thanks, Jesus was speaking. “Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee” (5:14).

We are not told whether Jesus instructed the man to go to the leadership of the Temple and identify Him as the one who had performed the miracle or not. The fact is, the man did so immediately, and the authorities reacted, inflamed with the intent to kill.

There is no question that Jesus’ act was purposely designed to provoke a confrontation with Jewry’s Temple leadership—He had something to say to the nation. We have witnessed the point of *provocation*; now we shall examine the *occasion* and the Messiah’s *explanation*.

The air of the Temple courts carried the resounding proclamations of the One who looked into the livid countenances of those who were prepared to stone Him. Their sensitivities, already wounded by His apparent disregard for the Sabbath, were cut deeper still by His words. “My Father worketh hitherto, and I work” (John 5:17). Menacing gestures and ominous murmurings made it only too clear that His opponents understood precisely what Jesus was proposing. He said “that God was his Father, making himself equal with God” (5:18). They were correct. He had claimed to be at one with the Father and in so doing set three great towers of truth in place.

1. JESUS CLAIMED TO BE CHRIST THE MESSIAH: “My Father worketh hitherto, and I work” (5:17). In this statement He claimed *oneness with Jehovah*. “For the Father loveth the Son, and showeth Him all things that Himself doeth; and He will

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show Him greater works than these” (5:20). The implication here is clearly one of *co-regency* between Jesus and the Father. In other words, the Temple hierarchy stood in the presence of their King. “That all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father” (5:23). The God-King is *worthy to receive worship*.

2. JESUS CLAIMED TO BE GOD'S SON THE JUDGE: “For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son” (5:22). The recording Spirit is very careful to press the *scope* and *significance* of Jesus as universal Judge. Its *scope* was all inclusive: “But hath committed *all* judgment unto the Son” (5:22). “Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation” (5:28–29). Jesus was explaining that it was an ultimate choice they had to make: “The resurrection of life ... [or] the resurrection of damnation” (5:29). They were to make a personal and eternal choice. Why? Because “every son of Adam will one day hear Christ's voice, shake off the dust of the sepulcher, and quit his tomb. Bodily resurrection is a certainty. Every man will receive his eternal due according to his present choice.”
3. JESUS CLAIMED TO BE THE GIVER OF LIFE: “For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and [giveth them life], even so the Son [giveth life] to whom he will” (5:21) “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life” (5:24). “Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live” (5:25). Pilgrims came up to Jerusalem for this feast wondering about their future. And what did they hear? Jesus told them that “the hour now is” that anyone separated from God can lay hold on eternal life. They could partake of salvation right then and never fear “coming into judgment,” because they had “passed from death to life.” The One who was the Way, the Truth, and the LIFE was among them at that very moment.

## **Resting Our Weary Minds**

### **WFF: Message Fifty-One (000917AM)**

As you open to our exposition of Colossians 3:1-17, may I make one thing perfectly clear: God wants your mind. More than anything else God wants to have the control of your mind.

**If God has your mind** - He has your body,  
**If God has your mind** - He has your emotions,  
**If God has your mind** - He has your appetites,  
**If God has your mind** - He has your time,

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**If God has your mind - He has your money.**

See the point? The one who gets your mind gets it all. All the rest are just the scraps.

**Your Mind is the Prize!**

The battlefield is for our minds. Satan is seeking to steal the minds of God's children. Your mind is the key to knowing God. Only a mind stayed on the Lord can have perfect peace. A personal Sabbath rest is the road to God's perfect peace filling your mind! Sadly it seems that Satan has caught many believers off guard. While they carefully avoid many obvious dangers, perhaps the most powerful mind robber has been overlooked. Satan is neutralizing the power of a godly mind little by little every day through the onslaught of the media that overflows us like a raging flooded river every day.

