

***Restoring
God's Pattern
For
The Home***

Winford Claiborne

International Gospel Hour

% West Fayetteville Church of Christ
Fayetteville, Tennessee

Published ~ 2001
Second Printing ~ August, 2002
Third Printing ~ January, 2006

A Product Of
Sain Publications
P. O. Box 616 • Pulaski, TN 38478
931-363-6905

**The International Gospel Hour
Is Under
The Oversight Of The Elders
Of The
West Fayetteville Church of Christ:**

Ed Briley
Mark Massey
Don Wallace

OUR PRESENT ADVISORY BOARD

E. Claude Gardner, Chairman,
Henderson, Tennessee

Ervin Hill, Neosho, Missouri

Thomas Holland, Nashville, Tennessee

Roy Lanier, Jr., Lakeland, Florida

Gordon Methvin, Clearwater, Florida

Noble Patterson, Ft. Worth, Texas

Robert C. Veil, Jr., Hagerstown, Maryland

Gene West, Moundsville, West Virginia

The members of the Advisory Board furnish advice and encouragement to our elders and others who work directly with the International Gospel Hour. We are grateful for their wisdom and support.

Acknowledgements

Churches That Supported The Printing Of This Book

**Central Church of Christ
Martinsburg, West Virginia**

**Elders: Danny Bowers, Don Deitrick and Mark
Everson**

Evangelist: Warren Kenney

**Dasher Church of Christ
Valdosta, Georgia**

**Elders: Al Armstrong, Charlie Copeland,
Louie Dawkins, Hugh Guthrie, M. C. McLeod
and Donald Wisenbaker**

Evangelists: David Nelson and Marty Broome

**Mannington Church of Christ
Mannington, West Virginia**

**Elders: Albert R. Cole, Pete Cole,
and Edwin Wright**

Evangelist: Mike Reese

**Shackle Island Church of Christ
Goodlettsville, Tennessee**

Elders: Garvin Claiborne and Troy Lambert

Evangelist: Ray Frizzell

Dedication

Dedicated To:

My Molly

Wonderful Wife, Faithful Friend,
"Female Barnabas"

Whose wisdom has been a
constant source of strength,
Whose love has sustained me
through

fifty-two years of marriage
and

Whose smiles have been
my umbrella on many rainy days.



Introduction

V. E. Howard had a burning desire to preach the gospel to the whole world. He believed that radio was one of the most effective ways of achieving that goal. So in 1934 he started the International Gospel Hour. He knew that reaching the world for Christ would require every means available—radio, the print media, songs, personal work, prayer and the pulpit. He preached on the program for more than sixty-one years. Wherever I go in gospel meetings or to appear on lectureships, someone invariably mentions having heard brother Howard and the influence his preaching has had in their lives. One man in St. Louis told me he had listened to brother Howard for more than fifty years. The good the International Gospel Hour has done will be known only in eternity. We are grateful to God for the great work brother Howard did.

When brother Howard's health prevented his continuing with the radio programs, he asked E. Claude Gardner, former president of Freed-Hardeman University (where I taught for fourteen years), to find someone to take the responsibility of preaching on the Gospel Hour. Brother Gardner knew of the radio ministry of the West Fayetteville Church of Christ and believed I ought to be the speaker of the Gospel Hour. The elders at West Fayetteville had been praying for greater opportunities in radio work. I asked our elders to consider taking the oversight of this great program. They agonized over the enormous responsibility of assuming the task. But they agreed they ought to do it. So beginning on August 6, 1995, the International Gospel Hour moved to the meetinghouse of the West Fayetteville Church of Christ, Fayetteville, Tennessee. It now operates under the

oversight of the West Fayetteville elders.

When the decision to accept the program was made, we decided to ask W. E. Skipper who had worked with brother Howard for many years to move to Fayetteville to become the General Manager of the Gospel Hour. We asked Dauna Skipper, W. E. Skipper's wife, to serve as office manager and computer operator. The Skippers take care of the mail, manage the financial affairs of the program and help in many other ways. In addition, brother Skipper preaches at West Fayetteville when I have to be away in gospel meetings or in contacting churches and individuals to help with the program.

When the Gospel Hour moved to Fayetteville, the program could be heard on about eighty stations. In the six years that have intervened, we have more than doubled the number of stations we have. We are currently broadcasting over some of the largest and most widely respected stations in America—WSM and WLAC in Nashville, WWVA in Wheeling, West Virginia, WOAI in San Antonio, Texas, WSAI in Cincinnati, Ohio, KAAZ in Little Rock, Arkansas, and many others. In addition to the programs associated with the Gospel Hour, we have other stations, including WAKI in McMinnville, Tennessee, and WEKR here in Fayetteville. We are constantly working to add more stations throughout the United States.

The International Gospel Hour has never used its programs to beg for money. We solicit money from individual Christians and from congregations. The West Fayetteville congregation has been most generous in its support of the radio programs. The church dedicates the entire contribution every first Sunday in August to the Gospel Hour. The members of West Fayetteville have been very liberal in their giving to the work. In addition, the church—not the Gospel Hour as such—

pays my salary and the utility bills. The church also provides rooms for offices. It would be very difficult to operate the program more efficiently and more frugally from a monetary viewpoint than is done at West Fayetteville. We strive diligently to use every dollar to spread the gospel message.

I am honored to be the speaker on the Gospel Hour. I spend a great number of hours every week in researching, writing and recording the messages that go forth from Fayetteville. Brother Skipper prepares and records our one-minute messages. I write and record five five-minute messages each week, one fifteen-minute program, one thirty-minute lesson (actually twenty-three minutes) and one full thirty-minute program. When I have recorded the programs on audiotapes, we sent them to Chuck Richardson (our engineer) in Texarkana, Texas. All the work in Texarkana is done at National Recording Studios—formerly owned by brother Howard. Chuck adds the announcements and songs, records the programs on CD's and send them to stations throughout the United States. Chuck and his staff do an outstanding work for the Gospel Hour. We receive many compliments on the quality of the program.

West Fayetteville's elders and I were pleased and honored by such wonderful opportunities to preach to a nation-wide audience. Our desire is to present a balanced gospel. I discuss many topics, including the necessity of being a member of the Lord's church, New Testament baptism, the Lord's supper, moral issues, the family and others. I share Paul's views of the blessings that are mine. "I am what I am by the grace of God." I do not take any credit for the good the Gospel Hour does. It is the grace of God that works in our elders, in the faithful members at West Fayetteville and in the preachers (1 Cor. 15:10). It is

also God's grace that works in hundreds of individuals and dozens of churches that support this radio ministry.

This book on the family has been in the process of developing for seventy-five years. My godly parents, my brothers and sisters have been a tremendous inspiration to me to study and to preach on the family. My Molly, our sons, their lovely wives and our grandchildren have given special meaning to my life. I have conducted dozens and dozens of workshops on the family. In addition, I taught marriage and family courses (fifty-five times) at Freed-Hardeman University. The thousands of young people in those classes were a great encouragement to me. I still hear from some of them occasionally. What a wonderful blessing in my latter years to have young people to say, "Your marriage and family classes made me a better husband and father (or wife and mother)."

The first seventeen chapters in this book are sermons that were broadcast on the International Gospel Hour. The other fourteen chapters are sermons that were delivered on the stations not associated with the Gospel Hour. Since taking the Gospel Hour, I have recorded more than three hundred thirty-minute sermons. But before we took the Gospel Hour I had recorded between seven and eight hundred full thirty-minute sermons. The Lord willing, we shall be publishing other books of sermons on preaching, moral issues, the nature of the New Testament Christianity and perhaps others.

I owe more debts of gratitude than I can possibly mention in the introduction to this book. For example, I am grateful to my teachers—especially W. Claude Hall and Dr. Thomas Warren—for inspiring me to be a better student than I would have otherwise been. I am grateful to my parents, to my brothers and sisters and other family members for their encouragement. I am

especially grateful to the elders of the West Fayetteville Church of Christ—Ed Briley, Mark Massey and Don Wallace—for their dedication to expanding the borders of the Lord's kingdom and for challenging me to do the best work of which I am capable. These men are very wise and have spent many hours in praying for me and for the International Gospel Hour. The members at West Fayetteville regularly pray for all who are immediately involved in the programs. They also express gratitude to the thousands of people who support the Gospel Hour.

Chuck Richardson does outstanding work as our engineer. The programs always sound better when he adds his magic touch to the tapes and CD's. Jasper Howard, V. E. and Ruth Howard's son, has been very helpful in our work. We sincerely thank him for his support. And, of course, we thank W. E. Skipper and Dauna for the work they do. Brother Skipper keeps a running account on all our radio stations—a monumental task. I thank the Dasher Church of Christ, Valdosta, Georgia, for sponsoring my radio sermons (in the 1950's) on WGOV, Valdosta. I also thank the Scotts Hill Church of Christ, Scotts Hill, Tennessee, for their sponsorship of our programs on WKIR-FM (now WTNV), Jackson, Tennessee. My twelve years on the Scotts Hill program have been of great value in my preaching on the Gospel Hour. Teaching at Freed-Hardeman and preaching on the program sponsored by Scotts Hill have made it possible for the work I do on the Gospel Hour. Dr. Billy Smith, dean of the School of Bible Studies at Freed-Hardeman University and a great gospel preacher, has honored me by furnishing the Preface to this volume. Molly is my "female Barnabas" and Billy Smith is my "male Barnabas." I also thank Paul and LaDon Sain of Pulaski, Tennessee, for helping make this book available.

While Molly does not appear on the payroll, her contribution to the Gospel Hour cannot be overemphasized. She inspires and supports me in the long hours I have to spend in reading, writing and recording. Nobody knows—except the Lord and me—how impossible my task would be without her love and generous spirit. She helps me to understand and appreciate God's arrangements for the family. I am also grateful to my sons—Doron and Danny—their wives and our grandchildren for filling my life with joy and sunshine.

As I write this introduction today, my mind dwells on E. Claude Gardner, my long time friend and faithful brother. At this hour he is in serious condition in a Memphis hospital. His gracious wife, Delorese, was killed in an automobile accident just two days ago (August 29, 2001). My heart goes out to brother Gardner—the chairman of our Advisory Committee—and to his family members in the loss of his wife, the mother of their four children, a grandmother and a dear friend to thousands. Molly and I will miss her so long as we shall live.

I thank God for His grace and mercy. I hope and pray that our efforts will bring honor to His name, help to teach the lost the way of salvation and strengthen the church of our Lord. Will you pray that God will use us to accomplish those goals?

“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all” (2 Cor. 13:14).

Preface

What an esteemed privilege it is for me to commend to you this excellent volume of lessons by my devoted friend and brother, Winford Claiborne. In ***Restoring God's Pattern For The Home***, you will find Biblical preaching at its very best, namely, the *character* of the speaker, the *content* of his message, and the *communication* of that message to the pressing needs of the church and the world.

For more than fifty-eight years, Winford Claiborne has been one of the clarion, dynamic voices of the Lord's church. He has thoroughly prepared himself to address the issues of this book by being a diligent, daily student of scripture and the application of those sacred writings to life. Through his distinguished ministry, he has stood tall and firm in the pulpit, in the classroom, and on the air.

These thirty-one lessons have been proclaimed in the pulpits of brother Claiborne's local work, gospel meetings, and brotherhood lectureships across the country. For fourteen years (1979-93) they were lovingly presented to hundreds of college students who filled his classroom at his beloved alma mater, Freed-Hardeman University, for the course *Marriage and the Family*. And since 1947, brother Claiborne has faithfully and effectively used the airwaves to instruct and inspire listeners in preparation for marriage and in building Christ-centered homes.

Brother Claiborne began his work with the West Fayetteville (TN) congregation in 1993. In 1995, the V. E. Howard family requested that he become the speaker of the ***International Gospel Hour***. In accepting this great and demanding work, his influence, including the outstanding lessons of this volume, now

reaches a national and international audience.

May our gracious Lord continue to bless the life and labor of this tireless servant. Winford Claiborne, and his faithful companion, Molly, who together with their children and grandchildren, are models of ***Restoring God's Pattern for the Home.***

Dr. Billy R. Smith, Dean
School of Biblical Studies
Freed-Hardeman University
September 22, 2001

Table Of Contents

1. Restoring God's Pattern For The Home (No. 1)	17
2. Restoring God's Pattern For The Home (No. 2)	27
3. Restoring God's Pattern For The Home (No. 3)	37
4. Restoring God's Pattern For The Home (No. 4)	47
5. Restoring God's Pattern For The Home (No. 5)	57
6. Restoring God's Pattern For The Home (No. 6)	67
7. Restoring God's Pattern For The Home: Husbands (No. 1)	77
8. Restoring God's Pattern For The Home: Husbands (No. 2)	87
9. Restoring God's Pattern For The Home: Husbands (No. 3)	97
10. Restoring God's Pattern For The Home: Husbands (No. 4)	107
11. Restoring God's Pattern For The Home: Wives (No. 1)	117
12. Restoring God's Pattern For The Home: Wives (No. 2)	127
13. A Wife's Submission To Her Husband	137
14. The New Media And The Bible	147
15. Wife And Mother (No. 1)	157
16. Wife And Mother (No. 2)	167
17. Spanking	177

18. Teaching Children About Strong Drink	187
19. Christ's Attitude Toward Women	197
20. Marriage Is For Adults Only (No. 1)	207
21. Marriage Is For Adults Only (No. 2)	221
22. Marriage Is For Adults Only (No. 3)	233
23. Marriage Is For Adults Only (No. 4)	247
24. Ten Commandments For Husbands.....	259
25. Ten Commandments For Wives	273
26. Abraham Will Command His Children (No.1)	287
27. Abraham Will Command His Children (No. 2)	301
28. Is Celibacy More Honorable Than Marriage?	315
29. Christian Homes Contribute To Church Growth	327
30. The Church Supports The Home (No. 1)...	340
31. The Church Supports The Home (No. 2)...	353

Theme: The Home

Restoring God's Pattern For The Home

If you listen to radio, watch television or read the newspapers and magazines, you know that many Americans are deeply disturbed about the status of the family in the United States. This concern for the family extends back a number of years. During the Carter administration, national leaders organized what they called The White House Conference on Families. The program was extremely ill-conceived and very poorly executed, but the purpose of the conference—whether or not that purpose was realized—was to learn how government could strengthen families. Seminars, workshops, movies, cassette and video tapes and other approaches have been widely used throughout the nation to help us to have more satisfying marriages. Hundreds of books, magazines, pamphlets and other materials are being produced and circulated by churches, parachurch groups, psychologists and sociologists. For thirty years or more Dr. James Dobson's books have sold in the millions. Hundreds of thousands of Americans have attended seminars and workshops on the home and have viewed videos and films about the family.

Why all of this interest in the home? What has happened or failed to happen which has brought about this tremendous expression of concern for the family? Many churches—including some churches of Christ—

have sorely neglected teaching our young people about dating, mate selection, marriage, the family, human sexuality and other vital topics. In addition, the academic community, the public media, the political establishment and a host of liberal theologians seem to have formed a conspiracy to destroy the home as God ordained it. Some prominent scholars in all the areas I have mentioned have said, in effect, that the home has outlived its usefulness. They agree that the family probably served a worthwhile purpose in ancient times, but we must now look for better ways for human beings to relate to each other. According to some of these so-called "experts," the family is dead or dying. Many of them seem to relish—or, at least, not to regret—the family's demise. But their celebration is probably premature.

Bible believers vigorously reject the rantings and ravings of radical academics and of liberal theologians. We firmly believe that God gave a pattern for the family and that no other arrangement for the welfare of humanity will work. We also believe that the great increase in crime, unhappiness, suicide, depression and rebellion against the law are clear evidences that the breakup of the family is a tragedy which will destroy our nation. The United States cannot continue to be a leader among nations of our world when the very foundation of our country—the family—is in such disarray and turmoil. But what can be done—or can anything be done—about this dreadful and discouraging situation? I invite your attention to our examination of the topic, ***"Restoring God's Pattern for the Home."***

When I use the work "restore," I am using a word which has a firm biblical background and one which has special meaning for members of the churches of

Christ. The God of Israel commanded Moses to require the Jews to restore that which they took by violence or that which they had gotten by deceit or that which was entrusted to them to keep or the lost thing which was found (Lev. 6:4). Through the prophet Jeremiah, God promised His people, "I will restore health unto you, and I will heal you of your wounds, says the Lord" (Jer. 30:17). God sent various punishments on His people. But He promised them if they would return to Him He would restore to them the "years that the locust had eaten, the cankerworm, and the caterpillars, and the palmerworm, my great army which I sent among you" (Joel 2:25).

When Josiah became king of Israel at the age of eight, he found moral and spiritual conditions disastrously low. During the reign of Josiah, the law of the Lord was found in the house of the Lord. The young king was deeply touched when he heard the words of the law of God. He was so deeply moved, he tore his clothes in grief (2 Kings 22:1-11). Josiah commanded his servants:

Go ye, enquire of the LORD for me, and for the people, and for all Judah, concerning the words of this book that is found: for great is the wrath of the LORD that is kindled against us, because our fathers have not hearkened unto the words of this book, to do according unto all that which is written concerning us (2 Kings 22:13).

King Josiah sent for the elders of Jerusalem and Judah. He met with the priests, with the prophets and with all the people. The king read in their hearing the words of the book of the covenant which had been found in the house of the Lord. Josiah made a covenant before the Lord,

...to walk after the LORD, and to keep his commandments and his testimonies and his statutes with all their heart and all their soul, to perform the words of this covenant that were written in this book. And all the people stood to the covenant (2 Kings 23:3).

Do you understand the significance of these events? King Josiah was saying, in effect, to the Jews, "We have sinned grievously against the Lord our God. We have forgotten His covenant and trampled under foot His divine law. We are making a covenant this day to restore the law to its rightful place in our lives. We are going to restore true worship and godly living." While the word "restore" is not used in this context, who can doubt that Josiah was launching a genuine restoration movement?

I have read the word "restore" from Leviticus, from Jeremiah and from Joel. I have also indicated that king Josiah initiated restoration among the Israelite people. Now let me give a simple illustration of what is involved in restoration. In the southern part of the United States, there are thousands of old mansions which have deteriorated badly. Some of our young people—and some not so young—have decided that these old masterpieces of architecture and nostalgia should not be allowed to perish. So they have sought to restore these old houses to their original condition. In fact, in Fayetteville, Tennessee, and in surrounding areas, there are a number of these beautiful old houses which have been restored. They are a joy to visit and to see how the work of restoration has been accomplished. The same has happened with old automobiles, with muzzleloading flintlock and caplock rifles and with other items of past ages. Some Americans feel an obligation to preserve the great

accomplishments of our ancestors. Future generations surely will be grateful for the work of restoration with so many of the works of art of early Americans.

The Statue of Liberty stands in New York Harbor and has stood there for more than two hundred years. It has been recognized as a beacon of hope to the millions of immigrants who have found freedom and dignity in this great nation. The Statue began to corrode and was in danger of complete deterioration. Lee Ioacocca and thousands of other Americans raised millions of dollars to restore the Statue of Liberty. Who can forget that hot July day when the restored Statue was unveiled? It was one of the most emotional displays of patriotism it has been my privilege to witness. We are grateful that she has been restored to her original beauty and that other generations of Americans can take comfort and hope by simply looking at her.

When we speak of restoring the home or the church or any other institution or item, there are certain questions which logically arise in our minds. I shall discuss four of these questions, although I recognize that many more could be formulated. My first question is: Does God's word furnish a pattern for the home? It would not make sense for me to speak—as I often do—about restoring God's pattern for the home if no such pattern exists or has never existed. How could one restore an old house or an old automobile or an old gun if these items never existed? We might speak of building a Statue of Liberty if there had never been one, but we could not logically discuss restoring it. The same reasoning incidentally must be applied to the New Testament church. Members of the church of Christ believe, or, at least claim to believe that the New Testament church departed from God's pattern

for the church, just as Christ and His apostles predicted. Let me give just one example of apostolic prophecies concerning the great falling away. Paul said to the Ephesian elders:

For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears (Acts 20:29-31).

Both Christ and His apostles predicted an apostasy, but did it actually occur? If you have read the New Testament and studied church history, you know the church departed from the pattern outlined in the scriptures. In New Testament times, the church had a very simple governmental structure—elders and deacons. Most religious groups have ignored God's arrangement and instituted complicated and unscriptural governments for their denominations. But unless a pattern for church government was given in the word of God, denominations which have adopted hierarchical types of church government must not be criticized. If a pattern exists, we must not depart from that pattern. If it does not exist and never has existed, we cannot depart from it; nor could we restore it.

The churches of Christ are seeking to restore what Jeremiah called "the old paths." We want to go back to Jesus Christ and to the apostles and follow their teachings in matters pertaining to church government, Bible doctrine and moral values. When churches or individuals stray from the divine pattern, we have a sacred obligation to restore the pattern.

While some teachers and preachers will readily

admit that a pattern for the church and its activities has been given by the Holy Spirit, they deny that we have a pattern for the home and the family. But Jesus made it very plain in His discussion with the Pharisees that such a pattern was given by the God of heaven and He expects His followers to honor that pattern. Will you please turn to Matthew 19 and study a few concepts from that chapter?

The Pharisees sought to tempt Jesus by asking Him, "Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause" (Mt. 19:3)? Among the Jews in New Testament times, there were two radically different views on marriage, divorce and remarriage. The followers of Hillel—the grandfather of Gamaliel—believed that a man could divorce his wife and remarry for just about any flimsy excuse he could devise. For example, if the wife burned the bread or talked so loudly her neighbors could hear her, the husband could divorce his wife. The ideas of Hillel had encouraged widespread divorce among the Jewish people. His teachings were clearly contrary to God's wishes for His people then and now.

But before we are too critical of Hillel and of his disciples, perhaps we should take a look at our own attitudes and behavior. In January of 1989, a CNN announcer told of a man in Alabama who was marrying his seventeenth wife. His marriage to the first sixteen had lasted from a few months to five years. He assured his seventeenth wife that their marriage would last "until death do us part," but the announcer said he probably had promised the other sixteen the same. Just a few days ago, I heard of a woman who is marrying for the twenty-third time. Obviously, such people could care less about the teaching of scripture or about the stability of homes in America.

Time magazine at one time carried a four or five line article of the silly excuses which some people give for divorcing. One man brought a lawsuit against his wife and divorced her because she had stolen his false teeth and held them for a \$2.00 ransom. The wife of an English professor divorced her husband who wrote derogatory poetry about her and tacked those poems to the walls and doors of their house. One of the poems read as follows:

Your eyes may shine,
Your teeth may grit,
But none of my money
Will you get,
Phooey on you!

I have to confess that the quality of the poetry does not mete the standards of Shakespeare or of Milton, but is it grounds for divorce?

The Jewish rabbi, Shammai, disagreed with the liberal views of Hillel. Shammai and his followers believed that a man could divorce his wife and marry another only if the wife committed adultery. Please take note of what God has said about divorce.

When a man hath taken a wife, and married her, and it come to pass that she find no favour in his eyes, because he hath found some uncleanness in her: then let him write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house (Dt. 24:1).

Hillel interpreted the word "uncleanness" to mean whatever displeased the husband. Shammai thought the word meant sexual immorality.

The Pharisees seemed to be asking Jesus, "Which of these two Jewish rabbis—Hillel or Shammai—taught

the truth on marriage, divorce and remarriage?" The Jews asked Jesus, "Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause" (Mt. 19:3)? Our Lord deliberately avoided mentioning either Hillel or Shammai, but there is no doubt about the Lord's position. He vigorously repudiated the position of Hillel that a man can divorce his wife for any little, insignificant matter. According to Jesus, a man can divorce his wife and remarry only if she had committed adultery (Mt. 19:9).

When the Jews asked Jesus about divorce, He answered, "Have you not read, that he who made them at the beginning made them male and female" (Mt. 19:4)? I want to dwell at some length on that little prepositional phrase, "at the beginning," but let us notice first what Jesus said about the scriptures. Jesus asked the Pharisees, "Have you not read?" Read what? What writing did Jesus have in mind? Every student of scripture can answer that question without hesitation. Jesus wanted to know if the Pharisees had read the scriptures—the word of God—the Old Testament revelation of God's will. Our Lord almost always answered questions by referring His questioners to the Old Testament. Let me give you one example. When the Sadducees inquired about the resurrection and levirate marriage, Jesus responded, "You do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God" (Mt. 22:29). Jesus settled the question by quoting the words of Moses: "I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. God is not the God of the dead, but of the living" (Mt. 22:32).

In His answer to the Pharisees' question, Jesus used the little expression, "in the beginning," two times (Mt. 19:4, 8). Actually, the Greek in both verses is the same and should read, as it does in the New American

Standard Bible, "from the beginning." There should be no difficulty in understanding what our Lord meant. He rejected every tradition and custom about marriage which had accumulated through the ages. He says, in effect, that nothing in the law of Moses has contravened the teaching which God had given to His people "from the beginning." Christ's law of marriage, divorce and remarriage is based on God's original pattern—not one which came into existence several hundred years later. Our first question about restoring God's pattern for the home, "Has God given a pattern for the home?", is YES. God gave that pattern "from the beginning" and He has not changed His mind. We must restore that pattern when it has been ignored or violated.

Theme: The Home

Restoring God's Pattern For The Home (No. 2)

Have you ever heard a school teacher or principal say, "If we are going to succeed in the educational enterprise, we must get back to the basics?" These educators are suggesting that we restore the kind of education this country enjoyed when it first started. Our educational system in many parts of the nation is in shambles. This is the first generation in the history of the United States when graduates know less than the preceding generation. Millions of parents are deeply disturbed at what their children are learning or not learning and are demanding that radical changes be made in our educational establishment. They may not speak of restoring the past, but that really is what they are asking. Although I no longer have children in school, I am concerned for my grandchildren.

Schools are very important to our nation. I want to see great changes made in them. But I am far more concerned about the homes of America. I am pleading for a restoration of God's pattern for the home. But has God really given a pattern for the home? Christ does not use the word "pattern," but He plainly implied such a pattern when He asked the Pharisees: "Have you not read, that he who made them at the beginning made them male and female" (Mt. 19:4)? If Jesus did not recognize a divine pattern, why did He go all the way back to the beginning to tell about the family?

The disobedience of the Jews in no way changed or abrogated the original pattern God gave in the Garden of Eden.

But can finite human beings actually know the pattern God gave? The question may seem trite, but I assure you that it is of enormous significance. The reason is, there are countless academic scholars and theologians who deny man's ability to know anything, although they know that we cannot know. According to many of these teachers, psychologists, sociologists and theologians, each person invents or constructs his own reality. Knowledge is personal. I can have my body of truth; you can have yours; but there is no such thing as absolute truth. We may be reasonably sure of some ideas, but no one can really know. You should be able to understand the contradictory nature of the affirmation that human beings cannot know. It does not take a logician to know that these men's statements are self-defeating. They may not mean them to be so, but they would make everyone in the world an agnostic.

I shall not appeal to psychologists, sociologists or psychiatrists to establish the agnosticism of many modern scholars. I want to examine very briefly some of the writings of the liberal theologian-Bishop John Shelby Spong. Bishop Spong's book, **Into The Whirlwind: The Future of the Church** (Minneapolis: The Seabury Press, 1983), includes many revealing statements. He expresses doubts that the church can affirm that any practices are always right and other always wrong (p. 136). Does that mean that racism and murder and infanticide may sometimes be right? Is mass murder such as that which has occurred in Bosnia sometimes right? Is it permissible under some circumstances to discriminate on the basis of sex?

Bishop Spong's book, **The Easter Moment** (San Francisco: Harper & Row Publishers, 1980), argues that modern men and women cannot experience theological certainty. Our world, our knowledge and our experience are so vast, we cannot really be certain about any idea or concept. And what does the vastness of our universe have to do with "theological certainty?" An event either happened or it did not happen—regardless of the size of our world or of the experience of the people who live in the world. Jesus became incarnate, died on the cross, was raised by the power of God and ascended to the Father. If the world were a thousand times larger than we have ever dreamed, these are still facts which are as true today as they were two thousand years ago. They constitute true doctrine, regardless of the vain imaginations and the radical opposition of liberal theologians. Besides, the God who made us adapted His revelation to us as He made us.

Dr. Carl F. H. Henry's excellent book, **Twilight of a Great Civilization** (Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1988), affirms that murder is always wrong and not just when it involves Jews. He ridicules the idea that we can only be 89% certain about Christ's dying for our sins (p. 32). My friends, we cannot know all there is to know. Only God can do that. But we can know what God wants us to know to love Him and to obey His word. How absolutely inexcusable for men to claim to know that we cannot know!

The Bible writers approach the possibility of our knowing so much differently than modernistic theologians like Bishop Spong. A few examples will give us enlightenment and assurance. Our Lord said to the Jews who believed on Him,

If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free (John 8:31-32).

Did Jesus really mean we can **know** the truth? You know He did. "If we cannot know the truth, we cannot be free or we cannot know we are free." If that is not the right conclusion from what Jesus said, I need someone to tell me what it is.

One of the most inspiring passages in all of Paul's writings is 2 Corinthians 5. I shall read four verses from that chapter.

For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens...Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord...We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord...Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences (2 Cor. 5:1, 6, 8, 11).

In every case in these verses, the word "know" is from the Greek **oida** and means certain or full knowledge. The tense of the verb in verse one says, "For we have come to know and we still know."

What if you were called on to preach the funeral of a devout member of the body of Christ and you said to the family and friends, "I am not sure if there is a building of God which he has prepared for his children. We cannot be confident of the Lord's promises because the apostles may not have fully understood

what he said or we do not know the exact meaning of Paul's words?" What kind of comfort would such preaching be? Is that the way God has left us—not being sure if He exists or if He has revealed Himself to man or not being able to comprehend what He says—if He says anything at all?

The apostle Paul wrote as follows to a young preacher:

For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day (2 Tim. 1:12).

Was Paul 89% sure he knew Jesus Christ? He was 100% sure and so can we be. Peter's second epistle uses the word "know" sixteen times. Twelve times he uses the common word for "know" (**ginosko**); six times he uses the intensified form (**epignosko**). Neither Jesus nor Paul nor Peter had any doubt about whether or not common men like us can know what God wants us to know. I have reviewed these biblical passages to draw this conclusion: We can know the pattern which God gave for the home. We may not know it, but it is because we have not carefully examined the teaching of scripture.

If we have God's pattern for the home and if we can know what it is, why do we need to restore it? Is it possible we have departed from the pattern? For those who know the scriptures and who understand what has happened to the home, the answer to the foregoing question ought to be obvious. If you saw today's newspaper or watched last evening's television news, you can furnish plenty of evidence we have

departed from God's pattern for the home. If the pattern exists and we can know what it is, but we have not departed from, then obviously we cannot restore it.

Can you review the divorce statistics for the United States and conclude that we have not departed from God's divine pattern for the home? Experts tell us that almost 50% of all marriages end in divorce, although there is some question regarding the reliability of these statistics. But even if the number is considerably smaller, it is still a discouraging situation. God meant for marriage to last a lifetime. When it does not, someone has sinned grievously against God Almighty. And what about the children of divorce? We are witnessing in this nation millions of children who have been abandoned by one parent—at least, that is apparently the way most children of divorce view the situation.

Many Americans believe that one-parent families provide all the love, care and discipline which children need. The controversy over Murphy Brown's condition brought into public debate the wisdom of a child's being reared by one parent. You know from reading the scriptures and from experience that every child needs two parents. There are cases where the single-parent can do nothing about her situation except to do her best for her child or children. I applaud such parents. Many of them have done a magnificent job of rearing their children, but that is not the ideal arrangement—which most of the single parents will readily admit.

The incidence of spouse abuse in the United States shows that we have departed from God's pattern for the home. It is almost impossible to determine the extent of spouse abuse, but the numbers are very

high. Some men use their fists in whipping their wives into line. I remember counseling one couple when the man claimed to have the right to discipline his wife. I am not just speaking of physical abuse. Some men and women continually criticize and belittle their spouses. They make them feel as if they are nobody and can do nothing. If you know what God says about our treatment of others—wives and husbands included—you know God's pattern for the home does not include abuse. Incidentally, wife abuse fueled the fire which became the Women's Liberation Movement. Although I am strongly opposed to feminism, I can understand why women would turn against men if they had been abused by their husbands or by other men.

Child abuse is a national scandal. There may be as many as two to three million children who are abused by their parents or other family members every year in our country. These children are burned, beaten, pushed down stairs and mistreated in other ways. There are some parents and step-parents who engage in sexual misconduct with their children. Others abuse them emotionally. Surely, no one has little enough sense to believe the abuse of children is part of God's pattern for the home. Is anyone so morally insensitive that he thinks abusing a child might not always be wrong?

Of course, there are radicals who object to parents spanking their children. Foolishly they refer to spanking and all other forms of discipline as "child abuse." The truth is, if a child needs a spanking and does not get it, he may be the object of child abuse. Since parents have been discouraged from spanking a child who needs it, many of our children have become rogues and even killers. We must use whatever legitimate

means are available to bring children up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (Eph. 6:4).

Another evidence that many families have departed from God's pattern for the home is the absence of moral and spiritual values in many homes. How can people imagine they will curb the violence and immorality in the nation unless they teach their children at home to fear God and keep His commandments? That includes, dear friends, the necessity of parents' being good examples of the moral and spiritual principles which God has ordained and which can keep a society from destroying itself.

There is one final question relating to restoring God's pattern for the home: Is it possible to restore the pattern which God has given in His word? If God has given us a pattern—which I have firmly established—and if we can know what that pattern is, and if we have departed from it, we can restore the pattern.

Let me review briefly the four questions I have raised concerning restoring God's pattern for the home. Has God given us a pattern for the home? In Matthew 19, Jesus spoke of God's having made certain arrangements from the beginning—meaning the beginning of the human family. I am not arguing—because I do not believe—that God has given every detail of the husband-wife relationship or of the parent-child relationship. In many cases, God reveals principles which govern all human relationships—not just parent-child or husband-wife. For example, Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount:

Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets (Mt. 7:12).

We call this verse "the golden rule." Does the golden rule apply only to some relationships and not to others? Can you imagine the changes which would occur in our families if every wife treated her husband as she would want to be treated and if every husband reciprocated? Is the golden rule a part of God's pattern for the home?

My second question was: Can we know the pattern God has given in His word? If men cannot know what God has revealed, would you not say offhand that it is God's fault? Either He did not create us where we can understand His will or He has not spoken plainly enough for human beings to comprehend what He said. In either case, saying that human beings cannot know is a reflection on God Almighty. If He could not speak where we can understand, He is not all powerful. If He did not speak where we can know His will, He is not all benevolent. Neither position makes good sense. God knew what we needed and adapted His word to meet our needs. If we apply ourselves to a study of His inspired word, we can know.

I raised a third question: Have we departed from the pattern? I gave you numerous examples of departures from what God wants the home to be. Divorce, sexual infidelity, spouse abuse, child abuse and many other behaviors of both husbands and wives allow us to see just how far we have strayed from God's will. If we are ever going to be a moral nation, we must return to what are being called in today's political climate "family values." Tragically, many of those who speak loudest and longest about family values have demonstrated almost total disregard for those values.

Finally, can we really do anything about the

dreadful conditions which exist? We can if we are willing to take God at His word and live by the precepts which are revealed in that word. The Bible furnishes us completely unto every good work (2 Tim. 3:17). But the Bible profits us only if we read it, meditate on it, and commit our lives to doing it.

Theme: The Home

Restoring God's Pattern For The Home (No. 3)

Throughout the Bible there are hundreds of passages which were designed to help us build the kind of homes God approves. Some of these passages specifically address the husband-wife relationship and the parent-child relationship. Let me give you one example of both.

Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it (Eph. 5:25).

And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (Eph. 6:4).

Sometimes the Bible addresses all human relationships with generic or universal principles. For example, Paul admonished the Philippians:

Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others (Phil. 2:3-4).

Our concern today is to examine some of the basic elements which constitute God's pattern for the home. I shall dwell primarily on Matthew 19, but I shall also read and discuss other passages which apply

to the home. Let us take notice of our Lord's conversation with the Pharisees.

The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause? And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female (Mt. 19:3-4).

May I remind you of our Lord's usual practice of answering questions and defending His message and mission by quoting the Old Testament scriptures? Is there a better way for Christians to defend what they believe than by giving a "thus says the Lord?"

When Jesus quoted the words of Genesis 1:26-27 about God's making us male and female, was he arguing that marriages which have God's approval must be between male and female? Jesus said, in effect, that He was returning to what God had ordained "from the beginning." God made us male and female and ordained that marriages should be only between men and women. For a marriage to have God's approval, there must be one man and one woman. Otherwise, the conduct of people pretending to get marriage constitutes an abomination in the sight of God (Lev. 18:22; 20:13).

Jesus taught emphatically and unequivocally that God's pattern for the home must include male and female. If a nation or a community has approved any other kind of arrangement—it cannot be called a marriage—then such conduct must be repudiated and God's pattern of male and female restored. I am aware of the contentions of many liberal theologians and unbelieving scholars, but our authority in human

relationships is not psychiatry, or psychology, or sociology or liberal theology. It is the inspired word of Almighty God. Besides, how can the human family continue to fulfill the mission God ordained unless marriages are between men and women?

Some of you in my audience are familiar with Immanuel Kant's categorical imperative. Kant thought all men ought to behave in such a way that their conduct would be good for all men to immitate. In other words, if you did not want men to steal your automobile, you ought not to steal other people's automobiles. If we are going to pretend to marry, then men should marry women and women should marry men. What if everyone acted contrary to the Lord's decree? What would happen to the human family? It would disappear from the face of the earth.

I have already pointed out that this was God's arrangement from the beginning. The Lord Jesus Christ—God's spokesman for this era—endorsed the arrangement which Moses mentioned in Genesis 1:26-27. It needs to be said also that the Holy Spirit during the Christian age gave His approval to that arrangement. The apostle Paul by divine inspiration wrote:

For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh (Eph. 5:30-31).

Is there anyone who believes the Bible who can misunderstand what God said through Paul? A man is to leave father and mother and be joined unto his wife.

Bishop John Shelby Spong's book, **Living in Sin? A Bishop Rethinks Human Sexuality** (San Francisco:

Harper & Row Publishers, 1988), accuses Bible believers of being prejudiced in favor of heterosexual marriages. In fact, he places heterosexism in the same category as witchcraft, slavery and other ignorant beliefs and oppressive institutions that we have abandoned (p. 79). Bishop Spong thinks we should welcome those who differ from us in sexual orientation. It is the emotional equivalent of "black is beautiful" (p. 80). Bishop Spong thinks the modern church must take three steps in correcting the heterosexism of our day. The church must repent of its prejudice and ask for forgiveness for its unfair and perverted judgment of our sons and daughters. He accuses the church of blatant prejudice toward non-heterosexual marriages or unions. The church has a moral obligation to rethink its view of human sexuality. The church must also reject the bias of Holy Scripture and be accepting of non-heterosexual unions (pp. 86, 154). Bishop Spong recognizes the quandary of those who believe in the inerrancy of the scriptures. But rejecting the explicit teaching of the Bible seems not to bother him in the least. In fact, he apparently is trying to build his reputation as a biblical scholar on his vicious attacks against the inspired word of Almighty God.

My friends, I cannot overemphasize the importance of the truth Genesis, Jesus and Paul taught. God's plan for marriage has always been, is today and always will be—one man and one woman until death separates them. No other arrangement makes sense—physically, emotionally, morally and spiritually. Even non-believers will be able to understand the wisdom of God's plan—if they will only think seriously about it.

Not only must marriages be between males and females—one man and one woman—but the married

partners must leave father and mother (Mt. 19:5). That scriptural injunction may seem relatively unimportant, but I assure you from many years of reading, observing and counseling that is not. Every marriage counselor—whether psychiatrist, or psychologist, or gospel preacher—could give you dozens of marital disasters which we caused by a violation of this simple truth—that a man should leave his father and mother and cleave unto his wife.

I remember counseling with a man many years ago who was in his middle to late fifties or early sixties who was thinking of getting married. He had never been married but had stayed with his mother all his life. He wanted to marry a widow and came to me for premarital counseling. We actually had only one session before his marriage. I knew—or thought I knew—the marriage could not succeed. He appeared to be attached to his mother's apron strings. There was nothing I could do to stop the marriage, but I felt fairly sure it would be a disaster. The couple stayed married about two years. He then returned to his mother.

Many years ago Dr. Edward Strecker, an army psychiatrist and a professor of psychiatry at the University of Pennsylvania, wrote a splendid book with the title, **Their Mother's Sons**. Dr. Strecker's book deals with the need to be mature when one gets married. He insists that marriage is serious business and not child's play. He said he had been to many weddings where the preacher would say, "If anyone has just cause why these two may not be married, let him speak now or forever hold his peace." Dr. Strecker said he had the urge to stand up and say, "I know why these two cannot be married. The man is already married—to his mother." He affirmed he could almost

see the hand of mother—whether she was living or dead—reach out and unclasp the hands of the couple and say to the woman, “You cannot have him. He is mine. I know what is in his heart. I put it there.”

Do you think Dr. Strecker may have exaggerated a little for effect? My friends, if you have observed some couples and have read much in the area, you know Dr. Strecker was telling it like it is. There are thousands of couples who have trouble from the beginning of their marriages because one or the other in the marriage had not left father and mother and bonded with the spouse.

If you have ever read marriage and family textbooks, you may remember that marital adjustments have to be made in several areas of life. Generally speaking, the textbooks list at least eight to ten problem areas, such as, money, lack of communication, sexual dysfunction and so on. In almost all of these lists, the sociologists list an unwillingness to separate from parents as one of the seven to ten problems in marriage. But tragically, the conflict does not always lie with one of the young people in the marriage. Sometimes parents will not let go of a son or of a daughter. Parents sometimes find it very difficult and painful to cut the umbilical cord and let their young go from the nest.

I am not making fun of young people or their parents. I know the pain of rearing sons to the age of eighteen and then having them leave home never to return for any length of time. I had difficulty when our older son left for college and then later married. But the real problem came when our second son left for college. As I would walk by his empty room, I would feel a lump in my throat because of his absence.

I fully understand why they were leaving home. We had brought them into the world so they would mature, go to college, find a good wife and have a home on their own. But intellectual understanding does not remove the emotional hurt. Even today—twenty-two years after our younger son left for college, I have to guard against being too emotional about the boys' being gone.

But I would not interfere in their marriages for my right arm. When they chose their life's mates, Molly and I give them all the support we can muster. We do not make decisions for them and have no desire to do so. They chose their mates. We want them to build their own homes and live without our telling them what to do. Besides, both boys are enough like their parents they would not permit any interference on our part. Attempts to control their lives would only result in alienation between our boys and their parents. We would not have that to happen for the world.

None of what I have just said should mean that parents turn their children out without any concern or willingness to help. Both of our sons pursued graduate degrees after they were married. If you know how expensive it is to earn a doctorate, you know that most young people working on graduate degrees need help from their parents or from someone. We were willing to help any way we could but without telling them what they ought to do or not to do. Our boys today know they can come to us when they need help. If we are able, you know we are going to help them. What kind of parents would we be if we did not help?

Leaving father and mother is just one step—although a very vital step—in establishing and maintaining a successful and permanent marriage.

Jesus went all the way back to Genesis 2 and quoted these words from God to Adam and Eve:

For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh (Mt. 19:5).

The Greek word translated "cleave" in Matthew 19:5 and "joined" in Ephesians 5:31 is **kollao** and means to stick like glue. The Greek word is used ten times in the New Testament and is always rendered either "cleave" or "join" except one time where the word is translated "keep company" (Acts 10:28).

Do I need to tell you that both the world and the church have ignored God's command about cleaving to one's spouse? Divorces are occurring at an alarming rate in the United States and in many other countries of our world. On this occasion, I shall not deal with the so-called causes of divorce, but I do want to point out how serious the problem of divorce really is. **The Reader's Digest**, February, 1976, published an article it had borrowed from **Cosmopolitan**, December, 1974. The article had the title, "The Marriage Game: How To Make The Magic Last," and was written by Dr. David Ruben, an American psychiatrist. Dr. Ruben calls our society a "disposable culture." He mentions the fact that many material objects, such as, ballpoint pens, razor blades, and even clothes seldom stay around very long. Even our automobiles are designed to be obsolete in ten years. Now, Dr. Ruben says, we are engaging in disposable relationships.

In 1974 there were 2,223,000 marriages in the United States and almost 1,000,000 divorces. In California, which Dr. Ruben calls the social frontier, there were 159,386 marriages and 121,944 divorces.

Dr. Ruben's figures are very disturbing, but they have not gotten any better. In 1976 for the very first time in the history of the United States, there were 1,000,000 divorces—1,000,000!

Have you ever done any historical research regarding divorce in our nation? When the United States government first began to keep divorce statistics—around 100 years ago—there were only 5,000 divorces. In just one hundred years, the number of divorces has increased from 5,000 to 1,000,000. Does that statistic give you some insight into the fact that our nation has departed from God's pattern for the home? If we are going to survive and prosper as a nation, will we have to return to God's pattern of one man and one woman until death separates them?

Divorce is a tragedy for husbands and wives, that is, if they have any moral values at all. I have worked with husbands whose wives have divorced them. I have seen the pain which divorce causes. In many cases, divorces cause greater sorrow and hurt than the death of a spouse. I can understand that. When a partner dies, we have to learn to get over it. We cannot bring the person back; we will never see them again this side of eternity. But when a divorce occurs—especially if the couple has children—the divorced persons usually see each other on a regular basis. The wounds of divorce are reopened every time the people see each other. Divorce is such a tragedy for husbands and wives.

But it is a greater tragedy—if possible—for the children involved, if there are any. The married partners may have built up such hatred and bitterness they are beyond hurting over the divorce. But the children probably did not expect the parents to divorce and

cannot understand why they did. I have worked with children and young people—and even older people—whose parents divorced. It is not possible to describe the disappointment of such children. Some of them never get over their parents' divorces. Do parents have a right to hurt their children in such a fashion?

As our lesson comes to a close today, I want to ask all of us—especially those who are contemplating divorce—is there any way we can prevent divorce? The answer for all Bible believers is yes. If we choose husbands and wives wisely, learn as much from God's book about marriage as we can, turn our lives over to the Lord, and follow God's pattern, we can prevent divorce. If we have not already done so, we must begin to teach our young people what marriage in God's sight must mean and how they can build strong, stable marriages. We cannot afford to go along for another twenty or twenty-five years without constantly telling young people about God's pattern for marriage and being the kinds of husbands and wives our children need to become. We must be models of what God wants in marriage.

Theme: The Home

Restoring God's Pattern For The Home (No. 4)

The living God has graciously provided for human happiness and welfare by ordaining a pattern by which we can build successful homes. Human beings have been given sufficient ability to understand that pattern and to put into practice the various elements of the pattern. One of the essential elements of God's plan for the home is that only men can marry women and women can marry men. Jesus asked the Jews, "Have you not read, that he who made them at the beginning made them male and female" (Mt. 19:3)? A second element in the divine arrangements for the home is leaving father and mother (Mt. 19:5). How sad that many young people and their parents do not realize just how vital this leaving is for the welfare of all concerned. But just leaving parents is not enough; mates must cleave to their spouses. They must stick like glue—the literal meaning of the word "cleave" or "be joined" (Eph. 5:31).

After instructing husbands and wives to leave parents and to cleave to one's spouse, Jesus added:

Wherefore they are no more twain, but one
flesh. What therefore God has joined together,
let not man put asunder (Mt. 19:6).

Matthew 19:5-6 shows conclusively the Lord's attitude toward divorce. The fact is, as every Bible student

ought to know, Christ allowed remarriage only for sexual immorality (Mt. 19:9). He requires husbands and wives to stick together. He severely condemns dividing asunder what God has joined. How can there be any doubt that our Lord wants marriages to last? What does He think of current divorce statistics in the United States? We know—whether or not we will admit it.

Did God permit divorce in the Old Testament era? Yes, but that was never His will. Please notice the conversation between Jesus and the Pharisees. After Jesus has spoken so plainly about not putting asunder what God has joined, the Pharisees asked Him,

Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away? He says unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so (Mt. 19:7-8).