**Has it troubled you yet that our modern media has reset the Moral Acceptability Threshold? Here is the test -** "Do the things that once offended you now entertain you?" asks media critic Al Menconi. "Are you able to enjoy the company of television programs, videos, and movies that have values diametrically opposed to yours? This moral drift is important to understand, for it continues unabated. Extrapolate ten or twenty years into the future, and it is frightening to imagine what media content awaits us.

**Has it troubled you yet that our modern media has reset the Shock Threshold?** In the past if we saw blood, killing, or tragedies on the evening news, it would disturb us for weeks. Today, however, the rule of the newsroom is, "If it bleeds it, leads." Movies are worse. Beginning about thirty years ago, succeeding waves of movies relied on more and more violence to attract crowds. Audiences became numbed to the repulsiveness of each level of violence, so directors had to enhance the horror to maintain interest. Such common fare no longer elicits anguish, no shock over the sin.

**Has it troubled you yet that** God defines spiritual adultery in Ezk 23:21 as the sin when His people spend and invest more time getting help, counsel, direction, and advice from TV, secular books, unsaved professionals, magazines, commercials, and the internet -- than from God and His Word?

**Has it troubled you yet that** today's teens (the 31 million 12-19 year olds, some of whom may be living in your house) have a world that has been defined for them **more by** computer games, TV, movies, the Web, and advertisements for Nike, Sony, Tommy Hilfiger, Nintendo, Addidas, Gap, Old Navy -- **than by God's Word?** Half of all teens are from a broken home, 63% have both parents working. And all of them down deep need adult guidance. In ***A Tribe Apart***, author Patricia Hersch said in 1998, "Every kid wished they had more adults in their life, especially that their parents would invade their lives."

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**Has it troubled you yet that** television's effects are well known to be disastrous to the life of any child or adult? Statistics by secular research have concluded what undisciplined TV watching causes. Let me apply them to our culture as Paul lists the same sins in Colossians 3:

- ✓ A shortened attention span. **That means a regular TV watcher can't** think about God very well.
- ✓ Reduced linguistic powers. **That means a regular TV watcher can't** talk about God very well.
- ✓ Limited capacity for abstraction. **That means a regular TV watcher can't** dream about heaven very well.
- ✓ Blur of adulthood and childhood. **That means a regular TV watcher can't** grow in Christ very well.

**Has it troubled you yet that** to attract and hold its audience, the TV industry feels it has to parade the taboos of culture: adultery, promiscuity, homosexuality, incest, violence, and sadism. As a result, the lowest of activities become commonplace, and even morally cachet.

**Has it troubled you yet that** what you choose for your mind today will shape your eternal future?

If you choose to watch godlessness-	it will callous you.
If you choose to watch sensuality -	It will defile you.
If you choose to watch violence-	It will desensitize you.
If you choose to watch evil-	It will distance you.
If you choose to watch worldliness-	it will discourage you.
If you choose to watch Satan's mind-	you will forfeit Christ's.

Let's be blunt: Don't say you are committed to Christ unless you are pursuing the mind of Christ! God has a will for your mind! Saturated with the word.

Please open with me to Colossians 3:1-17 as Paul tells us that to have Christ's mind we need to put off some things and put on others!

**Do we need to rest and to cease from our wandering minds?** Yes, and that is what this Old Testament picture teaches us New Testament saints! God offers rest! Not too long after Christ's teaching on the Sabbath rest, He invited His disciples minds to be filled with the serenity, tranquility, and solitude of rest. Look at Mark 6:31:

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*And He said to them, “Come aside by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while.” For there were many coming and going, and they did not even have time to eat.*

As Jesus and the disciples needed to cease from their labors and rest, so should we regularly cease. Our spiritual lives also need a time of reflection, a time of rest, a time of renewal, and a time to refocus. We have learned the New Testament perspectives on the Sabbath,<sup>i</sup> some of which were:

- 1) The Lord’s Day is not simply a “Christian Sabbath” moved from the 7<sup>th</sup> day to the 1<sup>st</sup>!
- 2) The Old Testament Mosaic Sabbath day was superseded by the “Lord’s Day” (the day Jesus was resurrected, Sunday), and became the Church’s day of worship.
- 3) The New Testament character of the Lord’s Day was worship and so our Lord’s Day ought to be observed as much as possible in the same way.
- 4) New Testament Christians do not have to follow the Mosaic Sabbath’s stringent command to desist from labor and to rest because that command was not transferred to the Lord’s Day.
- 5) However, wise Christians will incorporate the Sabbath rest principle into their observance of the Lord’s Day as best they can, because the rest principle is noted in our cosmos, so that there is a genesis rhythm to life, which, if observed, will benefit us *physically* and *spiritually*.

So the rest God commends is a ceasing from the blur of daily life, pausing, and resting in God by a focused time of seeking Him. This rivets our minds back upon Him. Does God have and hold your mind this morning? Is it fixed upon Him? Do your thoughts have a default setting so that whenever they are not on your work or duties of the moment, they revert back to the Lord?

The rewards of a Godward mind, a mind stayed on the Lord, a mind that is renewed and fixed on the King above, is beyond description! Listen to the dividends of the Godward mind that RESTS in the Lord:

*Isaiah 26:3: You will keep him in perfect peace, Whose mind is stayed on You,  
Because he trusts in You.*

*Isaiah 48:18: Then your peace would have been like a river.*

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*Matthew 11:28-29: "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 29. "Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.*

In our Sabbath study we have seen:

1. First, SABBATH PURPOSES: What did **Jesus say about the Sabbath**? As Lord of Sabbath He said one thing: The Sabbath was made for man to worship God. It was not a prison, a straight jacket, a death squad to hunt Sabbath breakers; no, it was a delightful offer of spiritual communion with God.
2. Second, SABBATH PROMISES: **Do we need to rest and to cease from our wearying schedules?** Yes, and that is what this Old Testament picture teaches us New Testament saints! God offers rest!
3. Third, SABBATH LAWS: **Should we really meet on Sunday** or on the Sabbath day, which is Saturday?
4. Fourth, SABBATH BLESSINGS: How **do we apply all this to our lives?** How do we cultivate a rest, a cessation from weariness in our lives? How do we make worship of the Lord special on our Day of Gathering, the Lord's Day?
5. Fifth, SABBATH THIEVES: What **takes away the blessings** and promises of the rest God offers?
6. Sixth, SABBATH PLANS: What are **some simply wonderful plans** we can make to heighten our worship, our communion with God? Some real blessings can come with some small changes and some preparations.
7. Seventh, SABBATH PICTURES: What are **the illustrations** that Jesus, His apostles, and all the Old Testament saints used to show the plan of God? God's holidays, the feasts. And each is a wonderful picture and pathway to deepening our devotion to Jesus.
8. Finally, SABBATH REST: What does God want more than anything? Our minds. What is the key to our spiritual success? A mind that rests upon, and is fixed upon the Lord God Almighty!

So why do we need to rest our Godward minds on a regular basis? Because of two dangerous conditions we are exposed to regularly in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century--

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### **THE EXHAUSTING PACE OF OUR LIVES WEARS DOWN THE GODWARD MIND:**

For most of us, the Lord's Day is the best day to rest, because Christianity's past influence has made it the day most people have off. And Christians ought to make use of the day for rest—not legalistically, but in thankful observance of the genesis rhythm. For some, that rest may be sleep. For some, it may include some activity. If so, we must keep in mind the distinction between the older understanding of recreation as *re-creation* and the modern pursuit of recreation. In broad strokes, today's idea of recreation is a hedonistic pursuit of pleasure. It's not re-creative but destructive. The older, wiser way of re-creating is the way to go. Forget your regular labors, and re-create with *conversation* with family and friends. A common, unrushed meal around a table is so important. Especially re-creative are *picnics, walks, swims, or playing* with the kids, wrestling on the floor, shooting baskets with the boys. Listening to *good music* is also a marvelous way to re-create. A great "*read*" in one of the Christian classics is a time-proven way to restore the soul as well. Think of it—the Lord's Day, a day to show love for Him—a day to break your frantic rhythm and allow Him to recharge you—a *day of grace!*