My friends, did you hear what Jesus said to the Jews? God permitted you to put away your wives, "because of the hardness of your hearts." But from the beginning **it was not so**. We do not want to be guilty of violating God's perfect will for our marriages.

When the Jews returned to Palestine from their seventy-year exile in Babylon, there were numerous problems relating to their marriages. For example, they intermarried with pagan nations which the Lord had strictly forbidden. God had commanded His people through His prophet Moses not to make marriages with the heathen (Dt. 7:3-4). Nehemiah repeated to the Jews the command God gave the Jews and then added:

Did not Solomon king of Israel sin by these things (that, by marrying pagan women)? yet

among many nations was there no king like him, who was beloved of his God, and God made him king over all Israel: nevertheless even him did outlandish women cause to sin. Shall we then hearken unto you to do all this great evil, to transgress against our God in marrying strange wives? And one of the sons of Joiada, the son of Eliashib the high priest, was son in law to Sanballat the Horonite: therefore I chased him from me (Neh. 13:26-28).

But intermarrying with foreigners was not the only problem relating to marriage that the postexilic Israelites faced. Many of them were wanting to put away their wives and marry others. Malachi delivers these stirring words from Jehovah to His people.

Yet ye say, Wherefore? Because the LORD has 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. And did not he make one? Yet had he the residue of the spirit. And wherefore one? That he might seek a godly seed. Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth. For the LORD, the God of Israel, saith that he hateth putting away: for one covereth violence with his garment, saith the LORD of hosts: therefore take heed to your spirit, that ye deal not treacherously (Mal. 2:14-16).

The Revised Standard Version translates the verb "putting away" by the word "divorce." God says very plainly, "I hate divorce." Do you want to be involved in any activity which God hates? If God hated divorce in the Old Testament era, do you think He has changed

His mind under the new covenant?

Bishop John Shelby Spong's book, **Living In Sin? A Bishop Rethinks Human Sexuality** (San Francisco: Harper & Row Publishers, 1988), includes one chapter with the title, "Divorce: Not Always Evil" (pp. 54-66). The views of this liberal bishop differ greatly from what the Lord taught in Matthew 19 and what God said in the Old Testament. Bishop Spong thinks the high American divorce rate may represent positive rather than negative values for human life (p. 54). "Positive" from whose viewpoint—the Lord's or a modernistic bishop's or from the children involved? He says he does not necessarily endorse divorce but it is not always sinful—not always to be condemned (p. 63). He thinks divorce is morally neutral and should not be automatically denounced by the church. Divorce, according to Bishop Spong, may be the price society has to pay for the emancipation of women (p. 64). Of course, we can understand the Bishop's attitude toward divorce when we meditate on this last statement: He disagrees that morality was frozen in an age when the male was primarily dominant in society (p. 66). In other words, the Bible has precious little relevance to decisions on moral matters. And we wonder why divorce is on the increase in the United States. How about placing the blame where it belongs—on the shoulders of liberal bishops and other compromising leaders—both political and religious?

The next element in God's pattern for the home is called simply "one flesh." Jesus said,

For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What

therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder (Mt. 19:5-6).

The Old Testament uses the same language (Gen. 2:24) and does Paul (Eph. 5:31). What does the Bible mean by the expression, "one flesh?" I have yet to find one reputable Bible scholar—Roman Catholic, Protestant, liberal, conservative, fundamentalist or otherwise—who does not believe that the one flesh arrangement means the sexual relationship in marriage. Roman Catholics and protestants, liberals and conservatives disagree on some aspects of human sexuality, but not the meaning of the term, "one flesh."

Yet there are very few aspects of biblical Christianity that are more criticized, maligned and lampooned than the Bible's teaching on human sexuality. There are probably several reasons for that, but let me mention just a few. Many of us simply do not want anyone—including God—to prescribe what we should or should not do with our bodies. If we want to drink beverage alcohol or use other dangerous drugs or engage in illicit and destructive sex, we do not want anyone interfering with our freedom. We might understand a non-Christian's reasoning and acting with such an unchristian attitude, but not a member of the body of Christ. The New Testament teaches that a Christian's body does not belong to him. We are not our own; we have been bought with a price; therefore we must glorify God in our bodies and in our spirits because they belong to Him (1 Cor. 6:19-20). God has a right because He is God to tell us—Christian and non-Christian alike—what is best for us. His divine word is filled with instructions which will help us to lead meaningful and useful lives. If you want to know the right attitude toward human sexuality, the best textbook

in the world is the Bible. In fact, it is the only really reliable textbook on human relationships—sexual and otherwise.

Many careless Bible readers and non-Bible readers think that the attitudes and writings of the so-called “church fathers” constitute the essence of the Bible’s teachings on human sexuality. Even though the average man on the street may not know the names of Augustine, Tertullian, Origen, Jerome and such men, he is inclined to believe there is something “inherently sordid”—to use Augustine’s words—about conception, birth and the intimate relationship in marriage. Our entire culture has been adversely affected by the writings of men who believed—honestly or otherwise, I am not in a position to judge—that God’s pattern for sexual communion in marriage leaves much to be desired. Let me give you evidence that I am not making unfounded accusations.

Letha Scanzoni—a professional writer on marriage and family themes—wrote a book in 1968 on the topic, **Sex and the Single Eye** (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House). Scanzoni summarizes the unscriptural and unreasonable attitudes of the “church fathers” about what the Bible teaches on human sexuality. According to Scanzoni and many other capable writers, there were many men in the fourth century who worked to avoid any sexual temptation by living separated from society and by punishing their own bodies. One monk, Ascepsimas, was weighed down with chains so that he could not walk upright. He had to crawl around on his hands and knees. Another monk, Besarion, would not allow himself to sleep for forty years for fear he would have sexual thoughts. Marcarius the Younger stayed naked in a

swamp for six months. So many mosquitoes had bitten him that he looked like a victim of leprosy. These men did unbelievable things to prevent sexual thoughts from entering their minds. Some of them would not take baths to keep from looking at their own bodies (pp. 24-25).

Were these men successful at warding off lustful thoughts? They lived in torment. An older monk admitted to a younger one that he had not allowed himself to eat adequately nor drink enough water nor sleep enough to avoid sinful thoughts about sex and yet he had been tormented day and night with pangs of lust. Sometimes these men went so far as to mutilate their bodies in avoiding thinking about women and sex. But their radical and unbiblical approach did not work. In fact, it drove many of them to an obsession with sex. They seemed not to think of anything else. I have one question to ask you which I would like to have asked them: Why did they not get married and experience the intimacy of the marriage relationship? Here the Lord's remedy for sexual desires: "But if they cannot contain, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn" (1 Cor. 7:9). Did Jerome, Tertullian, Augustine and Origen know these great truths from 1 Corinthians 7? Of course, they knew them, but they had been so influenced by Greek philosophy that they ignored what Paul said about the legitimacy of the sexual appetite. How can such brilliant theologians ignore the simple truth of the gospel?

As I mentioned a few minutes ago, even the learned Augustine who had been extremely sinful before his conversion, accepted the views of most of the so-called "church fathers." Augustine believed that the processes of conception and birth were inherently

shameful and sordid. He argued that the perpetuation of the human family would not have been by sexual reproduction had sin not entered the human race. Humans would have reproduced by the process of fission, like the amoeba and paramecium. We would just fall apart and there would be two of us. Can you imagine anyone of Augustine's knowledge of the scriptures holding such unreasonable, unscriptural and unscientific views of human reproduction?

Tragically and inexplicably, many of these church fathers blamed women for the sinful conditions in our world. Tertullian wrote as follows about women:

You are the devil's gateway: you are the unsealer of that forbidden tree: you are the first deserter of the divine law: you are she who persuaded him whom the devil was not valiant enough to attack. You destroyed so easily God's image, man. On account of your desert—that is, death—even the Son of God had to die.

Besides contradicting the plain teaching of scripture with regard to the fall of man, this teaching had a destructive influence on how women regarded themselves and what men have thought of them. How foolish is the reasoning of Tertullian!

If the church fathers were so far off—and they unquestionably were—then what is God's pattern for sexual relating in the marriage relationship? In the very first book of the Bible, God provides some insight into what God had provided in marriage.

And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the LORD (Gen. 4:1).

Husbands and wives by God's design are to know

each other in their intimate moments. Why do the Hebrew scriptures use the word "know" (**yadah** in the Hebrew) instead of a plainer word? Were the Bible writers embarrassed to discuss human sexuality in simple, explicit words? As a matter of fact, that had nothing to do with their use of the word "know." The word describes a nonverbal medium of communication. It refers to a very intimate way of learning about your partner in the marriage relationship. It is a very dignified way of showing that the sexual act is more than a physical relationship. It has spiritual overtones as well.

But surely the inspired word of God would not exalt and glorify the sexual relationship—even in marriage? My friends, if you think in those terms you have been influenced—either consciously or unconsciously—by the thinking of the church fathers and Plato and Aristotle and not the teaching of the Bible. The Hebrew writer expresses very simply and forcefully the beauty of the sexual relationship in marriage.

Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge (Heb. 13:4).

The word "bed" in this verse is **koite** which comes into English in a word coitus and means sexual communion. The marriage bed, the Hebrew writer strongly affirms, is undefiled, that is, it is not vulgar, stained with moral evil and second-class behavior. Is this the view the average man has concerning the Bible's teaching on sex—even in marriage? Any other approach does irreparable harm to the family. Besides, the teachings of the church fathers give our young people warped ideas about their bodies and about marriage.

But is not the Bible anti-sex, as men like Bertrand Russell have taught for years? On the contrary, the Bible provides the only really healthy teaching about human sexuality. Oh, I know of the Bible's teaching about premarital sex, adultery, incest and homosexuality. But is the Bible anti-sex because it condemns these destructive behaviors? As we close our lesson today, I want to read what the book of Proverbs says about sex in the marriage relationship. Please remember as I read that the words "cistern," "running waters," and "fountains" are euphemisms for sexual communion in the marriage relationship. Solomon wrote:

Drink waters out of thine own cistern, and running waters out of thine own well. Let thy fountains be dispersed abroad, and rivers of waters in the streets. Let them be only thine own, and not strangers' with thee. Let thy fountain be blessed: and rejoice with the wife of thy youth. Let her be as the loving hind and pleasant roe; let her breasts satisfy thee at all times; and be thou ravished always with her love (Prov. 5:15-19).

Although Solomon wrote these words almost 3,000 years ago, they are as appropriate today as they were then. How could you find healthier teaching on human sexuality?

Theme: The Home

Restoring God's Pattern For The Home (No. 5)

Bertrand Russell, the notoriously immoral English agnostic, was vicious and unrelenting in his attacks against the Bible's teaching on human sexuality. He argued that the Bible's warped ideas about sex could be understood only if one knew what was occurring in the Roman Empire at the time the New Testament was written. Of course, Russell and his first wife, Dora, did not want anyone interfering with their sexual escapades. Incidentally, Dora Russell was just as immoral as her famous husband. Oddly enough, Bertrand Russell objected to his daughter's being sexually promiscuous like he and his first wife had been. It does make a difference in a father's view when he loves his daughter. But I wonder if Russell ever thought about the fathers whose daughters were his sexual consorts.

Does the Bible have a pattern for sexual expressions within the marriage relationship? There are many passages in the Bible which deal with sex, but I want to direct your attention today to 1 Corinthians 7. Please listen carefully as I read to you the first nine verses of this powerful teaching on the intimate aspect of marriage.

Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me: It is good for a man not to touch a woman. Nevertheless, to avoid fornication,

let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband. Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband. The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife. Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency. But I speak this by permission, and not of commandment. For I would that all men were even as I myself. But every man hath his proper gift of God, one after this manner, and another after that. I say therefore to the unmarried and widows, It is good for them if they abide even as I. But if they cannot contain, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn (1 Cor. 7:1-9).

There are many very significant truths recorded in these nine verses, but I shall not have time today to examine all of them. But please pay special attention to the following information. If you listened to our reading of 1 Corinthians 7:1-9, you could not avoid noticing the emphasis on sexual exclusiveness in the marriage covenant. "...Let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband" (1 Cor. 7:2). When we pledge our love to our mates for life, sexual relations outside marriage are sinful, destructive and eternally damning. "They which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God" (Gal. 5:21; 1 Cor. 6:9-11). Joseph Fletcher, the infamous situation ethicist, thinks it may not be wise or right in every case for husbands and wives to be unfaithful

to their marriage vows, but it is not always sinful. If good comes from such an outside interest and nobody is harmed, it could be "healthy adultery." Fletcher would like to amend to the Ten Commandments to read: "Thou shalt not **ordinarily** commit adultery." In fact, he insists that the word "ordinarily" should be added to each of the Ten Commandments. Ted Turner has gone one step farther than Joseph Fletcher. Turner has invented his own ten commandments. You can rest assured that a commandment forbidding adultery is not one of Ted Turner's ten.

God demands that married men drink waters from their own cistern, running water from their own well (Prov. 5:15). Sexual favors of men and women belong to their spouses only. "Let them be for yourself alone, and not for strangers' with you" (Prov. 5:17). With the advent of AIDS, this may be easier for some married people to obey. But the Bible does not approach sexual immorality—either premarital sex or extramarital sex—primarily from a pragmatic viewpoint. Adultery is not wrong because the participants might become diseased or an unwanted pregnancy might occur. Men and women must not be sexually immoral because God our heavenly Father forbids such behavior. It is possible that some men and women might not fully comprehend the seriousness of sexual sin, but whether or not they do, they must remain pure because that is the will of Almighty God. If we want to honor Him and to have His divine approval, we will do precisely what He says, in the way He says do it and for the reasons He says do it.

My friends, I am not saying that the Bible ignores the physical penalties which often accompany sexual immorality. Solomon raised these questions with regard to sexual misconduct:

Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burned? Can one go upon hot coals, and his feet not be burned? So he that goeth in to his neighbour's wife; whosoever toucheth her shall not be innocent...But whoso committeth adultery with a woman lacketh understanding: he that doeth it destroyeth his own soul. A wound and dishonour shall he get; and his reproach shall not be wiped away (Prov. 6:27-29, 32-33).

Solomon provides for us a classic description of prostitution which ends with these words:

With her much fair speech she caused him to yield, with the flattering of her lips she forced him. He goeth after her straightway, as an ox goeth to the slaughter, or as a fool to the correction of the stocks; till a dart strike through his liver; as a bird hasteth to the snare, and knoweth not that it is for his life (Prov. 7:21-23).

According to the scriptures—including 1 Corinthians 7—God's arrangement for sexual fulfillment in the marriage act was designed for human enjoyment and not just for reproduction of the human race. Please notice Solomon's colorful language. "Rejoice with the wife of your youth...Let her breasts satisfy you at all times, and be infatuated with her love" (Prov. 5:18-19). Neither Proverbs, the Song of Solomon nor 1 Corinthians 7 says one word about perpetuating the human family through sexual conduct. These passages discuss the beauty, the ecstasy, the fulfillment and the joy of sexual union and communion. The word "infatuated" should provide a clue into what God intended for the intimate sexual relationship. Other versions render the word "ravished," "captivated." The

word could be translated "exhilarated" or "intoxicated." The Bible nowhere leaves the impression that God meant for one's sexual privileges and responsibilities in marriage to be a burden, as many of the ancient church fathers believed and taught.

Christians and all other people should remember that one's sexual conduct does not escape the Lord's attention. "For man's ways are before the eyes of the Lord, and he watches all his paths" (Prov. 5:21). If we believe we can be sexually promiscuous or sinful in other ways without incurring the Lord's anger, we are deceiving ourselves. God demands that we exercise self-control regarding sexual matters, just as He wants us to be disciplined in all other phases of our lives. Solomon warns us that an immoral man "dies for lack of discipline, and because of his great folly he is lost" (Prov. 5:23). These warnings, urgings and pleadings should cause us to think soberly and to conduct ourselves righteously in the sight of God and of our fellowmen.

Now please turn to 1 Corinthians 7. The Corinthians had sent a number of questions about marriage to the apostle Paul. We are not able to give an exact formulation to the questions, but one of the questions related to the legitimacy of sexual expressions of love in the marriage relationship. Paul opened his discussion by affirming that "it is good for a man to touch a woman" (1 Cor. 7:1). Unfortunately, this verse has been used to downgrade the sexual relationship, although the verse has nothing to do with that topic. Paul is discussing the legitimacy of marriage—not what married couples do in marriage. He really is teaching that it is good for a man not to get married.

This verse has been used by certain religious

leaders to exalt celibacy. But Paul is not teaching that being single is a higher and holier state than being married. Celibacy is certainly the right of each individual—as Paul clearly teaches in this chapter—but it is not a more righteous choice than getting married. One point needs to be stressed in passing. The decision to remain single is your choice—not someone else's choice. No church has a right to require anyone to remain single. You might be a better servant of the Lord if you do not get married, but you might not be. It depends on your desires, your goals and your ability to control your sexual appetite. Please remember Paul's words: "It is better to marry than to burn" (1 Cor. 7:9).

Paul uses the word "good" in verse one. In some contexts, the word means morally good, wholesome, God-approved. But it does not mean that in this verse. Let me show you from this chapter why I have arrived at that conclusion. If "good" (**kalon** in the Greek) means morally good in reference to remaining single, then marriage would be morally evil. If that were true, then the Lord's observation in Genesis 2:18 would be incorrect: "And the Lord said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him." Besides, 1 Corinthians 7 says very plainly, "But and if you marry, you have not sinned; and if a virgin marry, she has not sinned" (1 Cor. 7:28). Actually, those who forbid marriage for anyone who is eligible are guilty of apostasy (1 Tim. 4:3).

The apostle Paul had a right to marry, but chose not to exercise that right (1 Cor. 9:5). His decision not to marry **was his decision** but he made it in view of his service in the kingdom of God—not because he could not have served God acceptably as a married

man. It is my judgment from reading Paul's writings that he could not have done so much as a married man as he did as a single man. But that in no way obligates anyone to follow Paul's example of remaining single. Paul refers to celibacy as a "gift" (1 Cor. 7:7), but does not infer that anyone who does not have the gift is any less dedicated to the Lord's service or is less righteous and holy than the one who has the gift. The conclusion from this brief study, then, is very simple: You can get married or you can remain single. Whichever you choose, use that choice in service unto God and to your fellow human beings.

There are people who are so able to control their sexual appetites that they have no wish or need to get married. The great apostle Paul is a good example. But not everyone is so constituted. I, for one, am very glad of that fact. If everyone chose to stay single—which is not likely to happen—the human race would come to a screeching halt. For those who would have difficulty controlling their sexual appetites if they do not marry, Paul gave this inspired advice: "Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband" (1 Cor. 7:2). Why did the so-called "church fathers"—Origen, Augustine, Tertullian and Jerome—ignore the plain teaching of this verse? Many of those men were literally eaten alive with sexual desires, but they chose to turn aside from the Bible's simple remedy for burning passions—getting married.

Bertrand Russell, the British agnostic, severely criticized Paul for his statement in verse 2. He accused Paul of belittling marriage when he mentioned marriage as a prevention or a cure for sexual immorality. But how could Russell or any other unbeliever recognize

any absolute standard of right or wrong? How could Russell condemn anyone for doing anything? But Bertrand Russell misunderstood Paul or else he deliberately misinterpreted him. If Paul had said that avoiding sexual immorality was the sole reason for getting married, Russell might have some basis for objecting to Paul's writings, but Paul did not say that. The Bible—including Paul's writings—gives a number of good reasons for getting married, but one of these—and a legitimate one too—is avoiding sexual immorality.

Suppose your physician says to you, "I want you to drink a glass of orange juice every day." If you were to ask why, he might say, "The vitamin C should help to fortify you against colds." Would you react by saying, "But that is a negative reason for drinking orange juice. I want a positive reason." The truth is that orange juice tastes good and is good for you, but is also helps you to avoid colds and perhaps other illnesses as well. We also eat because food tastes good and to avoid getting sick and dying. Bertrand Russell's objections to Paul's teaching about marriage are ill-founded and probably biased.

While we are examining verse 2, I want to say a few words about the word "fornication." The Greek word **porneia** just simply means "any kind of sexual immorality"—not just premarital sex as many preachers and others have incorrectly taught. Many Bible students know that adultery usually means illicit sexual union between two people—one of whom is married. They conclude, then, that fornication is illicit sex between two unmarried people. But that is to a correct reading of the Greek. Fornication is used in the Bible of incest (1 Cor. 5:1), of adultery (Mt. 19:9) and of homosexuality

(Jude 7). With these Bible facts in mind, where does the Bible condemn—or does it condemn—premarital sex? Would it surprise you that theologians like John Shelby Spong, Victor Paul Furnish, Joseph Fletcher and a host of others do not condemn premarital sex? It does not surprise me, but it does disturb me tremendously. Just think of the damage these compromising theologians do to our young people. The spread of genital herpes, gonorrhoea, syphilis and AIDS must be laid at the feet of such theologians and those who follow their radical advice.

In the early 1970's, Dr. John Dedek, a Roman Catholic priest and a seminary professor, wrote a little book with the title, **Contemporary Sexual Morality** (Kansas City: Sheed Andrews and McMeel, 1971). Dr. Dedek, an obviously capable scholar, affirms that the churches are taking a much more liberal view of premarital sex. More and more preachers seem to believe that churches ought to be more accepting and less judgmental and that preaching against sin and discussing hell make people feel guilty (p. 20). I do have some questions regarding Dr. Dedek's statements. Do churches have a right to take a more liberal view of premarital sex? If so, who gave them that right? The Bible certainly does not take a soft line on premarital sex. How do preachers arrive at the position that they should discuss sin and hell? Should preachers make people feel guilty—if they are guilty?

Dr. Dedek discusses the meaning of the word "fornication" and then says: "It is not clear that this word ever designates simple fornication" (p. 28). He doubts that the New Testament ever forbids all sexual relations outside of marriage (p. 28). Dr. Dedek may have doubts, but there is no room for such doubts.

Let me read again these words from 1 Corinthians 7:

Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband (v. 2).

Please look at the verse very carefully and answer a question: "To whom was Paul addressing this verse?" He is not addressing married people; they already have their wives and husbands. He is speaking specifically to unmarried people. He said very simply, "if you cannot control your sexual appetite, then get married." If you do not get married you might be tempted to engage in fornication—which in this verse, means premarital sex. Please listen carefully to another of Paul's statements: "But if they cannot contain, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn" (1 Cor. 7:9). My friends, is it a part of God's pattern for the home that both men and women should be morally pure when they enter the marriage bond? You know it is because the Bible makes that truth too plain for anyone to doubt. Besides, if you marry someone who has been sexually immoral, how do you know he or she does not have AIDS?

Theme: The Home

Restoring God's Pattern For The Home (No. 6)

One of the reasons atheists, agnostics, secular humanists and liberal theologians object to the Bible's teaching on human sexuality is that the Bible specifically and unequivocally condemns all sexual activity outside the marriage bond. Premarital sex, extramarital sex and homosexuality are placed in the category of "unrighteousness" and will prevent one's enjoying the kingdom of heaven (1 Cor. 6:9-11). Millions of people in our world consider this approach to sex to be too narrow, too restrictive and too old-fashioned. After all, we live in the twentieth century and these prohibitions concerning illicit sex come from the first century or before. But young women still get pregnant outside the marriage relationship and sexually transmitted diseases pay no attention to what century it is.

The Bible does forbid sexual activity outside the marriage bond, but it has the only reasonable and workable approach to sex within marriage. I ask you—if you have your Bibles handy—to turn to 1 Corinthians 7 and study this very vital passage with me. Paul begins the chapter by referring to questions the Corinthians had sent to him.

Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me: It is good for a man not to touch a woman. Nevertheless, to avoid fornication,

let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband (1 Cor. 7:1-2).

In the next three verses Paul establishes three principles which should govern sexual relating in every marriage. These principles do not deal with the mechanical aspects of sex, but with attitudes.

Paul affirms the mutual responsibilities of wives and husbands in the one flesh relationship. "Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband" (1 Cor. 7:3). Paul's inspired advice may seem somewhat simplistic, but it is absolutely necessary for a mutually satisfying sexual relationship. I use the word "mutual" advisedly. How can anyone doubt that the word "mutual" is appropriate in this context? Whatever sexual duties a husband has been given by divine inspiration, the wife also has been given. Both husbands and wives are to seek the welfare and the satisfaction of their mates. Marital counselors could hardly object to this arrangement.

The expression, "Let the husband render unto his wife due benevolence," may seem a little archaic because we do not use that kind of language any more, but it was an excellent translation in 1611. The literal rendering of the Greek reads as follows: "The husband should fulfill his marital duty to his wife." Although we ought to be concerned about marital rights, that is not the emphasis in this verse. The Greek word rendered "due benevolence" actually means debt, duty. Paul is binding duties, obligations and responsibilities on husbands and wives. Obviously, if a husband has a duty toward his wife, the wife has the right to the husband's sexual favors. The tense of

the verb is present active imperative and means "keep on fulfilling your duty to your wife." Dr. Charles Williams translates the Greek as follows: "The husband must always give to the wife what is due her." Incidentally, how can anyone read this passage and conclude that sexual activity in marriage is for procreation only?

As you think about this admonition to the Corinthians, you can understand that God intended for the sexual relationship in marriage to be holy, beautiful and fulfilling. The Song of Solomon serves as a wonderful commentary on the truths I am reading to you from 1 Corinthians 7. That beautiful poem is a sensuous conjugal love story. The language is explicit; the imagery is striking. Some theologians—both modern and ancient—have tried to make the Song of Solomon a picture of Christ's relationship to the church, but they have misunderstood and misapplied this great love story. Many of these theologians just could not believe that God would speak so explicitly and approvingly of the sexual relationship—even in marriage. But their teaching was based on Greek philosophy—not on the inspired word of God. Their views of human sexuality have done great harm to the marriages of thousands and thousands of couples. We must not allow these warped views of sex to hold sway over the lives of married couples. We must teach the simple truths of 1 Corinthians 7.

When Paul used the word "duty" in 1 Corinthians 7:3, that does not mean that the sexual relationship should be considered only a duty. Sexual relations in marriage are a duty, but they are also a privilege. I sincerely hope and pray that your intimate relationship does not deteriorate to the point that it becomes merely a duty, but it is a duty and God Himself made it so.

I have often told young people in the college classroom: "You have the option to remain single. You may prefer to get married—and the vast majority of you will—but you are not required to. But when you get married, you do not have the option of engaging in sexual relations with your partner or not engaging. You have sexual obligations to your mates." Feminists and some modernistic theologians may deny this, but there is no question about the Bible's teaching on the topic.

Feminists have sought to indict New Testament Christianity with maintaining a double standard in the marriage relationship. They have said, in effect, that the Bible gives the husband all the rights and privileges and has denied the wife the same rights and privileges. They have either failed to read 1 Corinthians 7 or they have chosen to ignore its teaching. In either case, they are inexcuseably guilty of failure to sustain their accusations against the church of our Lord Jesus Christ. Except their desire to use the Bible against the family and against the church, the feminists could care less about the teaching of God's word.

The sexual relationship, according to Paul, whom Dr. Letty Russell called "the supreme male chauvinist," is a two-way street. Neither the husband or the wife has greater freedom or greater responsibilities in the marriage act. They have mutual responsibilities. How could it be otherwise in any marriage, especially in a Christian marriage? How can the sexual relationship in marriage be genuinely intimate without following God's simple plan? Where marriages have departed from God's pattern for the home, we must seek to restore the pattern.

The second major thrust in Paul's teaching about the sexual relationship in marriages is that husbands

and wives have mutual authority in the intimate act of marriage. Please listen carefully to the apostle Paul.

The wife hath not power of her own body,
but the husband: and likewise also the
husband hath not power of his own body,
but the wife (1 Cor. 7:4).

The principle of mutual authority applies only to the intimate relationship—not to other aspects of marriage. The idea of mutual submission being promoted by feminists—both radical and otherwise makes absolutely no sense—either scriptural or logical. But for the sexual relationship, it must be mutual authority or there would be a temptation for abuse. It is not possible for any arrangement to be simpler, more appropriate and more sensible.

Many Americans—including some prominent theologians—insist that the Bible's teaching on human sexuality is several centuries behind the times. Bishop Spong's book, **Living In Sin? A Bishop Rethinks Human Sexuality** (San Francisco: Harper & Row Publishers, 1988), accuses the Bible of teaching uncertain and even contradictory positions on human sexuality. He thinks the Bible's teaching on sex is absolutely unacceptable for making sexual judgments in our day (p. 131). In other words, you cannot depend on the Bible to furnish you with right and wrong in sexual situations. If we cannot trust the Bible to lead us into paths of righteousness, what or whom can we trust—Bishop Spong, the situation ethicists or the secular humanists? I wonder if it bothers liberal bishops that their beliefs and attitudes have led to many unplanned pregnancies, to a rash of sexually transmitted diseases, to broken homes and to broken lives.

The King James Version uses the word "power"

in the passage I have just read (1 Cor. 7:4). The word in the Greek is not "power" but authority. Paul said, "The husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. In the same manner, the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does." The Revised Standard Version and the New American Standard Bible basically agree with my rendering of the Greek. The point everyone of these modern translations makes is simple and easy to understand: The husband has control over his wife's body in the sexual relationship and the wife has control over her husband's body. The tense of the verb is significant. It can be translated, "The wife continues not to have authority over her own body."

Nothing Paul writes in this verse denies a woman's responsibility for taking care of her own body; nor does Paul imply that she can sin with her body and be free of guilt because she does not have authority over her body. No person has a right to say, "Since my husband (or wife) has authority over my body, whatever I do will be his (or her) problem. I can take drugs, abuse alcohol and be involved in sexual immorality. God will hold my husband (or wife) accountable for my transgressions." Every person will be judged for the deeds done in the body (2 Cor. 5:10). But husbands and wives are obligated before the God who made us to give their bodies to their spouses in the husband-wife relationship.

But does not God's arrangement detract from their freedom? Does that not make men and women slaves to their married partners? On the contrary, it is the only arrangement which will work. Paul says very simply: the wife's rights to her body must be shared with her husband. His rights to his body must be

shared with his wife. Both husband and wife give up exclusive rights to their bodies when they marry. How could any reasonable person object to God's wise ways for husbands and wives?

Of course, radical feminists strongly resist this biblical instruction. They demand absolute control over their bodies. That could be one of the reasons the radical feminists seldom keep husbands very long. However, when the feminists insist on total control of their bodies, they are not generally thinking of the marital sex act. They have in mind their alleged right to have an abortion. If a child is conceived in their bodies, they demand the right to take that child's life if having the child would be embarrassing or unpleasant or expensive. How cruel and ungodly and insensitive for anyone to reason in such a fashion!

If you listened carefully to my reading of Paul's advice to the Corinthians, you could not keep from noticing both husbands and wives are given divine freedom to enjoy the sex act. It may surprise you to know that many modern psychologists, psychiatrists and theologians seem to think they are the ones who discovered the fact that women as well as men have sexual rights, needs and desires. They even imply that ancient men knew nothing of the female sexual appetite. Only modern scholars have discovered that fact. It makes one wonder how anyone could ignore so much of history—especially sacred history as revealed in the Bible. The Song of Solomon—written almost three thousand years ago—speaks explicitly of the wife's desire for her husband. 1 Corinthians was written almost two thousand years ago. How could scholars be so blind or naive? Or are they so biased against the Bible that they discount what it says about the intimate side of

marriage? Do they think Freud invented sex?

It probably strikes some people rather strangely that God Himself is the author of sex and the sexual appetite. Those who argue—as both ancient and modern men have done—that sexual expressions of love in marriage are beneath the dignity of godly men and women are appealing to Greek philosophy, the so-called “church fathers”—not to the inspired word of God. My friends, any complaints human beings have against the sexual arrangement in marriage will have to be taken up with God.

The third point Paul stresses in our context is of tremendous importance, and that is, if the husband and wife decide to refrain from sexual activity for a time, the decision must be mutual. Will you please listen to Paul?

Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency (1 Cor. 7:5).

An acquaintance of mine, Dr. Neil Gallagher, author of **How To Stop Porno Plague** (Minneapolis: Bethany Fellowship, Inc., 1977), appeared on a national talk show, along with a number of other well known scholars. The participants on that talk show were discussing the husband-wife relationship as it pertained to sex. Dr. Gallagher proposed this question to the distinguished members of the panel: What would you think if I were to give the following advice to a married couple who were having problems with their sexual adjustment: “You both have obligations to fulfill your mate’s sexual desires; your bodies do not belong to you alone, they also belong to your partners. You

must not deny each other sexual access without your partner's agreement. What would you think of that advice?" The panel of psychologists, psychiatrists and marriage counselors agreed that such advice would be very beneficial to the couple. Dr. Gallagher then asked them if they had any idea where he obtained that advice. They admitted they had no idea. They probably thought he invented it. Can you imagine their consternation when he told them it came from the Bible? They almost lost their upper plates.

Let me reread 1 Corinthians 7:5:

Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency.

The word "defraud" in this verse is a powerful concept. It means to steal, to rob, to cheat. Some versions use words like "deprive," "refuse," but they are not forceful enough. The tense of the verb says, "Stop cheating each other or do not get in the habit of cheating each other." But is not cheating or stealing or robbing out of place in this context? If a man takes what does not belong to him, what would you call that? Since his body does not belong to him alone and he withholds it from his wife, what else would you call it except cheating?

Paul does grant one exception to the rule he has outlined in 1 Corinthians 7:5. Do not withhold the sexual act from your partner "except it be with consent for a time, that you may give yourselves to fasting and prayer." The Greek word translated "consent" is *sumphonou* from which we get our English word "symphony" and literally means to sound together.

Some versions render the Greek "accord or agreement." If a husband and wife decide to cease their sexual activity for a time, they must both agree. It must be by mutual consent. Even then it must be for a specified time.

When the couple has refrained from sexual intimacy for a time, they are instructed to "come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your inconsistency." My friends, Satan knows what our weaknesses are. If a husband or wife refuses his or her married partner, that may be opening a door for Satan to tempt that person to sin. Satan knows how strong the sexual desire is in many men and women. You can rest assured he will use whatever means are available to lure you into sin. Please do not allow him an open door to destroy your marriage and your peace of mind.

Theme: The Home

God's Pattern For The Home: Husbands

Unless, like Rip Van Winkle, you have been asleep for a long time, you know that marriages in the United States are falling apart at an alarming rate. You may not read scholarly literature dealing with this topic, but you know how troubled many marriages are simply by observing what is occurring in your own community, perhaps in your own family. You understand the problem also by watching television, reading your local newspaper and by listening to talk radio. Recently, one radio program reported that more and more people are getting married and more and more people are getting divorced. For about twenty-five years in a row, according to one radio report, Americans are divorcing at an ever-increasing rate. Approximately 1,250,000 marriages will end in divorce this year.

Is it possible to determine the exact cause or causes of every one of these tragic situations? I am not going to attempt today to place all the blame on any person or on any one factor. I am not sure anyone—except God Himself—could possibly discover the right places or right people on which to lay all the blame. However, it is my considered judgment, after reading and teaching in this area for many years and teaching marriage and family courses for fourteen years, that much of the blame for unhappy and broken marriages rests squarely on the shoulders of husbands. I am by

no means alone in that judgment. Dr. James Dobson, a well known west coast psychologist, gives statistical evidence that men are not so interested in preserving their marriages as are women. In his excellent book, **Straight Talk to Men and Their Wives** (Waco: Word Books, Publisher, 1980), Dr. Dobson stresses the need to place great importance on men in the survival of any culture. He asks who are the ones who buy and read books on family living. He affirms that at least eighty percent are women. Who attends workshops and seminars on building stronger families? The large majority are women. What segment of American society listens on radio to discussions of marriage and family living? Who are the ones who attend Bible study programs on what the Bible says about family living? The vast majority are women. Women also buy audio and video tapes on how to have good marriages. Women often complain to counselors that their husbands do not assume the role of leadership in the family (p. 22).

In my limited experience as a marriage counselor, I have encountered very few men who would admit that their marriages were in trouble. Sometimes men may be honest and open enough to admit that their marriages were in trouble, but in most cases they were not courageous enough to seek help. Most American husbands probably think it would be a sign of weakness on their part if they asked for outside help. They seem to think they can handle their problems by themselves. As a result of such stubbornness or indifference, they often wait until their marriages have deteriorated to a point that no one can help without miraculous interference. It is my considered judgment and that of Dr. Dobson that we

men are most of the culprits in marriage failures. Because we men are so often responsible for the breakup of marriages, I am pleading with the men in my audience today to pay careful attention to our discussion of "God's Pattern for Husbands."

What can and should we men do about our indifference toward our homes? Is there a solution to this very serious problem? My friends, there is and it is not really all that difficult to discover. What I am about to say to you may sound very simplistic, but it has worked for thousands of years and will continue to work if men will only give it a fair chance. We must go back to the truth of God's word; we must follow God's pattern for husbands and fathers. There really is no other plan which will work.

The great book of Ephesians has much to say about family relationships. I invite your attention to these powerful words.

For the husband is the head of the wife,
even as Christ is the head of the church: and
he is the saviour of the body (Eph. 5:23).

Incidentally, the churches of Christ did not elevate the husband to be the head of the wife. Ancient theologians, the so-called "church fathers" did not make the husband the head of the wife. The God who ordained marriage in the Garden of Eden was the One responsible for the husband's headship of the wife. God made Jesus Christ the head of the church and the Savior of the body. He is also the One who made the husband the head of the wife. If the husband is not the head of the wife, how could we establish Christ's headship of the church?

Since the advent of the Women's Liberation Movement, some compromising theologians, pressured

by the radical feminists, have sought to alter the meaning of the word "head" in reference to husbands. What did Paul have in mind as he spoke of the husband's being the head of the wife? Responding to that question from a negative viewpoint may be helpful. The scriptures nowhere permit a husband to be a dictator. The husband is not authorized to impose his will on his wife, regardless of the circumstances. Being the head of the wife means he has certain responsibilities and privileges which God Himself has ordained for husbands. For example, Jesus Christ provided for His family, the church of the living God; so husbands ought to provide for their families. Paul's instructions to Timothy included preaching on family relationships.

But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel (1 Tim. 5:8).

Financially, the husband must provide for his family; spiritually and morally, he must be the leader of the home. My gentlemen friends, this means that God will hold us accountable for our wives and children. Neglect of one's family will cause a man to be lost eternally. In addition, it will weaken our political and economic system.

Ephesians 5:25 is probably the best known New Testament passage dealing with a husband's duties to his wife. "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it." To the husbands in my audience today, I need to ask this question: What did Paul mean when he commanded, "Husbands, love your wives?" Some of you will probably answer: "Loving a wife means bringing home the

bacon." Some husbands say very firmly: "Of course, I love my wife. I provide a good home for her. I put food on the table. I furnish her a good automobile and on and on." I am not discounting that the duty of a husband is to provide for his own, as I have just read from 1 Timothy 5:8, but there are literally thousands of husbands who provide generously for their wives and children who care nothing for them. Many wives have every kind of luxury their hearts could desire. But those women would trade all of that for a husband who genuinely cares for them. I have had wives to say: "I do not want his money. I want his love." They sometimes complain: When my husband is at home he does not pay any attention to me or to the children. He is immersed in Monday night football or in hunting or in fishing. As vital as providing financially for one's family is, that does not prove love.

Other husbands believe they love their wives because they engage in sexual intimacy with them. I know from a scriptural viewpoint just how significant the sexual relationship in marriage is, but that does not prove love, unless one has a perverted view of love. Tragically, many preachers, priests and other religious leaders have left the impression—whether through ignorance or prejudice—that sexual intimacy is less than honorable in some way or maybe it is a necessary evil. Some of the so-called "church fathers" in the first few centuries of the church's existence had warped ideas of marital sex. Some leaders in the early church were forced to leave their wives and children. If they refused to cease all sexual activity with their wives, they and their families were often persecuted and sometimes even murdered. No theological position could be further from the truth of God's word. The Hebrew writer placed the sexual relationship in marriage

in the right light when he wrote:

Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge (Heb. 13:4).

Two words in this text need to be emphasized. The word "all" applies to everyone. "Marriage is honorable in **all**"—religious leaders included. The word "bed" in the Greek is **koite** and means the sex act in marriage. The bed is undefiled, that is, it is pleasing to God for husbands and wives to be sexually intimate with each other but obviously not with anyone else.

Paul discussed the marriage act—the intimate sexual relationship—in his first letter to the Corinthians. What could be more reasonable than these words from the inspired word of God?

Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband. Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband. The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife. Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency (1 Cor. 7:2-5).

A few observations on this passage are in order. The marriage act has a negative purpose: "to avoid fornication" (1 Cor. 7:2). Men and women have the option of remaining single, but if they want to find sexual satisfaction, it must be enjoyed within the marriage relationship. Sex outside of marriage will condemn one's soul to eternal torment, unless, of

course, one repents of that sin. "That which do such things," Paul taught, "shall not inherit the kingdom of God" (Gal. 5:19-21).

You must surely see from the reading of I Corinthians 7:2-5 that marriage is an honorable institution. "Let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband" (I Cor. 7:2). Religious organizations which teach that marriage **for anyone** is a less honorable state than being single is a violation of the plain truth of scripture. In truth, such a view of marriage shows that the church which takes that position is apostate. Will you please listen to Paul's statements in his first letter to Timothy?

Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth (I Tim. 4:1-3).

Degrading marriage, as some churches have done by requiring their leaders to remain celibate, is a doctrine of demons. I know that is plain language, but think of the enormous damage such teaching has done to otherwise good people.

As you can see from our text and from many other biblical passages from both the Old Testament and from the New, men and women—all eligible men and women—have a right to marry. After discussing the option men and women have either to marry or to remain single, Paul said,

But if any man think that he behaveth himself uncomely toward his virgin, if she pass the flower of her age, and need so require, let him do what he will, he sinneth not: let them marry...So then he that giveth her in marriage doeth well; but he that giveth her not in marriage doeth better (1 Cor. 7:36, 38).

Incidentally, Paul tells men and women to have their own spouses—not somebody else's.

Each spouse, according to Paul, is to render unto the other "due benevolence." In modern English, the term "due benevolence" would be better rendered "conjugal duties." This expression, "conjugal duties," indicates that God intended for the sexual act of marriage to be beautiful and fulfilling. In this respect, both Testaments harmonize perfectly. Solomon's advice enlarges upon Paul's teaching.

Drink waters out of thine own cistern, and running waters out of thine own well...Let thy fountain be blessed: and rejoice with the wife of thy youth. Let her be as the loving hind and pleasant roe; let her breasts satisfy thee at all times; and be thou ravished (or exhilarated, or infatuated) always with her love (Prov. 5:15, 18-19).

How could anyone read these words from Paul and from Solomon and conclude that marital sex is somehow immoral?

Sexual duties in marriage are reciprocal, that is, they are a two-way street. The wife is to render unto her husband her marital duties and the husband is to do the same. Furthermore,

The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the

husband hath not power of his own body,
but the wife (1 Cor. 7:4).

That verse says very simply that the wife's body belongs to her husband and the husband's body belongs to the wife. Can you imagine what this biblical truth would do for many unhappy marriages in the United States and around the world? Sometimes the sexual privilege is used as a reward for good behavior and withholding it as a means of punishing one's spouse for bad behavior. The scriptures do not allow for doing that. It is immoral.

Paul refers to one partner's withholding the sexual privilege from the other as "defrauding." That shows the seriousness of such conduct. The word "defraud" means to rob, to cheat. Had you ever thought of cheating in that manner? We normally think of cheating if a man has another woman on the side or if the woman has another man. That is cheating, but so is refusing to engage in sexual activity with one's spouse. We might not call it cheating, but the Bible does. And in some cases, it may actually do as much harm to the marriage as one spouse's being involved with someone else. Every marriage counselor can testify to that truth.

If and when married partners decide to cease their sexual intimacy, they should observe the Bible's restrictions. It must be by mutual agreement. They both must consent. There must be a good reason. Paul mentions prayer. That does not mean there is any conflict between marital intimacy and prayer, but there could be a good reason why married couples would want to engage in a period of prayer without any distractions. If they both agree to that condition, it is permissible. But such cessation should not continue

indefinitely. It is to be for a time, that is, for a specified time. The reason for not continuing to refrain from sexual relations in marriage is specifically mentioned: That Satan do not tempt you for your incontinency. The word "incontinency" means lack of power or lack of control. One partner in the marriage—or both—might face severe temptations if the couple fails to engage in their normal sexual relations. If you know human nature, you should have no difficulty understanding what Paul is saying.

But there are men who provide for the sexual satisfaction of their wives who do not love them. The Bible nowhere defines love as sex, although scripturally speaking, in marriages there is a necessary connection between the two. I have already shown that from 1 Corinthians 7 and Proverbs 5.

I urge the husbands in my audience to be grateful for the good wives God has given you and to be the very best husbands you are capable of being. There are no perfect husbands, but most of us can do better than we currently do.

Theme: The Home

God's Pattern For The Home: Husbands (No. 2)

If you were to walk down the main street in your town or city and ask every man you met this question: "Do you love your wife?", how do you think most of them would answer? I have no doubt most men would say, "Of course, I love my wife. Why do you think I married her in the first place?" That may not be a particularly good answer. The truth is: Many of them married for reasons other than love. But assuming they said they loved their wives, what do you suppose they mean by that? Are they saying they love their wives because they provide for them, protect them from harm, take care of their sexual needs? All of these activities on the part of the husband are vital to good marriages, but does any one of them or all of them combined prove that a man loves his wife?

It is in order for us to discuss the Greek words which are translated "love." The Greek New Testament has two primary words which are rendered "love"—**agape** and **philos**. I shall come back to these words in a moment, but let us look briefly at two other words. The Greeks normally used the word **eros** when they spoke of love. The word means sexual or sensual love and is never used in the New Testament. I do not know why the Bible writers never use the word **eros**, but I suspect it had such a bad connotation they simply avoided it. Erotic love is an important part of

marriage, as Proverbs, the Song of Solomon and other passages teach. But the words "erotic" and "eroticism" are never used by any Bible writer. The Bible writers were not squeamish about such matters, but they chose their words wisely.

The Greeks also used the word **storge** which means warm, tender feeling. Paul used one form of the word **storge** in the following verse: "Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another" (Rom. 12:10). The expression, "kindly affectioned," is the Greek word we are examining. The word seems to be particularly appropriate in the family circle, although it might have applications outside the home, and probably does.

A very common word for "love" in the New Testament is **philos** which generally means brotherly love. The Hebrew writer exhorts Christians: "Let brotherly love continue" (Heb. 13:1). Sometimes the Greeks used the word *philadelphia*—brotherly love. Peter exhorted his readers to add to their "godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness love" (2 Pet. 1:7). The same apostle wrote of our duties as God's faithful children:

Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently (1 Pet. 1:22).

While the basic meaning of the Greek **philos** is brotherly kindness or love, it probably is not always used in a strictly technical sense in the New Testament.

The most common word for "love" in the New Testament is **agape**—the noun—and **agapao**—the verb. The Greeks did not use this word so extensively as

they did **eros** and **philos**. Most of the Greek writers would not have been able to comprehend the meaning of this word as the New Testament writers used it. They used the word of unconditional love, of love which does not demand any response from the one loved, of love which seeks only the welfare of the one loved. That kind of love was rare among the Greeks and is rare today. But it is used often in the New Testament. That is the Greek word in the Golden Text of the Bible.

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life (John 3:16).

It is also the kind of love Jesus demonstrated when He "gave himself for the church" (Eph. 5:25). Paul commanded husbands to love their wives even as Christ loved the church. The language Paul used is simple and beautiful, but what does it mean?

As you no doubt know, the Bible nowhere defines words, but we can in most cases determine from the context what the inspired writer had in mind. Let us look carefully at the word "love." I Corinthians 13 tells us how very vital love is (vs. 1-3), how love behaves (vs. 4-7) and the permanence of love (vs. 8-13). I shall not take time today to read all of the thirteen verses in I Corinthians 13, but will dwell on verses 4-7. This whole chapter sheds much light on what love means in all relationships, but I want to emphasize today what it means for a husband to love his wife. Will you please turn in your Bibles to I Corinthians 13?