So the exhausting pace of the world wears down our Godward minds, also --

### **THE INESCAPABLE MEDIA OF OUR WORLD NEUTRALIZES THE GODWARD**

**MIND:** Right now television has the culture by its throat. Neil Postman warned that in the years ahead, we will live increasingly in fictions: We will turn on our virtual-reality systems and lie back, experiencing heavenly pleasures of sight and sound in a snug, electronic nest. The real world will almost be totally blotted out from our experience. That is the world of the future, and the society that will embrace the lie of the Antichrist!

"At MTV, we don't shoot for the 14 year-olds, we own them." BOB PITTMAN, former MTV chairman

**Has it troubled you yet that** according to media expert, Dr. Ted Baehr, teenagers watch fifty movies a year in the theater and view another fifty a year on video. Eighty percent of these movies are PG-13 or R-rated? And research has demonstrated that we store three trillion "videotape" images in our brain by the time we are thirty years old. But, worrisomely, we have no volitional control over selective forgetting. Once the images are there, we must then live with the consequences of that visual imprint. Realizing that the graphic content of R-rated movies is now irrevocably loaded into the memory banks of our youth gives us legitimate cause for alarm. Movies continue their slide in the direction of violence, nudity, and objectionable language. Many blockbuster movies now have elements of all three. The tendency in this direction has been mainstreamed and seems hardly to elicit a yawn. Children at younger and younger ages are drawn into the movie/video habit, especially with the common use of videos for baby-sitting. As parents become more overloaded, it is simply too tempting to put in a video and place the children before the set. They are well behaved and even entranced. And for busy, stressed-out, exhausted parents, there is nothing so attractive as quiet children. Toys are now commonly linked to movies that are R-rated. For example, the

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sci-fi movie *Starship Troopers* has graphic violence, nudity, and objectionable language. Alien bugs impale and behead humans, even sucking out their brains. (This from the same director whose last film was the pornographic NC-17 rated *Showgirls*.) Uninformed parents who see these alien bugs on toy shelves labeled for kids four and up are likely to think the movie is acceptable viewing. They would be mistaken.

**Has it troubled you yet that our modern media has reset the *Boredom Threshold*?**

After one eight-year-old boy had been watching television all Saturday afternoon, his father politely asked him to turn off the set. When five minutes of silence had elapsed, the boy moaned, “But Dad, it’s so lonely.”

**Has it troubled you yet that our modern media causes *Addictive Behavior*?** As a generalization, when media is available, people use it as a first option; the younger the age, the truer this principle holds. And once fully indoctrinated into this world of media, it is hard to break away. Media increasingly defines our world, and taking the media away is like taking our world away. When media is gone, there is seemingly nothing left, no inner reality, no relationships, no comfort, laughter, music, or security.

**Has it troubled you yet that our modern media gives a *More Negative View of the World*?** The world is already in enough trouble, and we don’t need to make it appear any worse than it is. But in the world of media, bad news sells. According to media critics Ben Wattenberg, bad news is big news. Additionally, good news is no news. So if you want to get on the air, the formula is simple: Say something terrible. Fictional programming isn’t any better than the newscasts. The average prime-time TV schedule presents the viewer with 350 characters each night, seven of which will be murdered on screen. “If this rate applied in reality, then in just 50 days, everyone in the United States would be killed,” explains media critic Michael Medved.