As I have already indicated, verses 4-7 tell us how love behaves. But before looking at these verses,

let me explain why the King James Version has the word "charity" instead of the word "love," as most other versions have. The translators of the King James Version in 1611 translated some of the Bible from the Latin. The Latin versions used the word **caritas** to translate the Greek **agape**. **Caritas** meant love as does the Greek **agape**. But when the English translators provided the King James Version they transliterated the Latin **caritas** and made it "charity." "Charity" was a perfectly good word in 1611, but it does not completely bring out the meaning of the Greek for our day. The Greek should be rendered "love" and that is how I am going to discuss it in our study today. In modern English the word "charity" is too narrow. It refers to a specific kind of love—helping those who are in need.

The inspired writer tells husbands and others, "Love suffers long." J. B. Phillip's translates the expression, "This love of which I speak is slow to lose patience." Peter uses the word "patient" in speaking in the Lord's relationship to man.

The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance (2 Pet. 3:9).

Are you and I as husbands longsuffering without our wives' faults and shortcomings? If you will allow me to coin a new word—suppose the Lord were as "shortsuffering" with us as we sometimes are with our wives—how do you think we would fare in life? We want our wives and others to be longsuffering with us. Does not the Golden Rule teach that we should treat others as we want to be treated (Mt. 7:12)?

Paul next affirms that love is kind. The word "kind" means gracious, useful. Are we husbands as gracious and thoughtful to our wives as we were when they were just our girlfriends? If you had treated her then as you treat her today, do you honestly believe she would have married you? Are we as kind to our wives as we often are to strangers? It is important that we be kind to everyone—our girlfriends included—but should it not be more vital that we continue to be kind, courteous and gentle? One of the most common complaints from wives is that their husbands never tell them anymore that they love them. If our marriages are really important to us, how can we fail to show our love to our wives?

Paul insists that love is not envious or jealous. If your wife has some special talent or ability—and all of our wives do—if she succeeds in some area of her life—there is no room for jealousy. Since the two in a marriage become one, there is no justification for being jealous. It would be similar to Paul's explanation of the relationship among the various parts of our physical bodies. The ear, for example, cannot say to the eye, "Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body" (1 Cor. 12:16). When our wives do well at their tasks and choices, we should be grateful and jubilant that we are married to such talented and splendid women. I try to thank God every day for my Molly.

If love is of the biblical kind, it does not vaunt itself. The word "vaunt" means vainglorious, boastful, braggard. One who truly loves does not boast or brag about his abilities and accomplishments. So many of us love ourselves so much we do not have time to love others, including our wives. The word "vaunt" is

closely related to the expression which follows: Love is not puffed up. The Greek word rendered "puffed up" is **phusioo** and means to be blown up like a bellows, hence to be arrogant. Is it significant that Paul uses the expression, "puffed up" so many times in 1 Corinthians? That church had some serious problems with being haughty, highminded. Paul warned the Corinthians about being "puffed up for one against another" (1 Cor. 4:6). How can a boastful, arrogant person express love for anyone when he apparently loves himself so much? Has our modern approach to self-esteem contributed to this haughty attitude on the part of so many in our culture?

Paul affirms in his great chapter on love that love "does not behave itself in unseemly ways." The word "unseemly" appears only here and in 1 Corinthians 7:36. In the latter verse, it is rendered "uncomely." The basic meaning of the word is shameful or indecent. It could apply to any kind of behavior which would embarrass or hurt the ones we love. Do you understand how the drinking of alcoholic beverages or the use of other drugs can destroy love by causing you to act in a shameful or indecent manner? You do not really love someone when you act in such a way as to disgrace your wife and children. How especially unseemly it is for preachers or other religious leaders to betray their wives, engage in illegal financial dealings and in other ways bring shame on their families and on the organizations they are supposed to lead.

Paul reminds us of many passages both in the Old Testament and in the New that love "seeks not her own," that is, love is not selfish. An excellent definition of love is: Love seeks the welfare of the one who is loved. If we men really love our wives, we are

not going to demand our way, attempt to satisfy our needs and our desires only or even primarily. We are to seek our wives' good. One marriage counselor was asked: What in your judgment is the most serious problem in marriage? He answered very simply and tersely: Selfishness. I have discovered no basis on which to disagree.

Again, may I remind ourselves of our courting days? How diligently we worked to please our girlfriends or fiancées. If we learned what kind of candy she liked or what flowers she enjoyed, we left no stone unturned to provide that favor. Why? Because we wanted our girlfriends to love us and to believe we would make good husbands for them. Now that they are our wives, is it important to keep them in love with us? How can we explain how thoughtless and foolish we men sometimes behave in reference to our wives?

The King James Version says that love "is not easily provoked." The word "easily" does not appear in the original. The Greek simply says, "love is not provoked." The Greek word rendered "provoked" is used only here and in Acts 17:16. While Paul waited in Athens for Silas and Timothy, he had an opportunity to learn about the city of Athens. As he looked around him, he saw on almost every street corner idols which the Greeks worshipped. Luke comments that Paul's spirit was stirred in him (Acts 17:16). The word means irritated, exasperated, angered. Paul became angry when he saw the most educated city in the world wholly given to idolatry. But Christian love prevents us from being provoked at our brothers and sisters in Christ and at our spouses. If we really love our spouses, we are going to strive to understand even the most cruel behavior. Love can and should overlook so much—

not that we should be naive—but forgiving and understanding and longsuffering.

Another quality of love is that it "thinks no evil." Dr. Charles Williams translates that expression: Love "never harbors evil thoughts" (p. 58). Have you ever had this experience: Your mate does something especially foolish and thoughtless? She asks your forgiveness which you freely grant. Then she does the same thing and you remind her of the first incident. That is doing exactly what Paul says love does not do. Paul says very plainly that love does not keep an account book of the wrongs done to us so as to get even for those wrongs. Should we not have the same loving, forgiving and understanding attitude toward our partners which Christ has toward us? Must we not be willing to forgive if we want to be forgiven? Failing to forgive your life's partner or anyone else causes many conflicts in our relationship to others.

Paul tells us that love "rejoices not in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth." There are people in every community who seem to take great delight in evil—not just in doing evil themselves—but in those who do evil. Paul had such people in mind when he wrote of the gross evils which existed among the Gentiles at Rome. According to Paul, some of these people knew the judgment of God,

...that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them (Rom. 1:32).

Some people "gloat over the wickedness of other people," as Dr. J. B. Phillip's translates that expression. The kind of love which God inspires and approves does not behave in such a fashion.

Instead, love rejoices when the truth triumphs. When Paul uses the word "truth," did he have in mind our rejoicing in the truth which God has revealed in His word or was He speaking of our telling the truth to one another? Dr. A. T. Robertson thinks Paul was speaking of truth personified as opposed to unrighteousness (volume 4, p. 178). Of this we can be absolutely sure: God's word is truth and He demands that we speak the truth. How much more enjoyable and profitable our marriages could be if we always remembered these words.

Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another (Eph. 4:25).

Paul teaches in this masterful chapter on love that love "bears all things." The word "bear" (**stegai** in the Greek) is a most fascinating one. The word really means a roof, a covering. The word would probably be better rendered "protects" or "covers." Peter used a different word for "cover" (**kaluptei**) but with the same basic meaning.

And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins (1 Peter 4:8).

Love knows no limits of endurance. It keeps on trusting regardless of the circumstances. The beautiful book of Hosea in the Old Testament is a powerful commentary on this truth. I have seen concrete evidence of this kind of love in my mother and father. They never gave up on their twelve children.

Love "believes all things," that is, it has faith in God and in His word. It trusts that all things work together to them who love God and are called according

to His purpose (Rom. 8:28). That should not mean that love is gullible, but trusting as much as humanly possible. Love hopes all things. Have you ever stood by the bedside of a dying child and seen hope beyond hope in the eyes of a father and a mother? Have you ever talked with a wife who keeps on hoping that her husband will leave the other woman and come back home where he belongs? Love keeps on hoping.

Love endures all things. The Greek words translated "endure" (**hupomenei**) literally means to stand under or to remain under. The expression could be rendered "love perseveres." Like a good soldier, love keeps on standing fast. Finally, and this is a great and comforting truth: Love never fails. Money and other material possessions fail, but love never fails. It endures through this life and into eternity.

Theme: The Home

God's Pattern For The Home: Husbands (No. 3)

N. B. Hardeman, founding president of Freed-Hardeman University and one of my teachers, loved to tell stories in his Bible classes. He said that one old woman was asked why she had never married. She replied, "I have a chimney which smokes, a parrot which cusses and a cat which stays out late at night. Why do I need a husband?" All joking aside, are husbands really all that bad? Tragically, the answer in thousands and thousands of cases is YES. We husbands are often too stubborn to ask for help when we desperately need it, too immersed in our occupations or professions to devote much time to our families and too interested in our own selfish wills to make good husbands and good fathers. If we are going to make any radical changes in our families' welfare, husbands must become the kind of men God wants them to be.

Is the current Promise Keepers movement the way for husbands to learn to be better husbands? I have serious doubts about some of the beliefs and practices of the Promise Keepers. I have no doubt about the sincerity of the men involved in the movement, but I am thoroughly convinced the members of the churches of Christ cannot support the Promise Keepers—not because they encourage husbands and fathers to be faithful in discharging

their duties to their wives and children—but because of doctrinal compromises which are evident in reading any of the literature published by those in the movement. The movement is basically Pentecostal and includes a number of Calvinistic beliefs. To be very plain: The Promise Keepers do not teach the New Testament plan of salvation. That alone should keep members of the churches of Christ from endorsing the movement.

The Promise Keepers have recognized—and correctly—that the homes of America are in deep trouble. They have decided to capitalize on that tragic fact and have built an enormous movement in a very short time. If the Promise Keepers strengthen homes by encouraging men to be good husbands and good fathers, does that not erase any doctrinal errors that movement might support? The answer to that question should be plain to every Bible student. Paul condemns doing evil that good may come (Rom. 3:8). Many religious groups—even cults—may do some good in helping strengthen families, but that does not and cannot excuse false doctrine.

Most of my adult life I have taught Bible classes and lectured on the duties of husbands. I taught marriage and family courses at Freed-Hardeman University for fourteen years and have preached everywhere I go in meetings on this very vital topic. It would do me good to see all husbands take their responsibilities seriously. I know wives hope that will happen. But the Promise Keepers movement is the wrong way to go about it. I have read the testimonies from both husbands and wives about the good the Promise Keepers have done. But the movement is based on teachings which are contrary to the word of

God. To the average modern religious leader, doctrine may not mean much, but it does to God Almighty. If any of the Promise Keepers want to challenge any of the statements I have made today, they are certainly free to do so.

I am convinced that being a good husband is one of the most difficult tasks in the world. But with the help of God and with the guidelines furnished by divine inspiration we men can certainly improve on our past performance. It is with this in mind that I call your attention to some of Paul's admonitions to husbands. He commanded: "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it" (Eph. 5:25). How much did Christ love His church? Paul says He "gave himself up for it," that is, He sacrificed His life for His bride, the church of the living God. What kind of sacrifices are we husbands willing to make for our wives? Are we willing to give up some of our fishing or hunting or golfing time to be with our wives and children? After hearing a preacher speak about a man's willingness to give his life for his wife, one man said to his mate, "O, I would give up my life for you." His wife asked, "Would you give up Monday night football for me?" Can you imagine a wife's demanding such great sacrifices from her husband?

If a husband really loves his wife as Christ loved the church, do you honestly believe many wives would go out looking for another man? But when we husbands pay attention to every other phase of our lives and neglect our wives, we can expect unhappiness, frustration and disillusionment from our spouses. I am not saying that a man's neglecting a wife justifies her finding another man but it unquestionably leans in that direction for some women. Will you husbands in

my audience please listen to these wise words from Strother Campbell's book, **Making Marriage Christian** (Philadelphia: The Judson Press, 1937):

By simply neglecting a wife whose heart craves kisses and caresses a husband makes it easy for her to listen to the flattery and love-making of another man. Husbands often forget his. A woman naturally wants to be loved and to be told she is loved. Nothing else will take the place of it. She will put up with scanty fare, if her husband will only satisfy her heart hunger. Every married man knows that he won his wife by loving her and making her believe that he would make her a wonderful husband. But alas! No sooner has the preacher finished saying, "I now pronounce you man and wife;" and "What God has joined together, let not man put asunder," that he quits telling her that he loves her. Is she disappointed? Ask her.

Any man who has secured the consent of a good woman to be his wife can bind her to him with hoops of steel by occasionally putting his manly arms around her and giving her a kiss with a kick in it—just like the one he gave her the night she said, "Whither you go, I will go; and where you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people." Too often a man after he is married thinks his wife is his forever without any effort on his part to keep her, and to keep her in love with him. He dives headlong into his business, or his profession, and becomes oblivious to all else. Presently along comes some flattering philanderer and runs away with his wife. Men—I mean you married men—when you go home at night tell you that you love her. But if you

do, be sure to have the smelling-salts handy, for she is likely to faint from shock (pp. 52-53).

Do you think Dr. Campbell may have exaggerated the situation just a little? Are we husbands really that unthoughtful and uncaring? Dr. Campbell knew and we ought to know that a husband's duty is to love his wife right next to loving God. Paul expressed that truth in these words:

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

Is Paul arguing that a man ought to love his wife as he loves his own body? Intelligent men take care of their bodies since they know they are issued just one in this life. Most of the time we try to eat right, to do the proper amount of exercise and avoid debilitating diseases. There is nothing wrong with that so long as we do not make a fetish of our bodies. But why will we spend so much time taking care of our physical bodies and neglect to cultivate **the** most important earthly relationship—the husband-wife relationship?

Since husbands and wives become one flesh in marriage, when a man loves his wife, he is loving himself. That is not or should not be a selfish love, but a strong desire to show our wives just how important they are. A sane man does not hate his flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, even as the Lord the church. The word "nourish" (**ektrepho** in the Greek) means to train up, to nurture, to help to achieve maturity and good health. The word "cherish" (**thalpo** in the Greek) means to foster with tender care. Paul

used this latter word when he spoke of his work with the Thessalonians. "But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherishes her children" (1 Thess. 2:7).

The nourishing and cherishing of a wife does not just happen. It has to be planned and the plan has to be consummated. Incidentally, I am not saying that what my wife needs or wants by way of nourishing and cherishing is exactly what your wife wants. After all, we are not married to a statistical average. We are married to individuals who have different wishes, desires and needs. That means we are to make an effort to know what pleases our wives and helps them grow into maturity, just as we need to grow into maturity. We can learn much by studying how Christ nourishes and cherishes His bride—the church of Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 5:31 offers some of the sanest wisdom any married couple could ever find anywhere.

For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh.

Every marriage counselor will tell you that one of the major problems in marriage relates to in-laws. Either the parents are unwilling to allow their married young people to begin life on their own or the young people have an unhealthy attachment to the parents. In either case, the marriage will have some serious problems, if it does not end in divorce. That does not mean that young people should rebel against their parents, but it does mean they have to cut the emotional umbilical cord and start life as mature young adults. There should be no running back to mama and daddy for advice. And parents must not interfere with an on-going marriage. I have known parents who actually caused

couples to separate because the parents thought their child had married beneath him or her.

Paul's advice to married people was based on God's original pattern as revealed in the book of Genesis. Our Lord taught exactly the same truth (Mt. 19:5). God wants the young people to have the courage and the maturity to launch into a solid marriage. He also wants the parents to encourage and to support their children in every way possible without seeking to control their lives. How wise parents would be if they would simply say to their married children: "We are standing behind you with our whole being. We are going to continue to pray for you and to assist you in every way conceivable, but we are not going to tell you what to do or how to do it. You are on your own and we are not going to live your lives for you. We have enough to do to keep our own marriage on track. So please do not come running home every time you have a disagreement."

Young people must always respect and honor their parents. Paul instructed children to,

...obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;) (Eph. 6:1-2).

When young people marry, they are no longer expected to obey their parents. However, there will never come a time when you will escape the responsibility of honoring your parents. That honor may even require you to help support your parents financially (1 Tim. 5:8ff.). Even if your parents are dead—as both of mine are—you still have an obligation to honor them by the way you live. We honor our parents when we have established good homes and seek to put into practice

the great principles they instilled in us.

Please take note of these last two verses in Ephesians 5.

This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband (Eph. 5:32-33).

If you have studied the Ephesian letter carefully, you know that the word "mystery" (**musterion** in the Greek) means secret. It is one of the key words in Ephesians. In six short chapters, the word is used six times. The mystery or secret of God had in His mind concerning the church of the living God is no longer a secret. It has been revealed and can be understood by all who read this great book.

As Paul concluded his discussion of the husband-wife relationship, he anticipated an objection which some might raise. Some have said in modern times, "Paul meant what he said about Christ and the church, but he was simply using the husband-wife relationship as an illustration." After saying that he was speaking primarily about Christ and His church—which the whole Ephesian letter does—Paul said, in effect, "I meant what I said about the church, but I also meant what I said about husbands and wives. A husband must love his wife even as he loves himself. And the wife must see that she reverences or respects her husband." How desperately our nation—including many in the church—needs to hear and heed the message of Ephesians 5!

Paul's letter to the church at Colosse has a short section about husbands and wives. I shall read only Colossians 3:19. "Husbands, love your wives, and be

not bitter against them." I do not know specifically what Paul has in mind when he told husbands not to be bitter against their wives. I understand the word "bitter" (**pikraino**), but I do not know what the reasons were that would cause a husband to be bitter. Could it be disputes over money? That is one of the primary causes of irritation in modern marriages. Could that have been the case in the first century of the Christian era? Had they had conflicts over sex or over in-laws? We have no way of knowing, but we do know that bitterness and anger can be very destructive of marital harmony. Obviously, there is no way to avoid all disagreement—whether in marriage or in any other human relationship—but all of us—including husbands—must work at resolving the differences which arise. We husbands must not be bitter at our wives. After all, Paul teaches that husbands and wives become one. How can a man justify being bitter at himself?

Our time has been spent today in examining Paul's specific instructions to husbands in their relationship to their wives. For the remainder of our time, let me read some generic or universal principles which ought to help us husbands to fulfill our duties in a more responsible manner. These admonitions were not given just to husbands or just to wives. They apply to all human relationships. I shall begin by reading a few statements from our Lord's Sermon on the Mount. Can you think of any principle which would help marriages any more than this:

Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets (Mt. 7:12).

How much happier would all marriages be if every

husband treated his wife like he wants to be treated and if every wife reciprocated? Following the Golden Rule would revolutionize marriages and all other relationships.

Paul's instructions to the Philippians include these powerful words:

Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others (Phil. 2:3-4).

Paul exhorted the Romans:

Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good. Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another (Rom. 12:9-10).

What better way to close our discussion today than to read these words from the great chapter on love?

Charity never faileth...And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity (1 Cor. 13:8, 13).

Theme: The Home

God's Pattern For The Home: Husbands (No. 4)

Some wise author has written: Husbands come in three kinds: Prizes, surprises and consolation prizes. Which of these we husbands become is not left to blind fate or to chance. Even if we are not prizes when we first marry, we can work diligently at improving ourselves. That is one of the chief purposes which inspired writers had in mind as they addressed husbands. Will you please pay close attention to these challenging words from the apostle Peter?

Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered (1 Pet. 3:7).

These are sobering words which demand our attention today. If we husbands would learn and practice the message of this verse, the atmosphere of America's homes would dramatically improve.

The apostle Peter urges husbands to dwell with their wives according to knowledge. Peter uses a word for "dwell" which appears nowhere else in the New Testament. The word involves domestic association. The verb Peter uses is a present participle which means to continue to dwell with our wives according to knowledge. Husbands have a God-given duty to

maintain their homes intact. I am aware that men can always find excuses for leaving their wives and finding others who are more suitable, at least, for a short run. But those excuses will not stand in the final judgment.

Husbands are to dwell with their wives "according to knowledge." Marvin Vincent's **Word Studies in the New Testament** (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1946) says the expression "according to knowledge," means "with intelligent recognition of the nature of the marriage relationship" (volume 1, p. 651). I think Vincent's observation has merit, but his definition does not go far enough. The knowledge of which Peter writes goes far beyond the nature of the marriage relationship, although within itself it is very important. All husbands certainly need to know about marriage, but just as important, they need to know the nature of women. We especially need to know about our wives—not just women in general.

But how does a man learn about women—his wife in particular? After all, women are supposed to be the mysterious sex. According to some, women are like the weather—changeable! The homespun theory is: If you think you know a woman, she comes up with something new. I am not about to assert that you and I can learn all there is to know about our wives—or other human beings—but we can learn enough to know how to be good husbands. I am absolutely confident of that.

The greatest source of information about women is the word of Almighty God. If you and I expect to succeed as husbands, we must know what God says about women. It should prove profitable to all of us to examine a few statements from God's book on human psychology—the inspired word of God. In the

mind of God, men and women are equal in value. That does not mean that men and women are the same, either in body or mind or in their functions and responsibilities. Genesis reveals that God made man in His own image. The word "man" in this context does not mean "male"; it means human being.

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them (Gen. 1:26-27).

God made a difference in men's and women's functions, but He made no difference in their value. The New Testament makes that truth even plainer.

For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus (Gal. 3:26-28).

As you can glean from these words, God expects all of us—including husbands—to respect and treat others as equals. He is not pleased when men treat their wives as if they were objects and not human beings. Husbands are to treat their wives as they want to be treated (Mt. 7:12).

Occasionally, you will discover some good books which will help you to understand your wife. Dr. James Dobson's book, **What Wives Wish Their Husbands Knew About Women** (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1975), has some very valuable information in it. I also recommend Dr. Thomas Warren's book, **Your Marriage Can Be Great** (Jonesboro, AR: National Christian Press, Inc., 1978). Dr. Warren's book is filled with information and

instructions about virtually every phase of married life. It probably is **the** best book I have on the topic.

Peter encourages husbands to give "honor unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel." The word "give" in the Greek means to assign, to portion out. The husband must give the wife her portion of honor. It is not enough just to tell our wives that we honor and love them. We must demonstrate by our attitudes and our actions that we really do honor our wives.

Peter designates wives as "the weaker vessels." The feminists are angry at Peter for using such language, but they have no reason to be angry. Dr. A. T. Robertson's books, **Word Pictures of the New Testament** (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1935), affirms that "both husband and wife are designated vessels or parts of the furniture in God's house" (volume 6, p. 110). The woman is said to be the "weaker vessel." But "weaker" in what respect? Are women intellectually weaker than men? If you have ever taught school, you know the answer to that question. Many psychologists have shown that women think differently from men, but they are not intellectually weaker than men. Are women morally weaker? Of course not! They may not be morally stronger, as some theologians have taught for years, but they are not morally weaker.

When Peter uses the word "weaker" of women he almost unquestionably means physically weaker. In their upper body strength, the average woman is weaker than the average man. They always have been and always will be, even if they take all the weight-lifting and body-building courses in the world. There is nothing particularly degrading about a woman's being physically weaker than men, especially in modern times when physical strength has little to do with most kinds of work.

It is interesting to note in passing that one modern anthropologist, Dr. Ashley Montagu, wrote a rather foolish book with the title, **The Natural Superiority Of Women**. Even if Dr. Montagu's thesis were correct, there would be no way under heaven he could prove it. Some women have some strengths that some men do not have and some men have some strengths that some women do not have, but how is it possible to balance the strengths of women against the strengths of men and reach the conclusion that women are naturally superior to men? Or that men are naturally superior to women? Some writers have something to say and others just have to say something. I wonder if Dr. Montagu does not fall into the latter category.

If men are ever tempted to think of themselves as superior to women, they should remove such thinking from their minds. Peter affirms that men and women are "heirs together of the grace of life." The expression, "heirs together" in the Greek literally means "fellow-heirs." Women have every right to become Christians and to entertain the same hope of eternal life which men do. God has not selected men to be first-class citizens in the kingdom of heaven and women to be second-class citizens. All men and women who have obeyed the gospel and remain faithful to their calling enjoy all the promises which God has for His children. So far as salvation is concerned, we have every right to say about men and women what Paul said about Jews and Gentiles: "There is no difference" (Rom. 3:22).