**Has it troubled you yet that our modern media *Increases Exposure to Sexual Material*?** The pervasiveness of media leads to an almost unavoidable exposure to sexually explicit material at ever-younger ages. Observes adolescent medicine specialist Victor Strasburger, M.D.:

Teenagers watch an average of three hours of TV per day, listen to the radio for an additional one to two hours, and often have access to R-rated movies and even pornography long before they are adults. According to the best study from the late 1980’s, the average American teenager views almost 15,000 sexual jokes, innuendoes, and other references on TV each year. Fewer than 170 of these deal with what any sane adult would define as responsible sexual behavior. Add to that the 20,000 commercials per year each teenager in America sees with implicit messages that sex is fun, sex is sexy and everyone out there is having sex but you and you have at least the possibility of a fairly important influence.

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**Has it troubled you yet that** renowned media experts, like Professor Neil Postman of New York University, say that between the ages of six and eighteen, the average child spends some 15,000 to 16,000 hours in front of the TV, whereas he spends only 13,000 hours in school?

**Has it troubled you yet that** Postman says that during the first twenty years of an American child's life, he will see some one million commercials, at the rate of about 1,000 per week.

**Has this troubled you yet?** I am aware of the wise warnings against using words like *all*, *every*, and *always* in what I say. Absolutizing one's pronouncements is dangerous. But I'm going to do it anyway. Here it is: It is impossible for any Christian who spends the bulk of his evenings, month after month, week upon week, day in and day out watching the major TV networks or contemporary videos to have a Christian mind. This is always true of all Christians in every situation! A Biblical mental program cannot coexist with worldly programming.

- Phil 2:1: Let this mind
- Col. 3:16: Let the word of Christ richly dwell
- Rom. 12:1-2: Present yourself and renew your mind

So God's goal is that we cultivate the mind of Christ.  
And the scandal is that Christians neglect this area immensely.  
But the cure is available this morning: PLAN how to saturate your mind with the Word.

How? Remember Paul's list of Colossians 3:1-17: Thirteen Put-offs and a Dozen Put-ons! Translated this morning, I would say:

1. Stop watching TV, movies, video games, and videos for some planned periods of time.
2. Start replacing these "Godward mind deadeners" with times of systematically and prayerfully reading and studying God's word
3. You have the time -- take it!

Let's choose the mind God has willed us to have today. **HOW DO WE RECOVER OUR GODWARD MIND? WHAT ARE SOME WAYS TO RETURN TO OUR REST IN JESUS?** The Navigators, a worldwide discipleship and Bible memorization ministry has published the following list of practical guidelines:

1. **GUARD AGAINST MEDIA CONSTITUTING YOUR ONLY BARRIER TO LONELINESS:** It is easy to lapse into a media-saturated existence, which

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eventually leads to a media-dependent existence. When lonely, bored, or stressed, the first thing we often do is activate our media surrounds, which usually means turning on the television. In a previous era, we would instead have perhaps visited a friend.

2. **ESTABLISH MEDIA LIMITS:** If media in all its forms continues to escalate in visibility and dominance, there obviously comes a point when we have to impose limits. Decide such limits as an act of intention rather than randomness. For example, consider putting some limits on television. It is acceptable for TV to be an interlude, but it should not become a way of life. Have standard rules that make sense. Don't force yourselves into re-deciding every week. Possible suggestions (not laws!) might include: Allow up to seven hours of TV (including videos) each week. Require all viewing to be preplanned or intentional. No TV is allowed until homework or chores are done. One hour per day can be viewed only for approved shows. Also, limit the number of channels; be leery about expanding. More is not necessarily better. Limit the number of TVs as well. Although the majority of children today have a television in their own room (fifty-eight percent), mostly it is not a good idea. For one reason, we want to live as family; otherwise "home is where we live alone together." For another reason, it is essential that parents keep an eye on what their children watch. Beyond television, consider also establishing limits on Nintendo, Sega, Walkman, and Internet use.
3. **HAVE NON-ELECTRONIC CHILDREN'S PARTIES:** Consider not renting or viewing any electronics for birthdays or slumber parties. Cultivate other activities instead. For our boy's birthdays, we would always have two special events: marshmallow fights (they are safe and don't hurt) and darts thrown at balloons.
4. **RESIST ADVERTISEMENTS:** Ads are omnipresent in our "engineered-messages" lives. If we try to completely avoid them, we will not succeed. The next best thing is to discipline ourselves and train our children to be wary.
5. **ZAP THE SET:** Consider always having the remote nearby when watching television. Use it freely. Also use it as a threat and a teaching tool. If something objectionable comes on, hit the mute button, switch the channel, or turn off the set.
6. **DISCONNECT CABLE SELECTIVELY:** If you have cable, and most people do, there are some things best to avoid. Most cable operators will allow selective disconnection from those elements that you find objectionable. When media expert Bob DeMoss was asked if there was any reason people should have HBO and MTV in their homes, his answer was immediate: "None."