I am aware that some feminists and others question that last statement. They accuse churches of Christ and some other religious groups of discriminating against women because they do not have women

preachers, elders or deacons. Of course, I am concerned about that objection, but if there is discrimination—and I do not concede that for a moment—it is not the churches of Christ which are discriminating; it is God Himself. Churches of Christ did not invent the biblical prohibition against women preachers. We are simply modeling our work and worship after the New Testament pattern. Paul expressed the will of God when he forbade women to lead in public prayers in the presence of men. "I will therefore that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting" (1 Tim. 2:8). The word "men" in this verse is not the generic term for human being, but specifically males as contrasted with females. For the benefit of the Greek students in my audience, the Greek word is **andras**—not **anthropos**. In the same context, Paul gives instructions regarding a woman's preaching or teaching over a man.

Let the woman learn in silence with all
subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach,
nor to usurp authority over the man, but to
be in silence (1 Tim. 2:11-12).

Even though God ordained that men should preach and serve the congregation as elders, deacons and prayer leaders, men and women are still "joint-heirs" of the grace of life. The home Jesus has gone to prepare will be yours, dear sister, if you are faithful to your calling and election. Even though some religious groups have cast reflections on the moral nature of women, the Bible simply does not allow for such. After all, it was a woman who gave birth to the Messiah, the Savior of the world.

I need not tell you—if you are a careful observer of the modern religious scene—that many churches,

maybe most churches—including some compromising, mediating churches of Christ—are thoroughly confused about the Bible's teaching on women preachers. The scriptures are not confusing, but since the advent of the modern women's movement, many churches have bowed to the pressures of this radical group and have either ordained women to preach or are considering doing so. Is it not strange that any church or parachurch group would make any concessions to one of the most destructive social movements ever to arise in our nation? Besides, the radical feminists could care less about churches. Their only concern seems to be having their way whether in churches or in politics or in education. Most of the leaders in the women's movement despise New Testament Christianity and work diligently to destroy its influence in the lives of women. It is encouraging to me that most of our younger women have seen the results of radical feminism and are embracing it with considerably less fervor, if at all.

Even some leaders in the women's movement, such as, Betty Friedan, have taken note of some of the damage the movement has done, especially to young women. May I urge young women not to pay attention to women like Gloria Steinem, Katherine McKinnom and such leaders. They are not doing homes any good. Please join with your husband to establish and maintain a home that will bring you joy and happiness and be a wonderful place to rear your children. If you fail to do that because of the pressures of the women's movement or for any other reason, you will surely live to regret it.

There is one other element in the verse I am discussing with you which deserves our attention. Peter

demanded that husbands give honor to their wives as unto the weaker vessel "that your prayers be not hindered." If you husbands in my audience have ever wondered about the sacredness of your obligations to your wife, these words ought to settle the matter for you. Does Peter mean that the answer to our prayers is contingent on giving our wives the honor they are due? In other words, if a man mistreats his wife, will God turn a deaf ear to his prayers? If Peter's observation comes as a surprise to anyone, we need to remember that our worship is acceptable to God only if it is offered from a pure heart. Perhaps you remember these words from the book of Psalms:

LORD, who shall abide in thy tabernacle?
who shall dwell in thy holy hill? He that
walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness,
and speaketh the truth in his heart. He that
backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth
evil to his neighbour, nor taketh up a reproach
against his neighbour. In whose eyes a vile
person is contemned; but he honoureth them
that fear the LORD. He that sweareth to his
own hurt, and changeth not (Psm. 15:1-4).

The word "hindered" in the expression, "that your prayers be not hindered," is from the Greek **enkopto** which means to cut into, to interrupt. If we are attempting to pray to God and have mistreated our wives, He is not going to listen. The line between God and man, figuratively speaking, is severed. We cannot expect an answer to our prayers if we do not love and honor our wives. Peter's statement may sound rather harsh, but it is precisely what the word of God teaches. If we husbands want our prayers to be answered we must treat our wives as we want to be treated. Of course, this is not the only prerequisite to our prayers'

being answered, but it certainly is one. Would the same principle apply to a wife's mistreating her husband or one neighbor's mistreating another?

The apostle Peter specifically directed 1 Peter 3:7 to husbands. Are there other passages in his great letters which would help us men to be better husbands and women to be better wives? I direct your attention to the verses which immediately follow the one we have been examining:

Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous: Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing; but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing. For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile: Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it (1 Pet. 3:8-11).

Can you see from the simple reading of these verses how they apply to husbands and wives and to other relationships?

Peter's second epistle urges Christians—and not just husbands and wives—to grow in grace and in knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (2 Pet. 3:18). In the very first chapter of his second epistle Peter writes:

And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity (2 Pet. 1:5-7).

The seven graces mentioned in these verses would do wonders for those marriages which cultivate them. But not only would they make our lives on earth more enjoyable and profitable, they would prepare us for the home Jesus has gone to prepare for us—the home where Christian husbands and wives can be heirs together.

My friends, I hope I have some understanding of the great influence good wives and mothers have on this generation and on the generations which follow. But we must not forget just how important fathers and husbands are too. Wives and mothers working alone can have some impact on the present and the future, but think of the good they can do when joined to good fathers and husbands. The truth is: If we are going to change the course of the United States and of the world, the change will not begin in Washington or in the other capitals of the world. The change will begin in each of us and in the homes of America.

Theme: The Home

God's Pattern For The Home: Wives (No. 1)

If you watch the evening news on television or read your daily newspaper, you know the Southern Baptist Convention has been having its annual meeting in Salt Lake City, Utah. The Baptists have created some controversy by two actions: Trying to convert Mormons to the Baptist church and emphasizing certain scriptural principles concerning the home. The Baptists spent millions of dollars to try to reach members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. Both the media and the Mormons have been critical of the Baptists for attempting to convert the Mormons to Baptist theology. But Mormons have been trying to convert Baptists and other religious people for many years. Do the Mormons have a monopoly on proselytizing to their beliefs? If people believe others are teaching and practicing soul-condemning error, do they have any choice about converting those people to the truth or what they consider to be the truth?

Most prominent media people have no idea what is transpiring on the religious front. They have misunderstood what the Baptists are teaching on almost every topic. Since when have people in the media set themselves up as judges of all matters, including religious concepts? Many within the media have no respect for anyone in religion and have not bothered to understand the issues involved. Whatever a person

believes and practices meets with approval of media personnel, unless religious people are conservative and attempt to follow the teaching of the Bible. Then they are accused of being fundamentalists or narrow-minded or radicals. The great majority of television people are not in a position to judge religious and moral values.

The Baptists have been roundly criticized by the Women's Liberation Movement, by liberal theologians, by media people and by others. There are probably many aspects of the Southern Baptist Convention's meeting in Salt Lake City which have not been publicized by the media, but I want to dwell in our lesson today on the Baptist's view on the husband-wife relationship. But before we examine the controversy surrounding the Baptists' view of a wife's submission to her husband, I want to make some observations about this study.

The Southern Baptist Convention does not need me to defend its position on any topic, although I have spent considerable time supporting their boycott of the Disney corporation. The Baptists have many outstanding scholars, such as Dr. Richard Land, head of the Baptists' Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission; Dr. Albert Mohler, who did a superb job responding to the criticisms of the Women's Liberation Movement, and many others I could mention. I was especially impressed with Dr. Mohler's knowledge of the scriptures, his unwillingness to bow to the pressure of the Women's Liberation Movement and his courage in standing by his convictions. Dr. Mohler explained that he would have been surprised and disappointed if the feminists had agreed with the Baptists' statement about the family. He would have known they were on

the wrong side, if the feminists agreed with them.

The president of the National Organization for Women debated briefly with Dr. Mohler, who incidentally, is president of Southern Baptist Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. She tried to make it appear that the scriptural teaching about a wife's submitting to her husband made the husband a kind of dictator and opened the way for a husband to abuse his wife. There are certainly husbands who abuse their wives and use—or misuse—the scriptures to justify such ungodly behavior, but the Bible does not permit such abuse. Did Christ abuse the church? Since husbands are to love their wives as Christ loved the church, that leaves no room for a husband's abusing his wife.

I have a question that I would like to challenge you to answer. Are homes in America in better shape today than they were when the modern women's movement began in the early 1960's? In other words, has the women's movement made homes stronger, wives happier and more contented, helped young women to have a healthier view of marriage and the family and brought husbands to a more responsible position in their homes and communities? If you think the women's movement has been beneficial to our homes, churches and communities, it is because you have not studied the radical beliefs and practices of this most destructive organization. I am not saying that the women's movement has done no good—although I have to search with a fine toothed comb to find the good—but the movement has unquestionably done more harm than good. It is my deep conviction and fervent hope that most Americans—especially our young women—are waking up to the ungodly influence of radical feminism.

For more than twenty-five years I have devoted many hours in reading the works of the feminists and in debating them on radio, in churches, in college auditoriums and in other settings. I am not just depending on what the critics write about the women's movement; I have dozens of their books which I have studied diligently. I am ready to debate any feminist anywhere on the merits of the women's movement. I charge the movement with contributing to the divorce rate, to the unhappiness of many otherwise good wives and to the decline of religious influence in our great country. I also charge them with encouraging women to kill their babies by abortion, with the proliferation of sexual perversion in the United States and with the increase in sexual immorality in our nation. I know these are serious charges, but I am prepared to sustain everyone of them. I am not holding my breath until some feminist gains the courage to respond to these charges.

Some of the television personnel showed their misunderstanding of the Baptist's position on the husband-wife relationship by saying that the Baptists think of women as being inferior to their husbands. Their misunderstanding—whether intentional or unintentional—brings us to a number of very important questions. Does submission mean inferiority? Does the Bible teach "mutual submission," as has been affirmed on television by a number of people? Who appointed the husband as the head of the house, if indeed he occupies that position? Why at this time in the history of mankind have so many decided the Bible really does not mean what it says about a wife's submission to her husband? Could liberal theology which has little or no respect for the Bible anyway and

the Women's Liberation Movement which has no respect for the Bible be responsible for men's and women's attempts to discount the teaching of God's inspired word?

Before answering those questions—at least as many as time permits today—let me read the simple truth of God's holy book. In the very beginning of the human family, God Himself said to the woman,

I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee (Gen. 3:16).

In this case some may be thinking that the King James Version may have missed the true meaning of that verse, let me read the last part of the verse from the Revised Standard Version. "Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you." The inspired apostle Paul wrote:

Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the Savior of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing (Eph. 5:22-24).

The same apostle wrote, "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord" (Col. 3:18). Paul instructed the older women to,

...teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed (Tit. 2:4-5).

Incidentally the Greek word rendered "obedient" in this passage is the same word translated "submit" in Ephesians 5:22 and in Colossians 3:17. I am not sure why the King James translators used two different English words to render the same Greek word, although there is not dime's worth of difference between obeying and submitting.

Dr. Letty Russell, a feminist and a Presbyterian theologian, accused Paul of being chauvinistic, but Paul was not the only New Testament writer who demanded that wives submit to their husbands. Will you please give careful attention to Peter's first letter?

Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; While they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear...For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands: Even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement (1 Pet. 3:1-2, 5-6).

The word "obeyed" in this context is the Greek word for "obey"—not the word usually translated either "submit" or "be subject to."

Some of the news commentators on television accused the Baptists and others who take the same position of wifely submission of interpreting the Bible literally. What else can we do if we believe the Bible to be the inspired and inerrant word of Almighty God? Are we to take only what we like or what modern

liberals decide is appropriate? If we deny that wives are to submit to their husbands, maybe we should also deny our need to submit to Christ, since both concepts appear in the same verse (Eph. 5:24). Can you not see the kind of dilemma we face when we make ourselves the judge of what part of God's word should be honored? Many of the problems in the world and the church can be traced directly to men's twisting the scriptures to make them mean what they want them to mean. I honestly wish I could say that preachers among churches of Christ are never guilty of abusing the Bible in the way many liberals do, but that would not be the truth. I have a tape of a member of the church of Christ who vigorously denies that the pattern of the husband-wife relationship in Ephesians 5 applies to modern families. He even says that many problems in marriage stem from a literal interpretation of this and similar passages.

Let us turn now to some of the questions I raised a few minutes ago. The first of these questions was: "Does submission mean inferiority?" Maybe it would be wise to define the word "submission." Our English word is a translation of the Greek **hupotasso**. The Greek word is composed from two Greek words: **hupo** meaning under and **tasso** meaning to arrange. The meaning of the word is "to arrange or to array or to rank under." As I mentioned a minute ago, the Greek is rendered "submit," "be in subjection to," or "obey."

If the word "submission" means inferiority, then everyone on the face of God's earth is inferior since everyone is subject to someone. Let me show you from the scriptures just how silly is the argument that the wife is inferior because the Bible requires her to submit to her husband. Paul commanded the Roman Christians:

Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God (Rom. 13:1).

As a citizen of the state of Tennessee, I am subject to the governor of our state. Am I inferior to the governor since I am commanded to be subject to him? He has a position and power that I do not have—and do not want—but am I inferior to our governor? I am a citizen of the United States of America and grateful to be. As a citizen, I am in subjection to the president of this nation. Am I inferior to him? The whole idea that we are inferior because we are in subjection to someone makes no sense.

As one of the preachers of the West Fayetteville Church of Christ, I am under the oversight of three godly elders. For the first time in my fifty-five years of preaching the gospel, I am older than any of the elders under whom I serve. Will you please take note of what the book of Hebrews says about Christians—all Christians including preachers—being subject to elders of the church?

Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation (or manner of life)...Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you (Heb. 13:7, 17).

Not only am I an older man than any of our elders, I have had much more experience in teaching

and in doing other kinds of church work than any of these men. Am I inferior to the elders because they are over me in the work of the Lord's church? You should have no difficulty understanding that God has ordained order in all His institutions—the home, the government and the church. If these institutions are going to fulfill their God-ordained missions, someone has to be in charge and others must be in submission. There is no other way for these institutions to function.

But let us use the television people as an illustration of the principle under consideration. Katherine Crier, Peter Jennings, Tom Brokaw and other nationally known personnel serve under the president of their networks. I do not know in every case—and have no particular interest in knowing—who the presidents of the networks are. But I know that those who work for those organizations have to be in subjection to their bosses. They might resent that kind of language, but all of us know there are leaders in the networks and there are followers. It has to be that way if those organizations are to succeed. Real trouble arises when the employees decide to rebel against their leaders. Such disobedience and rebellion have destroyed thousands of corporations in our nation and throughout the world.

Oddly enough, a number of theologians—many calling themselves “Evangelicals”—have criticized the Bible for demanding that wives be in submission to their husbands. One prominent Evangelical writer, Dr. Paul King Jewett of Fuller Theological Seminary in California, wrote a book in 1976 with the title, **Man as Male and Female**. Dr. Jewett makes it very plain that wifely submission means wifely inferiority. Obviously, Dr. Jewett has a right as an American citizen

to make such unfounded statements, but how can he claim to be an evangelical and openly criticize the word of God? Does he honestly think he has greater access to the mind of God than God's own writers?

My friends, God Almighty has given in His word the pattern for the home which was designed to last until the end of the age. We have no right to change what God has ordained for the welfare of the human family. How could anyone be so arrogant as to oppose what God Himself has ordained? Does modern men's and women's rejection of God's pattern for the home explain why so many homes are unhappy and are breaking at an alarming rate? Do we honestly think we can trample under foot the plan of the Lord and not have to pay the consequences?

Peter Jennings implied that our Baptist friends have come up with something new when they endorsed a wife's submission to her husband. One television commentator said the Baptists were going back to the 19th century. How absolutely inexcusable are such comments. This is not 19th century teaching and it certainly is not new. It comes from the very first century—from the writings of God-inspired and God-guided men. To deny such and to overlook God's arrangements will wreak havoc in the world and in the church. Has it not already done so?

Theme: The Home

God's Pattern For The Home: Wives (No. 2)

Our Baptist friends are being roasted by the feminists, some of the commentators on television, various liberal theologians and by others because the Baptists in their annual convention in Salt Lake City, Utah, passed the following resolution:

A husband is to love his wife as Christ loved the church. He has the God-given responsibility to provide for, to protect and to lead his family. A wife is to submit herself graciously to the servant leadership of her husband even as the church willingly submits to the headship of Christ.

You would think from what has been said on television and in the newspapers that the Baptists dropped a bomb on a yardful of helpless children. The Baptists have been accused of going back to the 19th century, of introducing some new approach to human families and of undermining all the progress human beings have made in the past 1,000 years.

Tragically, some so-called "Evangelical" theologians have joined in criticizing biblical writers for demanding that a wife be in submission to her own husband. Dr. Paul King Jewett of Fuller Theological Seminary, the largest theological seminary in the nation and supposedly evangelical, wrote a book in 1975 which he called **Man As Male And Female** (Grand

Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company). In this book Dr. Jewett argued that submission means inferiority. He accused Paul of making three mistakes when he commanded wives to be in subjection to their own husbands. Paul did not fully understand the Genesis account of creation. Like most of you I have read the Genesis account of creation many times. I see nothing in that account which is in conflict with Paul's writings. Genesis requires that a wife submit to her husband. "He shall rule over you" (Gen. 3:16). How does this differ from Paul's teaching that the wife is to submit to her husband (Eph. 5:22)?

According to Dr. Jewett, Paul's second mistake was not understanding the teaching of Christ. My friend, Jesus did more to elevate and liberate women than any other teacher who ever lived. But what is there in the teaching of Jesus which Paul did not understand? Did Jesus deny that wives were to be subject to their husbands? Besides, dear friends, did not Jesus promise His apostles the guidance of the Holy Spirit in giving us God's complete revelation?

Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come (John 16:13).

Did the Holy Spirit fail to guide Paul into understanding Christ's teaching and into writing in harmony with the will of his Lord? I am sure Dr. Jewett did not mean to, but what he wrote borders on blasphemy.

Paul's third mistake, according to Paul King Jewett, was that he contradicted himself. In Galatians 3:28-29, Paul said, "There is neither male nor female: for you are all one in Christ Jesus." After teaching this

great liberating truth, Paul turned around and contradicted himself by requiring wives to be subject to the husbands. Have you ever wondered why these radical interpretations of scripture generally paralleled the rise of the Women's Liberation Movement? Do we interpret the Bible to harmonize with cultural and political ideas or do we conform our lives to the dictates of scripture? You do remember that Paul told the Romans:

And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God (Rom. 12:2).

Too many churches and theologians are allowing the world to set their agenda rather than obeying the great truths of the gospel.

Will you please think of the seriousness of accusing an apostle of making blunders in his writings? If Paul were wrong when he instructed wives to be in subjection to their husbands, how do you know he was not wrong when he wrote:

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God (Eph. 2:8)?

If the apostle Paul made a mistake in Ephesians 5:22-24, maybe the apostle Peter made some blunders also. Do you understand where this kind of thinking leads? It tells us that we do not have a sure word from the Lord, but these men were writing by the direct inspiration of God's Holy Spirit. Please listen to Paul's statement of that truth.

Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we

might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Spirit teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual (1 Cor. 2:12-13).

Ephesians 5:22-24 was not Paul's idea; it was God's. God ordained that wives should submit to their husbands. You may or may not like what Paul wrote, but it is the inerrant word of God.

Do you know the crucial issue in wives' submitting to their husbands? What I am about to say may be too late to be of much help to many women in the audience, but I hope it will be of great help to the unmarried women. You have no choice about submitting to your husband, if you are a committed Christian; God's word specifically requires it. But, select only the kind of man that would make submission a joy and not a nightmare. If you select a harsh, unreasonable and unloving man, you will make life very difficult. Ladies, if a husband really loves his wife as Christ loved the church, why would there be any problem submitting to such a man? The real problems often arise when a woman marries a man who is not a faithful Christian—a man who abuses her physically and spiritually, a man who cares only for himself and not for his wife. I plead with the young women in my audience: Avoid that kind of a man like a plague, he will make your life hell on earth.

If you have listened to some of the discussions about a wife's submitting to her husband, you have heard some news person or a guest speak of "mutual submission." A young couple was interviewed on channel 31 in Huntsville, Alabama. The couple was objecting to the resolution the Baptists had passed at

their recent convention in Salt Lake City. The husband said that he and his wife respected each other and mutually submitted to each other. Was he suggesting that a couple which chooses to follow the divine pattern did not or could not respect each other? The truth is, dear friends, so-called "mutual submission" does not really make any sense. Let us try the idea on for size.

If you work in a company or a corporation, you have a supervisor or a director of some sort over you. Suppose you say to that supervisor: "I want to maintain respect for you. So from now on, our relationship will be one of mutual submission." The supervisor would probably want to know what in the world you were talking about. You could tell him that you no longer want to feel inferior by submitting to his directions. From now on, you each would submit to the other. If you have ever worked as an employee, you know how that would be received. He would probably tell you: "I do respect you or you would not be working here. But I am still the boss and you will follow my directions or you can find another place of employment." Mutual submission may sound appealing, but it is a foolish idea which has never worked and never can—not in the home, not in the industrial world and not in government. It may not be the invention of the Women's Liberation Movement but they have tried to take advantage of it. I wonder if that is one of the reasons so many of the radical feminists are not married anymore.

But did not Paul have "mutual submission" in mind when he wrote: "Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God" (Eph. 5:21)? As a matter of fact, that is exactly what he did not have in mind. How can we discern what Paul was thinking? Every preacher and every theologian will tell you: For you

to be able to understand any text, you have to examine the context. If nothing else were said in Ephesians 5 or elsewhere in the scriptures, one might get the idea Paul was teaching mutual submission. But Paul never deals in illogical and foolish statements. Mutual submission is an impossible concept to put into practice. What if the husband and wife disagree on an idea? Must they delay action until they mutually agree? Does not the husband have the obligation of taking the leadership in family decisions? Is that not what being the head of the wife means?

We must examine the setting where the verse we are studying appears. Please listen to Paul. "And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit" (Eph. 5:18). The expression, "be filled with the Spirit," is a command. Following this verse are several participles which take their force from the main verb I have just read. How do people who are filled with or guided by the Spirit behave?

Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ (Eph. 5:19-20).

Being filled with the Spirit does not mean a miraculous, mysterious infilling of the Holy Spirit. It simply means we are walking according to His direction as revealed in the Bible. There is no fundamental difference between being filled with the Spirit and walking in the Spirit (Gal. 5:16). God's book was inspired by His Holy Spirit. When we obey the commands and precepts of the Bible we are filled with the Spirit or we are walking in the Spirit. And how

does one who is filled with the Spirit behave? He or she sings and offers prayers of thanksgiving unto God.

But those who are filled with the Spirit submit themselves unto one another in the fear of God (Eph. 5:21). What does submitting one to another mean in this context? Fortunately, we are not left to guess or to speculate. Paul provides four examples of what submitting to one another means. The first of these examples applies to the wife. "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord" (Eph. 5:22). If you look carefully at that verse without the rantings and ravings of the Women's Liberation Movement or the prejudices or biases of liberal theology, do you see any signs that Paul meant mutual submission? Is it possible that the women's movement and liberal theology are attempting to read into the passage what Paul never dreamed of teaching? If Paul meant to teach mutual submission, why did he not say, "And, you husbands, submit yourselves to your wives?" Can you not see what radicals are attempting to do to scripture?

The Bible unquestionably teaches mutual love, mutual respect, and mutual honor, but it does not teach mutual submission, except in the sexual relationship (1 Cor. 7:1-5). If you think carefully about it, you can understand why Paul emphasizes mutual submission in the couples' intimate relationship. If the husband and wife did not have mutual responsibilities, mutual authority and mutual agreement in the sexual relationship, it would be very easy for one to intimidate and manipulate the other. That would destroy the intimacy of the sexual relationship.

Paul's second illustration of submission in this context applies to the parent-child relationship. All of us are familiar with these words:

Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;) That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth (Eph. 6:1-3).

I have spoken on these verses literally hundreds of times in the past fifty-five years of preaching. I have read extensively from some of the greatest Greek scholars in the world. Neither they nor I have ever found one word in this passage which requires mutual submission of parents and children. But if the husband-wife relationship demands mutual submission, why would not this passage demand mutual submission between parents and children?