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7. **FAST FROM THE MEDIA:** Throughout God's Word fasting occurs often. Media is perhaps one of the most important kinds of fasts. Have a no-television week or month. Don't listen to the news perhaps for a week. Pray in the car instead of listening to the radio. Or simply enjoy the silence for a change. Cancel the newspaper or magazine and donate the funds rather to the fasting and hunger relief ministry. Create an intentional solitude.
  8. **REGAIN CONTROL OF THE VALUE SYSTEM:** "Parents can no longer control the atmosphere of the home and have even lost the will to do so," asserted Professor of Social Thought Allan Bloom in *The Closing of the American Mind*. Sadly, many of us have essentially and tragically lost control of the value system of our children, often compliments of the media. If we still hope to influence them in the direction of virtue, it is important to make our move early.
  9. **HATE EVIL:** Evil, for reasons not completely clear to me, is always more interesting. This obviously is not a statement about the way things should be, but simply a statement of the way things are. Once we understand this, much that is mysteriously wrong in life becomes clearer. For example, if we had forty-nine stations broadcasting healthy, virtuous programming and only one station broadcasting violent or sexual programming, most of America would be tuned into the one channel--even church people. Evil is always more interesting. Understanding the allure of evil explains why we watch so much of it, even when it is so clearly destructive. The sheer volume of evil our nation is exposed to on a daily basis is one of the most disturbing effects of the proliferation of media. The only remedy I know is two thousand years old: "Hate what is evil; cling to what is good." Romans 12:9
  10. **SUBSTITUTE SOOTHING MUSIC:** Music fills the air and the ears of America, especially our youth. For many youth (perhaps most) music heroes have even greater stature than movie or sports stars. To simply tell these kids to stop listening is not realistic; they won't. But if we can give them an alternative, perhaps. At least we can try. And hope. And pray. Looking beyond the interests of our children to our preferences, there is a wide choice of what we might listen to. My advice: Listen to that which calms the spirit.
  11. **ENCOURAGE READING** Someone once said, "Having your book made into a movie is like having your oxen made into bouillon cubes."
  12. **CREATE A READING EVENING:** Consider having a regular or episodic family reading evening.
  13. **VISIT USED BOOKSTORES.**

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14. HAVE A FAMILY OUTING: The library is as enjoyable a place to visit as the movies, but only if you start young enough.

We have finished our look at the Biblical teaching on the Sabbath. Jesus clearly sets the tone for the controversies of the day and speaks to us to this day on the Sabbath.

1. First, SABBATH PURPOSES: What did **Jesus say about the Sabbath**? As Lord of Sabbath He said one thing: The Sabbath was made for man to worship God. It was not a prison, a straight jacket, a death squad to hunt Sabbath breakers; no, it was a delightful offer of spiritual communion with God.
2. Second, SABBATH PROMISES: **Do we need to rest and to cease from our wearying schedules**? Yes, and that is what this Old Testament picture teaches us New Testament saints! God offers rest!
3. Third, SABBATH LAWS: **Should we really meet on Sunday** or on the Sabbath Day, which is Saturday?
4. Fourth, SABBATH BLESSINGS: How **do we apply all this to our lives**? How do we cultivate a rest, a cessation from weariness in our lives? How do we make worship of the Lord special on our Day of Gathering, the Lord's Day?
5. Fifth, SABBATH THIEVES: What **takes away the blessings** and promises of the rest God offers?
6. Sixth, SABBATH PLANS: What are **some simply wonderful plans** we can make to heighten our worship, our communion with God? Some real blessings can come with some small changes and some preparations.
7. Seventh, SABBATH PICTURES: What are **the illustrations** that Jesus, His apostles, and all the Old Testament saints used to show the plan of God? God's holidays, the feasts. And each is a wonderful picture and pathway to deepening our devotion to Jesus.
8. Finally, SABBATH REST: What does God want more than anything? Our minds. What is the key to our spiritual success? A mind that rests upon and is fixed upon the Lord God Almighty!

**LEGALISM STEALS OUR REST: A Personal Sabbath Rest: *Helps us Counter the claims we are required to worship on the Sabbath day.*** It, like the other Old Covenant holy days Paul mentions, is not binding under the New Covenant. Legalism is the religion of human achievement. It argues that spirituality is based on Christ plus

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human works. Our manifesto under God's grace to combat the legalists in our day is found in Colossians 2:16-17.

We resist anyone who makes conformity to man-made rules the measure of spirituality. We are complete in Christ, who has provided complete salvation, forgiveness, and victory. Paul reminded the Galatians, who were also beguiled by legalism, "It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery" (Gal. 5:1).

Paul reminded the Romans, "the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Rom. 14:17). That the dietary laws are no longer in force was illustrated by Peter's vision (Acts 10:9-16) and formally ratified by the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:28-29).

A **festival** was one of the annual Jewish celebrations, such as Passover, Pentecost, the Feast of Tabernacles, or the Feast of Lights (cf. Lev. 23). Sacrifices were also offered on the **new moon**, or first day of the month (Num. 28:11-14). Contrary to the claims of some today, Christians are not required to worship on the **Sabbath day**. It, like the other Old Covenant holy days Paul mentions, is not binding under the New Covenant. There is convincing evidence for that in Scripture.

1. First, the Sabbath was the sign to Israel of the Old Covenant (Ex. 31:16-17; Neh. 9:14; Ezek. 20:12). Because we are now under the New Covenant (Heb. 8), we are no longer required to keep the sign of the Old Covenant.
2. Second, the New Testament nowhere commands Christians to observe the Sabbath.
3. Third, in our only glimpse of an early church worship service in the New Testament, we find the Church meeting on Sunday, the first day of the week (Acts 20:7).
4. Fourth, we find no hint in the Old Testament that God expected the Gentile nations to observe the Sabbath, nor are they ever condemned for failing to do so. That is certainly strange if He expected all peoples to observe the Sabbath.
5. Fifth, there is no evidence of anyone's keeping the Sabbath before the time of Moses, nor are there any commands to keep the Sabbath before the giving of the law at Mount Sinai.
6. Sixth, the Jerusalem Council did not impose Sabbath keeping on the Gentile believers (Acts 15).
7. Seventh, Paul warned the Gentiles about many different sins in his epistles, but

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never about breaking the Sabbath.

8. Eighth, Paul rebuked the Galatians for thinking God expected them to observe special days (Including the Sabbath) (Gal. 4:10-11).
9. Ninth, Paul taught that keeping the Sabbath was a matter of Christian liberty (Rom. 14:5).
10. Tenth, the early Church fathers, from Ignatius to Augustine, taught that the Old Testament Sabbath had been abolished and that the first day of the week (Sunday) was the day when Christians should meet for worship. That disproves the claim of some that Sunday worship was not instituted until the fourth century.