Paul next turns in his great epistle to the relationship of servants and masters. Incidentally, his discussion of servants and masters does not mean he endorsed that arrangement; he was simply regulating it for the benefit of all concerned. The truth is, Paul's writings and those of other New Testament authors were responsible for removing slavery from all countries where the gospel has been preached and obeyed. How could slavery continue among those calling themselves Christians when they faced passages such as the following?

Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others (Phil. 2:4).

Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets (Mt. 7:12).

Paul commanded servants:

...be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men: Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free (Eph. 6:5-8).

How much sense would it have made in apostolic times if Paul had demanded mutual submission of servants and masters? Paul did demand mutual respect, mutual love and mutual honor, as seen from the following verse:

And, ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening; knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with him (Eph. 6:9).

We do not have the master-slave relationship in the United States, for which I am profoundly grateful. The influence of scripture succeeded in removing the slavery abomination from our great country. But there are relationships which are governed by the principles Paul gives in these verses. For example, employees are to be in submission to their employers. If they cannot be for moral reasons, they ought to leave that employment. I could not work for an employer if I could not conscientiously respond to his demands and requirements. But so long as I am working for a man or a company, I must submit to those who are over me.

Now that we have looked briefly at the husband-wife relationship, at the parent-child relationship and

at the master-slave relationship—none of which can involve “mutual submission,” there is one other relationship which shows just how utterly foolish and impossible is the mutual submission concept. I am speaking of our duties to obey the Lord Jesus Christ. Will you please listen carefully?

Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing (Eph. 5:22-24).

If the husband-wife relationship involves mutual submission, does the Christ-Christian relationship demand mutual submission? If it does not, by what principle of interpretation does one arrive at that conclusion? Let me read again Paul's inspired words in verse 24. “As the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing.”

That we are to obey our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is the implicit and explicit teaching of the entire New Testament. But where is the passage which says He must obey us which would be the case if mutual submission were a legitimate concept?

God's will is, dear friends, that wives be in subjection to their own husbands. But should that be a major burden if husbands loved their wives as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for it (Eph. 5:25)? Until and unless we follow the biblical pattern for the home, it will continue to deteriorate. Liberal theologians and radical feminists need to understand what they are doing to the family by trampling under foot God's regulations for the home.

Theme: The Home

A Wife's Submission To Her Husband

The vast majority of media personnel have no idea what the Bible teaches about a wife's submission to her husband, and apparently, could care less. Peter Jennings of ABC "Evening News" seems surprised and shocked at the Southern Baptist's resolution asking women to graciously submit to the servant leadership of their husbands. Jennings left the impression—whether intentionally or unintentionally I do not know—that the Baptists had invented a new approach to the husband-wife relationship. Incidentally, I am not picking on Peter Jennings. I have listened to his evening newscast for years and continue to do so. His pronunciation and enunciation are by far the best of the evening newscasters. As one who majored in English and taught it for a number of years, I like to hear a newsman whose use of the English language is so precise.

But is the Southern Baptists' approach to the husband-wife relationship a recent development within the religious community? My friends, there is no doubt about the Bible's teaching on that topic. Obviously there is some dispute over the application of the Bible's teaching, but Paul's and Peter's language could hardly be plainer (Eph. 5:22-24; 1 Pet. 3:1-6). My question for you to consider today is: What were the attitudes and teachings on this topic of previous generations of preachers—not just preachers among churches of Christ or among Baptist churches—but among Presbyterians, Anglicans, Methodists and other prominent religious

groups? Research into this area should be both enlightening and challenging.

Let us begin our investigation about the submission of wives to husbands by reviewing the commentaries on the Bible by Dr. Adam Clarke, the distinguished Methodist scholar who wrote a commentary on the entire Bible. Dr. Clarke's commentaries are in the libraries of hundreds of thousands of preachers and are widely used by conservative preachers and teachers. I have had my set of Clarke's commentaries since September 28, 1944, when I was a sophomore at Freed-Hardeman University at Henderson, Tennessee. There is some teaching in Clarke's commentaries I cannot accept, but his books have been very useful to me through almost fifty-five years of preaching and teaching. Clarke's commentaries were written about two hundred and fifty years ago and published by Abingdon-Cokesbury in Nashville.

Two brief paragraphs from Clarke's commentaries will explain this well known Methodist preacher's views on the topic I am discussing with you. Dr. Clarke makes these comments on the expression, "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands":

As the Lord, that is, Christ, is the head or governor of the **Church**, and the head of the man, so is the man the **head** or **governor** of the **woman**. This is God's ordinance, and should not be transgressed. The husband should not be a **tyrant**, and the wife should not be the **governor**. Old Francis Quarles, in his homely rhymes, alluding to the superstitions notion that the crowing of a hen bodes ill luck to the family, has said:

Ill thrives the hapless family that shows

A **cock** that's **silent**, and a **hen** that
crows:
I know not which live must **unnatural**
lives,
Obeying husbands or **commanding**
wives.

Dr. Clarke makes the following comments on the expression, "As unto the Lord":

The word **Church** seems to be necessarily understood here; that is: Act under the authority of your husbands, as the **Church** acts under the authority of Christ. As the church submits to the Lord, so let wives submit to their husbands (volume 6, p. 463).

There is one other statement Dr. Clarke makes that I want to mention. He affirms that the wife's submission to her husband "is God's ordinance." That is a very strong affirmation, but one which has been believed by virtually all religious leaders and teachers until the influence of the Women's Liberation Movement brought about drastic changes to some people's view of the husband-wife relationship. Do we change our views of God's word because of the radical groups in society or do we seek to modify the views of these destructive groups?

Albert Barnes was the preacher for the large and influential First Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia. During those years Albert Barnes wrote a substantial number of commentaries on the Bible, although he did not write a complete commentary on the Bible. His series of commentaries was entitled **Notes on the New Testament: Explanatory and Practical**. His **Notes on the New Testament** were originally published in the mid-1800's by Edwards Brothers of Ann Arbor,

Michigan, but were republished in 1950 by Baker Book House of Grand Rapids, Michigan. I shall read a rather lengthy excerpt from Barnes' commentary on Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians. He wrote as follows on the biblical teaching: "Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands":

While Christianity (was) designed to elevate the character of the wife, and to make her a fit companion of an intelligent and pious husband, it did not intend to destroy all subordination and authority. Man, by the fact that he was first created; that the woman was taken from him; that he is better qualified for ruling than she is, is evidently designed to be at the head of the little community that constitutes the family. In many other things, woman may be his equal: in loveliness, and grace, and beauty, and tenderness, and gentleness, she is far his superior; but these are not the qualities adapted for government. Their place is in another sphere; and **there**, man should be as cautious about invading her prerogative, or abridging her liberty, as **she** should be about invading the prerogative that belongs to him. In every family there should be a head—someone who is to be looked up to as the counsellor and the ruler; someone to whom all should be subordinate. God has given that prerogative to the man; no family prospers where that arrangement is violated. Within proper metes and limits, therefore, it is the duty of the wife to obey, or to submit herself to her husband. Those limits are such as the following: (1) In domestic arrangements, the husband is to be regarded as the head of the family; and he has a right to direct as to the style of

living, the expenses of the family, the clothing, etc. (2) In regard to the laws which regulate the family, he is the head. It is his to say what is to be done; in what way the children are to employ themselves, and to give directions in regard to their education, etc. (3) In business matters the wife is to submit to the husband. She may counsel with him, if he chooses; but the affairs of the business and property are under his control, and must be at his disposal. (4) In everything, except that which relates to **conscience** and **religion**, he has authority. But there his authority ceases. He has no right to require her to commit an act of dishonesty, connive at wrong-doing, to visit a place of amusement which her conscience tells her is wrong; nor has he a right to interfere with the proper discharge of her religious duties. He has no right to forbid her to go to church at the proper and usual time, or to make a profession of religion when she pleases. He has no right to forbid her endeavoring to exercise a religious influence over her children, or to endeavor to lead them to God. She is bound to obey God, rather than any man; and when even a husband interferes in such cases, and attempts to control her, he steps beyond his proper bounds, and invades the prerogative of God, and his authority ceases to be binding. It ought to be said, however, that, in order to justify her acting independently in such a case, the following things are proper: (1) It should be **really** a case of conscience—a case where the Lord has plainly required her to do what she proposes to do—and not a mere matter of whim, fancy, or caprice. (2) When a

husband makes opposition to the course which a wife wishes to pursue in religious duties, it should lead her to re-examine the matter, pray much over it, and to see whether she cannot, with good conscience, comply with his wishes. (3) If she is convinced that she is right; she should still endeavor to see whether it is not **possible** to win him to her views, and to persuade him to accord with her....It is **possible** that, if she does right, he may be **persuaded** to do right also. (4) If she is constrained, however, to differ from him, it should be with mildness and gentleness. There should be no reproach, and no contention. She should simply state her reasons, and leave the event to God. (5) She should, **after** this, be a better wife, and put forth more and more effort to make her husband and family better. She should show that the effect of her religion has been to make her love her husband and children more; to make her more and more attentive to her domestic duties, and more and more kind in affliction. By a **life** of pure religion, she should aim to secure what she could not by her entreaties—his consent that she should live as she thinks she ought to, and walk in heaven in the path in which she believes that her Lord calls her. While, however, it is to be conceded that the husband has **authority** over the wife, and a **right** to command in all cases that do not pertain to the conscience, it should be remarked: (1) That **his** command should be reasonable and proper. (2) He has no right to require anything wrong, or contrary to the will of God. (3) **WHERE COMMANDS BEGIN in this relation, HAPPINESS USUALLY ENDS;** and the moment

the husband **requires** a wife to do anything, it is usually a signal of departing or departed affection and peace. When there are proper feelings in both parties in this relation, there will be no occasion either to command or to obey. There should be such mutual love and confidence, that the known **wish** of the husband should be a law to the wife; and that the known desires of the wife should be the rule which he would approve. A perfect government is that where the known wish of the lawgiver is a sufficient rule to the subject. Such is the government of heaven; and a family on earth should approximate as nearly as possible to that (pp. 108-109).

There probably are a few extreme statements in this lengthy excerpt from **Barnes' Notes on the New Testament**, but almost every word is in harmony with the teaching of the Bible. What has occurred in American society since the mid-1800's when **Barnes' Notes on the New Testament** were originally published and today? The Bible reads in our day just exactly as it did when Albert Barnes lived and wrote. Could it be that liberal theology has caused a change in men's attitudes toward the teaching of scripture? Do theologians have a right to alter what God has so plainly and emphatically taught? Could these changes explain why there are so many divorces and so much unhappiness in American homes?

My friends, what Paul taught concerning the husband-wife arrangement was God's idea—not Paul's. At least, that was Paul's belief of his writing. Paul informed the Corinthians that what he was preaching and writing was revealed to him by the Holy Spirit. He then asked,

For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual (1 Cor. 2:11-13).

It would be difficult to misunderstand Paul's simple and powerful teaching in these verses. Let me summarize Paul's points. The only one who knows what God has in His mind is God's Holy Spirit. But what good does the Holy Spirit's knowing the mind of God do us? The Holy Spirit guided the apostles and other Bible writers into recording the very words the Holy Spirit wanted us to know. In the Ephesian letter, Paul adds these clarifying thoughts.

For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel (Eph. 3:1-6).

In spite of these principles from 1 Corinthians 2 and from Ephesians 3, Dr. Victor Paul Furnish says

Paul was not conscious of writing scripture. If you are not convinced that Dr. Furnish is wrong, one more verse should show beyond doubt that Paul believed he was writing for all people for all time.

For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe (1 Thess. 2:13).

These passages and many others tell us that we have in the Bible the very words of God Almighty. We can put our trust in them because they were protected by God's Holy Spirit.

In view of these biblical truths, how can preachers and theologians change the simple teaching of scripture on a wife's obligation to submit to her husband? Why would anyone—especially those who claim to love God and walk according to His word—bow to the pressures of society on this or on any other topic? Do preachers not realize that the world has not been authorized or empowered to set the agenda for the church? Are they so ignorant of history that they cannot see the direction the churches are taking and where that will eventually lead? If the church yields to the pressures of the world, why does the church exist in the first place? If the preachers and other religious leaders of our day had the courage of the great prophets of the Old Testament and the faithful preachers of the new, our world and the churches would have an entirely different look. We cannot—I repeat—we cannot compromise the truth of the gospel just to appeal to worldly-minded media personnel.

My friends, I am pleading today for preachers of

all religious groups to preach the word—all the word—and only the word. That would include teaching what the scriptures say on the home. Do I believe such preaching would solve all the problems which plague the home in our day? I do not, but that is a necessary first step—if we are going to change the tragedy of the American family. Husbands are to love their wives; wives must be in subjection to their husbands; parents must rear their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Bringing our children up in the discipline and teaching of the Lord means instructing them in how to be good husbands and wives, how to be good parents and how to live everyday so as to please our heavenly Father. Without such instruction, we will continue to have broken homes, unhappy spouses, abused spouses and children and an increase in immorality in our nation.

One of the keys to the situation I have just described is the leadership of the husband and father. If husbands loved their wives as Christ loved the church, good wives would have no problem submitting to their husbands. Husbands are not lords or dictators. They are to be kind, gentle and loving. They are to consult their wives about major and even minor decisions. If they do not—and many of us husbands do not—we are guilty in many cases of ignoring some of the wisest advice which is available.

My prayer today is that God will bless husbands and wives, parents and children and help them to submit to the will of God—even when the world has different ideas.

Theme: The Home

The News Media And The Bible

When controversial issues, such as abortion, homosexuality, a wife's submission to her husband and politician's involvement in adultery and lying, are discussed on television, the so-called "experts" who are often called are entertainment personalities, media representatives and college professors. Admittedly, some of these people have at least read the Bible, but most of them are as ignorant of the Bible as the man who was asked to identify Dan and Beersheba. He arrogantly replied, "They are man and wife, like Sodom and Gomorrah." Even when the media consult theologians, they generally ignore Bible believers and call on such radicals as Bishop John Shelby Spong.

The Joplin Globe, a daily newspaper of Joplin, Missouri, published an article about Bruce Willis, a prominent Hollywood actor, who stars in the movie, "Armageddon." The magazine, **George**, which was begun, if I remember correctly by John Kennedy, the late president's son, quotes Bruce Willis as saying that the days of organized religion are numbered. He observed: "Modern religion is the end trail of modern mythology." He recognizes that there are people in our country and in other places who interpret the Bible literally. He says, "I choose not to believe that's the way."

Obviously, Bruce Willis has the freedom in this country to say whatever he pleases, even it is shows

a streak of ignorance as broad as from California to the moon. When he affirms that the days of organized religion are numbered, he shows how inexcuseably uninformed and misinformed he is. Organized religion has been around in some form since the beginning of time. New Testament Christianity was begun in the city of Jerusalem almost 2,000 year ago. What makes Bruce Willis think that organized religion will simply fold its tents and sneak away just because he says it will? Willis' foolish statements remind me of predictions made by people like Voltaire and Thomas Paine that the Bible would soon disappear from the earth. Did you know that Voltaire's house was eventually used as a distribution center for Bibles? Very few people, usually the educated elite, read Voltaire's writings, but millions on top of millions read the Bible and believe it is literally true.

Willis says he chooses not to believe the Bible is literally true. He has a right as an American citizen and as a human being to make that choice, but he will have to give an account in the day of judgment for his rejection of God, of God's Son and of God's word. He needs to know that one of the reasons human beings kill each other, unfairly discriminate against one another, cheat, lie, steal and commit adultery is because they have chosen to ignore God or fight against God. Paul informed the Romans of that truth.

For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was

darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools...Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves (Rom. 1:20-22, 24).

Based on the kind of evidence the Bible so clearly presents, I have made the same choice Joshua made a long time ago: "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Josh. 24:15).

Waylon Jennings has weighed in as an "expert" on religious matters. He admits that some of his people in Texas were faithful members of the churches of Christ. He now says that churches of Christ are "wronger than anybody." The word "wronger" is his—not mine. How did Bruce Willis and Waylon Jennings get to be biblical scholars? How many thousands of books on religious themes have they read? How many thousands of hours have they spent reading and digesting the word of Almighty God? I have mentioned these two men—not because they are alone or the most prominent—but because of their recent criticisms of religion. Tragically, neither man should be considered very knowledgeable about the topics he discusses. If we are going to listen to men discuss such serious and vital topics, let us choose men who have devoted their lives to study and investigation.

On Monday, June 15, 1998, **The Courier-Journal** of Louisville published an article entitled, "Look it up: Wives also are leaders, providers." The article was written by another "expert," a young woman named Beverly Bartlett. Her article criticizes the Baptists for passing a resolution encouraging wives to graciously submit to the servant leadership of their husbands. She admits that the word of God does command wives

to be in subjection to their husbands. She does say that the word "graciously" does not appear in the divine record, but being gracious in submitting probably would not do any great harm. She acknowledges that Southern Baptists are more committed to the scriptural principle requiring wives to be in subjection to their husbands than most Christians in the United States (p. F-2).

These paragraphs from the **Courier-Journal** article reveals some vital errors—errors which could have been avoided by further reading and research. While the texts urging wives to submit to their husbands do not use the word "graciously," there is hardly any doubt about the duty of Christians—males and females, husbands and wives—to be gracious in all their activities and relationships. Is that not what Peter meant when he wrote,

Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous (1 Pet. 3:8)?

Incidentally, these words are from the same chapter where Peter commands wives: "Be in subjection to your own husbands" (1 Pet. 3:1). A little learning, Alexander Pope wrote, is a dangerous thing, but a great amount of reading will prevent our making reprehensible blunders.

Many people, according to Beverly Bartlett, choose to construe the text from Ephesians 5 somewhat differently than the Baptists do. The wise people look down further in the Ephesian letter and see the responsibility of slaves to obey their masters. There are a number of observations which must be made on these teachings about slavery. Wherever the gospel has been preached in its fulness, slavery has

disappeared from the face of the earth. How can Christians continue to own their fellow human beings in the face of our Lord's admonition:

Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets (Mt. 7:12)?

Slavery disappears where that kind of preaching is done and where that truth is practiced.

What if Paul and Peter had attacked slavery in the first century as the abolitionists did in the 19th century in our nation? Do you know who would have suffered the most—the poor Christians who happened to be slaves to rich and powerful people? If slaves had rebelled against their masters in Rome and in other countries in the first centuries, they would have been killed by the thousands. Instead, they submitted to their masters and in many cases brought those masters to faith in Jesus Christ. Besides, a person may not like slavery and may pray for its demise, but he can be a Christian and a slave, as Paul makes plain in I Corinthians 7:20-23. I wonder if the author of the article in **The Courier-Journal** knew or cared about any of these biblical facts.

If Beverly Bartlett had bothered to do her homework, she could have learned why the Southern Baptists take "this 'submission' stuff" more seriously than do other Christians. My friends, I am not attempting to defend the leadership of the Southern Baptist Convention. They have hundreds of outstanding scholars who can defend and are defending their theological position, but I know why they insist that Christian wives must submit to their husbands: Because the Bible requires it and in the words of a prominent

Baptist preacher: They take the Bible to be literally true. Conservative Baptist scholars believe in the inerrancy of the scriptures. That is not to say that all Baptist preachers or theologians believe in the inerrancy of the Bible, but the majority of them almost certainly do.

Besides, the command of wives to obey their husbands is in a context which does not allow cultural changes.

Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the savior of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing (Eph. 5:22-24).

If we are permitted to relativize the duty of wives to submit to their husbands, why cannot we do the same for Christians' obeying the Lord? How does one eliminate the one without affecting the other? What does "as unto the Lord" mean? Was Paul guilty of male chauvinism, as Dr. Letty Russell, a woman Presbyterian preacher asserted? If the church is to be subject unto Christ, how can we escape the conclusion that wives are to be in subjection to their husbands? Tragically, Beverly Bartlett does not know or does not care about these inconsistencies in her article.

Beverly Bartlett claims to be disturbed that people who do not know the Bible may be tempted to believe that his hateful speech is central to the Good Book's message (p. F-2). Are the passages which teach wifely submission filled with hateful talk? How can it be hateful talk when it comes from the inspired word of Almighty God? Is the teaching central to the Good

Book's message? It is—if Paul were speaking by divine inspiration—as he so powerfully says in Ephesians 3:1-6. Wifely submission was not Paul's idea; it was and is God's idea. What this young columnist may not know is that this was God's idea from the beginning of the human family. God said to Eve after she had sinned against the Lord:

I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee (Gen. 3:16).

She quotes some of the Baptist leaders as insisting that submission does not "reflect on a woman's worth or intelligence." She accuses the Baptists and millions of others of "playing with words." I am amazed and troubled that anyone could be so blind. Submission does not reflect on the worth and intelligence of those who are commanded to submit. If it does, our whole society is in really bad shape. Everybody is in submission to somebody. When Beverly Bartlett writes an article for **The Courier-Journal**, she has to submit it to the editor—maybe several editors—before the article is approved for publication. She may prefer not to speak of her being subject to the editors, to the proof readers, to the publisher and to others, but she is, regardless of the language she uses. She is also subject to the governor of the state of Kentucky. Does that fact= reflect on her worth and intelligence? This kind of talk reflects a desire on the part of modern Americans not to have to submit to anyone—but we all do, even if we do not like it.

I am subject to the elders of the church where I preach. I am an older man than any of them, but

I am still subject to them. There is a good reason for my being subject to the elders of the church: The Bible demands it.

Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation...Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you (Heb. 13:7, 17).

Does this arrangement make me unworthy or unintelligent?

God had good reasons for making someone head of the house. He knew the chaos which would result if no one were given that responsibility. And what if that had to be settled by the husband and wife after they were married? Can you not see the likelihood of marriages breaking because of the competition for leadership which would inevitably develop? Is that what feminists and other radicals in society are hoping will happen? The feminists often speak of marriage as being oppressive. Are they hoping to end marriages by interrupting God's pattern for the home? Is Beverly Bartlett a feminist or just spouting the feminist line? Whatever the case, her thinking and writing are unscriptural, unreasonable and disturbing.

Beverly Bartlett quotes Dr. Paige Patterson's wife as insisting that she had to obey her husband even when he was wrong. Wrong in what way—morally, spiritually? No one has to obey anyone if such obedience requires one to break the law of God. Peter placed that in its proper light when he wrote: "We

must obey God rather than man" (Acts 5:29). If it is a matter of judgment and the husband and wife cannot agree, the husband's wishes must prevail since he is the head of the house by divine appointment (Eph. 5:23). She calls this thinking an insane position, but she has to do it when she and her editor disagree. What if he had not agreed for her to write this article. Would she have had to submit to his judgment, even though she thought the article ought to be written?

Being the head of the house does not mean running roughshod over the wife. A man who does that does not love his wife as Christ loved the church. If one will consult I Corinthians 13—the great chapter on love—he will understand better how a man should treat his wife, even when they are not in total agreement about any matter. For example, when Molly and I decide to go out to eat, I always ask her where she wants to go. Of course, if she wants to eat fish, I take her to a fish place and then I go where they serve steak. We tease each other about it and our friends tease us, but we both have a good time doing it.

I heard or read that a resolution to approve mutual submission failed. I know the reason it failed: it does not make any sense. The term is an oxymoron. Try mutual submission on your employer the next time you disagree with him or her. Beverly Bartlett needs to tell her editor that he is supposed to be in submission to her just as she is to him. Does she honestly think he would fall for such an arrangement? If he did, he would lack good journalistic and business judgment and would not occupy his position for long. And what if children demanded the mutual submission arrangement? The feminists demand mutual submission so they can be in control of whatever

situation they face. Incidentally, some of the feminists organizations in their early stages decided to forego any presidents or directors, but they soon learned they would fall flat on their faces when they did.

Beverly Bartlett made the grievous error of claiming that Jesus never mentioned authority or submission. Who, according to scripture, guided the apostles and other Bible writers in their work? This young woman desperately needs to read her Bible before she acts as if she were an authority on any Bible topic. She also claims that the rules the Baptists adopted separate marriages. Does she not realize that when marriages were framed according to the divine pattern they lasted longer than they do when they follow the feminist pattern?

Beverly Bartlett attempts to show a conflict between a wife's submission and the good woman of Proverbs 31. There is nothing in Ephesians 5 or Colossians 3 or Titus 2 or 1 Peter 3 which conflicts in any way with Proverbs 31. If there were such a conflict, would not the Holy Spirit have discovered it and corrected?

Theme: The Home

Wife And Mother

American society has made a number of grievous mistakes—mistakes which have had devastating effects on families, on churches and on schools. The endorsement of abortion-on-demand has contributed to a lack of respect for all human life. If we can kill the unborn baby just weeks or days before its birth, there is no logical reason we cannot kill the baby just weeks or days after its birth. Could this sad situation have any bearing on the violence which brought about the deaths of young people in Pearl, Mississippi, in Paducah, Kentucky and Littleton, Colorado? If unborn babies, newborn babies, old people and sick people do not deserve protection, how do we establish the worth of others?

Young people in almost all high schools and colleges across our nation are indoctrinated with the theory of organic evolution. They are taught that man's existence on this earth is accidental, that God had nothing to do with creating the world and all that is in the world. By what logic can children and young people arrive at the sacredness of all human life when we are nothing more, according to evolution, than advanced animals? Evolutionists generally would not condone what occurred in Littleton, Colorado. They probably grieved, like the rest of us, at what they saw on television. But there is not an evolutionist on earth who can condemn the brutality of the killers in Colorado. The evolutionists cannot say that such cruelty

and violence are wrong—always wrong—wrong on principle. Since the evolutionist cannot have any absolute standard of right and wrong, he cannot consistently maintain that killing high school students or others is always immoral.

Another mistake modern society has made is the downgrading of the role of wife and mother. College and university professors, liberal theologians, especially the feminists have criticized women for devotion to their families. As a result of their unreasonable attitude toward the work of wives and mothers, many women in American society have been embarrassed by their commitment to their husbands and children. A former school teacher in southern Indiana complained that her fellow church members were critical of her leaving the teaching profession to take care of her children. I have heard similar stories in other parts of our country.

I do not know the family backgrounds of the killers in Pearl, Mississippi, or in Paducah, Kentucky, or in Littleton, Colorado. Were the mothers of those young killers always available to their children? Or did the mothers think they could contribute more to society and to their own happiness by being lawyers, doctors or other professionals? The radical feminists have convinced many American women that they are wasting their valuable time and talent by staying at home with their children and helping their husbands in their professions or occupations. Besides, how can a woman develop her intellect by constantly communicating with two-year olds or four-year olds? America is paying dearly for the foolishness which the Women's Liberation Movement has been promoting for the past thirty to thirty-five years.

There is one thing for sure, dear friends: The

radical feminists, the liberal academicians and politicians and the modernistic theologians are seeking to destroy what God has revealed about wives and mothers. The Bible makes it clear that good wives and mothers are essential to the welfare of every nation. The influence of good women cannot be ignored if a country is to prosper—if we are to have good homes in which our children grow to maturity. I am reminded of the words of Dr. Harold Voth of the famous Menninger Clinic. Dr. Voth said, "Mothering is probably the most important function on earth." I am in perfect agreement with Dr. Voth. Until recently in the United States, this was almost universally believed.

In my more than fifty-five years of preaching, I have been honored and privileged to know hundreds of good wives and mothers. I have observed how these good Christian women sacrificed for their husbands and children. Many of these women have had an enormous impact on my life and my preaching. The lives of these good women have shown that the feminists are promoting falsehood. Long before the current wave of feminists came on the scene in the early 1960's, I knew how vital mothers were—not only from reading the scriptures but from observing the life of my own mother. No woman could have given more freely and sacrificially for her husband and twelve children than my mother did. Even though she has been dead almost thirty years, there is hardly a day I do not think of her devotion to being a wife and mother. I thank God today that I had such a wonderful mother.

I invite you to turn to Proverbs 31 so that we may examine what this great chapter teaches about wives and mothers. I am not going to apply this chapter to

wives and mothers in general, but to the one wife and mother I have known the best—my Molly—the mother of our sons. I do this for several reasons. I know what Molly's family means to her. She has been the greatest wife any man could want and certainly better than I deserve. She has been and is a great mother. But I honor her in this study because she has been my wife for fifty years as of May 26, 1999. Fifty years! Can you believe that any woman would put up with me for fifty years? She not only deserves my gratitude and praise and love, but she deserves some kind of medal. Maybe a congressional medal of honor?

As an introduction to our study of Proverbs 31:10-31, I want to read to you the first nine verses of this chapter.

The words of king Lemuel, the prophecy that his mother taught him. What, my son? and what, the son of my womb? and what, the son of my vows? Give not thy strength unto women, nor thy ways to that which destroyeth kings. It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine; nor for princes strong drink: Lest they drink, and forget the law, and pervert the judgment of any of the afflicted. Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish, and wine unto those that be of heavy hearts. Let him drink, and forget his poverty, and remember his misery no more. Open thy mouth for the dumb in the cause of all such as are appointed to destruction. Open thy mouth, judge righteously, and plead the cause of the poor and needy.

These verses deserve our careful attention, but I want to devote our time today to some of the great truths in the remainder of this chapter.

The scriptures ask, "Who can find a virtuous woman? For her price is far above rubies" (Prov. 31:10). The word "virtuous" means more than moral purity, although that concept is included. The word involves moral goodness and propriety, nobility of character, excellence. The Greek word rendered "virtue" means moral courage. The word shows the strength of character which every man should seek in a wife. The inspired writer knew it was difficult—though not impossible—to find such a woman. The Bible explains; "For her price is far above rubies." Blessed is the man who finds the kind of woman the author of Proverbs had in mind.

During the years I was searching for a life's mate, I had in my mind certain qualities she had to possess. Number one on the list was devotion to the cause of Christ. If the girl were not a Christian, I simply did not date her. I knew that I would not marry a non-Christian girl if I never dated one. One of the reasons I went to a Christian college was so I could date and marry a Christian, although that did not happen. I had completed junior college and was a senior at Murray State University in Murray, Kentucky, when I met and married the most beautiful thoroughbred Kentucky every produced. As you can discern from that last statement, I did not just want a Christian girl, I wanted a pretty Christian girl. I have to admit that I cannot explain it, but I did marry a beautiful Christian. She has gotten more beautiful as the years have passed or else I have become blinded because of my great love for her.

According to the divine record, the price of a virtuous woman is far greater than that of rubies. Every man who has been blessed by having a good

wife will testify to the truthfulness of the Bible's statement. Money and other worldly possessions, including precious jewels, cannot compare with the worth of a good wife. A faithful Christian wife stands by in times of poverty, when one fails at almost every project, when the world seems to be against you. Nobody in this world has been a greater encouragement to me than Molly. I am not telling you that she has always agreed with my decisions. She has sometimes vigorously opposed them. For fifty years she has been my most persistent and consistent critic, but she has also been my greatest supporter and encourager. How could I have made it through these fifty years of marriage without her gracious smile, her love for me and her desire that I should use whatever talent the Lord has given me?

I believe I can understand from experience these words from the divine writer. "The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil" (Prov. 31:11). Can you imagine any more disheartening situation than to be married to someone you could not trust? The inspired writer seems to have in mind a wife's fidelity in handling the family's finances, although there is much more to trusting a wife than in her spending the family's income. I know how important it is, though, for a wife and husband to agree on how the money is to be spent. Neither married partner should have to worry about the other person's taking care of their income.

Molly is not stingy by any measure, but she does believe in getting at least one hundred and ten cents from every dollar. She knows how to spend money so that we shall not have a considerable amount of month at the end of our money. Her judgment in reference

to money has always reminded me of what Proverbs 31 says about the worthy woman.

She seeketh wool, and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands. She is like the merchants' ships; she bringeth her food from afar (Prov. 31:13-14).

Obviously, Molly does not work in wool and in flax, as the woman of Proverbs 31 did, but the principles enunciated in these verses apply to her, as they do to all faithful wives.

I not only have trusted Molly with our money, but I have trusted her and do trust her in every way. Never one time in our fifty years of married life have I had even the slightest reason to suspect her of being unfaithful to her married vows—NEVER! I know the heartaches many men and women face in this area of their lives, because I have worked with husbands and wives who suspected their mates of being unfaithful. I have witnessed firsthand the broken hearts and shattered lives of these couples. It grieves me to have to say this, but in many cases, death would be easier for some mates to understand and to accept than having a mate who was sexually involved outside the marriage relationship. How wonderfully blessed are the husbands and wives who can trust their mates to be faithful to them—"to keep themselves to each other until death separates them!"

I trusted Molly absolutely implicitly to take care of our sons as they were growing into manhood. Before we were married, Molly and I talked at length about the family we wanted and how we wanted to rear them. We both believed in the scriptural injunctions about the rearing of children, such as,

And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (Eph. 6:4).

And,

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

We knew what God expected of us and were determined with His help to be the kind of parents God wanted us to be. Sometimes during the years our sons were growing into manhood I had to be away in gospel meetings or for other reasons. I had no doubt Molly would teach our sons, take them to the services of the local congregation and model for them what true Christianity means. What a joy to be able to trust a person completely!

Being a preacher's wife is not easy for any woman. The demands on preachers and their families can sometimes be burdensome. Not only do many church members expect the preacher and his wife to be perfect—or almost perfect—they expect the same of the preacher's kids. Molly knew of these demands on the preacher and his family, although she did not grow up in a preacher's family. She understood how too much pressure from those outside the family might adversely affect our sons. She never allowed that to happen. She talked with our boys about these matters, and helped them to keep all of that in proper perspective. She did not intend for other people's expectations of our sons to make them afraid and to make them feel undue pressure.

While we were dating in Murray, Kentucky, we often discussed how Molly would stay home from work to rear our sons. At the time we were married, we both

were teaching school. She was a music teacher; I was an English teacher. She was making more money teaching music than I was making teaching English. She could have continued to earn more money than I was earning. But we decided to have her home with our boys **all the time**. That was true when they were little guys, but it was also true when they were in elementary school and even in high school. Our boys always knew how to get in touch with their mother. They knew she was at home. I have absolutely no doubt these forty-year old men would tell you today how very vital it was for their mother to be at home when they came home from school. Was it a burden on Molly? Probably, at times, but she had a commitment to our sons which never wavered. They are grateful and I am grateful.

A good wife, according to Proverbs 31, "will do him good and not evil all the days of her life" (v. 12). I want to address the following to the married men in my audience: "If you have been fortunate enough to have a good wife, you ought to thank God Almighty every day for that wife." The young men in my audience need to learn from this and other biblical passages just how important it is to choose a wife very carefully. And, my young friends, physical beauty is not the most important consideration. I am not downgrading beauty, but I am telling you that Jezebel may have been a beautiful women. But who wants to be married to a Jezebel or a Delilah? Outward beauty will fade. But the beauty of character never fades.

The truth is—even though many of us men are reluctant to admit it—some of us—maybe most of us—could never have accomplished what we have without the love and support of our wives. I shudder to think

what I could have missed in life and how much less I would have done without Molly. She has stood by me—although not always quietly—as I have spent thousands and thousands of dollars on books. In fact, Molly's chief fault is: She thinks food, clothing and shelter come before books.

If you have gotten the impression that I am a very fortunate man, you have not missed the point I have tried to emphasize today. But not only am I fortunate; so is every man who has married a woman whose price is far above rubies. I know many single men who have made great strides in their lives—men who have accomplished much in the Lord's service—but I know I have had great fun and am enjoying the blessings of being married to the number one woman in the world.

Theme: The Home

Wife And Mother (No. 2)

Some of you probably remember from your high school or college days the literary masterpieces of Elizabeth Barrett Browning, wife of the English romantic poet Robert Browning. Elizabeth Barrett Browning wrote a series of sonnets which she called "Sonnets from the Portuguese." Mrs. Browning was not of Portuguese ancestry, but her husband's favorite pet name for his wife was "the little Portuguese." Her sonnets are among the most beautiful in the English language.

When Molly and I married fifty years ago this coming Wednesday, May 26, during the wedding festivities, one of Molly's best friends read the following sonnet which I dedicate today to my wife of fifty years.

How do I love thee? Let me count the ways.
I love thee to the depth and breadth and
height

My soul can reach, when feeling out of sight
For the ends of Being and ideal Grace.

I love thee to the level of every day's
Most quiet need, by sun and candlelight.
I love thee freely, as men strive for Right;
I love thee purely, as they turn from Praise.
I love thee with a passion put to use
In my old griefs, and with my childhood's
faith.

I love thee with a love I seemed to lose
With my lost saints—I love thee with the breath,
Smiles, tears, and all my life!—and, if God
choose

I shall but love thee better after death.

How very fortunate Molly and I have been that we have been permitted to live together as husband and wife for fifty years. Many couples are just as dedicated to each other as we are but have suffered from illnesses which brought about their premature death. Our health has been good, but in addition, we never thought in terms of getting a divorce. Our parents taught us that we should live together so long as God permitted us to live on His good earth. They did not tell us we could come back home if our marriage did not work out as we wanted it to. They would have been devastated had we not succeeded in our marriage. I am grateful for the teaching and example of both sets of parents.

My wife has much in common with the good woman of Proverbs 31. The inspired writer asks,

Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies. The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil. She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life (vs. 10-12).

But there are some differences between good Christian wives in modern times and the virtuous woman of Proverbs 31. The woman in Proverbs had to seek raw materials and provide food for her family in ways modern women do not.

She seeketh wool, and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands. She is like the merchants' ships; she bringeth her food from afar. She riseth also while it is yet night, and giveth meat to her household, and a portion to her maidens (vs. 13-15).

Christian women still have to work diligently, but not in the same way ancient women did.

The feminists seem to think they are the only ones who have good business sense. That is not true, not even in modern times. The woman of Proverbs 31 was a very capable business woman, as the following verses indicate.

She considereth a field, and buyeth it: with the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard. She girdeth her loins with strength, and strengtheneth her arms. She perceiveth that her merchandise is good: her candle goeth not out by night. She layeth her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff (vs. 16-19).

Conditions have changed drastically in the past three thousand years, but many modern women—good Christian women—have duplicated many of the accomplishments of the worthy women of Proverbs 31.

The good woman of Proverbs 31 was compassionate. "She stretches out her hand to the poor; yea, she reaches forth her hands to the needy" (v. 20). I have been blessed by living with a woman like the one I have just mentioned. Molly has for years spent much time in cooking for the poor, the sick and the distressed. I think of one particular incident which illustrates her concern for others. Near our home is a housing project where many poor people live. One of these people is a little old woman who picks up aluminum cans along the streets and roads. Molly has saved cans and found this woman and given the cans to her. She became troubled when she no longer saw the woman.

Molly not only keeps up with the sick in our congregation at Fayetteville; she helps me to keep up

with them. The International Gospel Hour takes so much of my time that I occasionally neglect the people in the hospital or in the nursing homes. But Molly helps me to remember those who are in need. She takes care of many of these matters—and not just because she is a preacher's wife—but because she knows how lonely many of our sick and old people are. Sick people, poor people and people from minorities touch her heart—just as they did the heart of Jesus Christ. Molly has learned from Jesus Christ what it means to be compassionate.

The worthy woman of Proverbs 31 was apparently a good housekeeper, or perhaps better, a good homemaker.

She is not afraid of the snow for her household: for all her household are clothed with scarlet. She maketh herself coverings of tapestry; her clothing is silk and purple (vs. 21-22).

Wise women plan ahead for whatever emergencies may arise. They do not allow the cold winter to surprise them. They are prepared for the cold. They have adequate coverings; they make warm clothing for their family members. The implication is that they also wear beautiful clothing. Good Christian women do not have to look like they have never seen a mirror.

My Molly is a good housekeeper. She keeps our house in good order, except for my study and nobody touches my study, including me. But our house does not dominate Molly's life. There are times when the beds are unmade—if some member of the church has a need for food or for other help. If I am at home, she often asks me to make the bed. I tell her that no one is coming to visit. She always replies, "But what

if the Queen were to pay an unexpected visit?" In that case, I make the bed. Who would want to be embarrassed by a visit from the Queen of England?

Good women often inspire their husbands to be elders, deacons, preachers and other leaders in the church and in society in general. You may or may not agree with the practices and policies of Jimmy Carter, but does anyone believe he could have become president without his wife? Wives almost always are responsible to some degree for their husbands' success, although many of us husbands act as if we achieve success all by ourselves. A good wife can be of tremendous help to their husbands; an evil wife can be a great drawback. Like most of you, I have known both kinds of wives.

The Bible says concerning the husband of the worthy woman. "Her husband is known in the gates, when he sitteth among the elders of the land" (v. 23). Sitting "among the elders of the land" does not mean he was whittling and swapping tales with his fellow sitters. The rulers of the cities in ancient times would sit at the gates to conduct the business of their jurisdiction. We probably would refer to such men as city aldermen or city counselors. But whatever title we use, these men in Solomon's day were comparable to the city fathers of our day.

Is the inspired writer inferring that the good wife was responsible in some way for her husband's sitting among the elders? I cannot believe we can think otherwise. Her wisdom and demeanor enabled her husband to take an interest in the affairs of the city or community where they lived. In those days, she could not have been among the rulers; it simply was not permitted. But she made her contribution to the

welfare of her community by encouraging her husband to be a leader and standing beside him in all worthwhile endeavors. Does the world need good men to be leaders and good wives to support and strengthen them? There probably are few greater needs than that.

This great chapter of Proverbs lays some stress on the woman's appropriate dress. "Her clothing is silk and purple" (v. 22). "She makes fine linen, and sells it: and delivers girdles unto the merchant" (v. 24). As important as appropriate is, the woman of Proverbs 31 did not depend on her dress to take care of her family and of other responsibilities. "Strength and honor are her clothing; and she shall rejoice in the time to come" (v. 25).

I have always been impressed with Molly's ability to look good—even though she does not spend great sums of money on clothing. She knows how to buy. Being a preacher's wife, she has had no other choice. I know you may think I am prejudiced in making the following remark, but it comes from my heart. She always looks good. She knows what looks good on her and in my view always appears radiant and beautiful. I tell her how beautiful she looks. If your wife dresses to please you—as I know Molly dresses to please me—tell her how beautiful she looks to you.

But Molly's goodness does not come through in the way she dresses. It shines though in her unaffected smile, in her natural sweetness and in her love and concern for others. Like the worthy woman of Proverbs 31, Molly's clothing consists of strength and honor. In many ways, she is as strong spiritually as anyone I have been privileged to know. She would not for her right arm do anything dishonorable. Because of her commitment to the Lord, to her family and to others,

"she shall rejoice in the time to come."

Committed Christians seek to uplift and not to tear down with their speech. The following verses from the book of Proverbs show how very vital it is for men and women to be careful and considerate with their speech. "A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger" (Prov. 15:1). "A man hath joy by the answer of his mouth: and a word spoken in due season, how good is it" (Prov. 15:23)! "Pleasant words are as an honeycomb, sweet to the soul, and health to the bones" (Prov. 16:24). The inspired writer says concerning the ideal woman of Proverbs 31: "She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness" (v. 26).

My experience with Molly these past fifty years has convinced me of her intention of speaking in the right way to the right person on every occasion. If she thinks she may have hurt someone with what she has said or the way she said it, she wastes no time in making it right. She has also used her speech to encourage those who are downtrodden and discouraged. If young women are having difficulty in their marriages or with their children, Molly knows just what to say to such people. Her influence on me has led me to be more careful about my speech—both in the pulpit and out. Paul urged the Colossians:

Let your speech be alway with grace,
seasoned with salt, that ye may know how
ye ought to answer every man (Col. 4:6).

Unkind words can discourage and even destroy. Kind words can inspire and challenge.

I have already spoken of Molly's ability as a housekeeper and a homemaker. The Bible says concerning the worthy woman.

She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness. Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her (Prov. 31:27-28).

There simply is no way to estimate the good influence Molly has exerted on our sons and on their father. She was a strict disciplinarian, but never unreasonable and harsh. Our sons were supported when they did right and corrected and punished for doing wrong. They were not allowed to talk back to their mother or to flaunt her wishes. Modern psychologists might disagree with her disciplinary methods, but they worked with the two boys who lived at our house.

As our sons have grown into manhood and achieved success in their respective fields, I have witnessed the affection and respect they have for their mother. They have expressed gratitude for her constant care of them. They call her on a regular basis to see how she is getting along. There is no doubt about their devotion to their mother. They call her blessed, although they do not use that kind of language.

Molly's husband also praises her, as you no doubt have ascertained. When I teach classes or do lectures on marriage and family, she is always my model of what a good wife and mother ought to be. In fact, when I taught marriage and family courses at Freed-Hardeman University, one of the students told me that what he did not like about the man who taught the courses before I did was that he always talked about his wife and children. I said to the class, "At the end of this course, you will be required to know my wife's name is Molly and my sons are Doron and Danny." On the final exam in that class, one of the students wrote,

"Brother Claiborne, I have not done very well on this test. But I know that your wife's name is Molly and your sons are Doron and Danny." He then added, "I hope this helps my grade."

The last three verses of Proverbs 31 read:

Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all. Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the LORD, she shall be praised. Give her of the fruit of her hands; and let her own works praise her in the gates (vs. 29-31).

Tragically, there are scholars who think the inspired writer has exaggerated the importance of some of these concepts. Do good women deserve the kind of praise the Bible indicates she does? How could any observant person deny that? There is no greater work than that of being good mothers.

In saying so much about Molly, am I trying to convince you that she is perfect? I know she is delightful, committed to her family and to her God, but I would not try to say that anyone is perfect. If I made such comments about her, she would be the first to correct me. Paul wrote about human beings in general and that includes Molly and Molly's husband: "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). The first verb in that sentence is past tense: "All have sinned." The second verb is present tense: "And come short of the glory of God." Charles Williams renders the verse: "For everybody has sinned, and everybody continues to come short of God's glory."

A few months ago I made this comment in one of my radio sermons on the International Gospel Hour: "Everybody is a sinner." I received a very caustic letter

from a brother which read: "Speak for yourself." He then added: "My mother is not a sinner." Unfortunately, my correspondent and his mother are sinners. So is everyone else who walks on God's footstool. But there is a difference among sinners. Some are saved sinners and some are lost. Those who have obeyed the gospel still sin but they are walking in the light and continue to enjoy the remission of sins (1 John 1:7).

There is no possibility so long as we are in our mortal bodies that we can completely cease from sin. We have unchristian thoughts or we speak in unchristian ways or we commit other sins. But the good news is, if we stay close to our Lord, He forgives our sins and promises us a home where no sin dwells.

I close today with this thought: During this special week for us—our fiftieth wedding anniversary—I take great delight in telling you of my wife's qualities. I am grateful to God that I married her. I would not exchange that privilege for all the wealth of this world. I pray God's special blessings to be upon her and upon us as we continue to travel together. May God bring us together to His eternal home.

Theme: The Home

Spanking

Some of the most influential scholars in the world—psychiatrists, psychologists, pediatricians and theologians—have been debating for years the advisability of using corporal punishment in the rearing of children. On one side of the question are liberals and radicals who choose to ignore the almost universal wisdom of the human family. It is not primarily research which has convinced these scholars that spanking is wrong—even child abuse—but their philosophy. If they believe—as most of them do—that children are naturally good and need only the right atmosphere to develop in the right direction, they then will oppose spanking. Apparently the majority of childrearing specialists are vehemently opposed to any kind of corporal punishment. But have their unspanked children achieved greater happiness and emotional balance than those who have been spanked? Absolutely not!

On the other side of the question are conservative scholars and theologians who have good reason for spanking their children and advising others to do the same—when and if it becomes necessary. Dr. James Dobson's book, **Dare to Discipline: A Psychologist Offers Urgent Advice to Parents and Teachers** (Wheaton: Tyndale House, Publishers, 1970) encourages parents to spank their children for serious offenses. The book, incidentally, has the endorsement of Dr. Paul Popenoe, one of the most influential family specialists of all time. Dr. Dobson calls pain "a marvelous purifier" (p. 13). Obviously, Dr. Dobson does not endorse child abuse, but he does say that

the "spanking should be of sufficient magnitude to cause the child to cry genuinely" (p. 21). He recommends spanking when a child says to the parent "I will not" or "shut your mouth." Spanking must not be used routinely or it will lose its effectiveness. But those who strongly oppose spanking are ignoring the good judgment of parents who did far better with their children than most modern parents.

My parents brought twelve children into the world. They reared all twelve of them to maturity, except for one child who died in infancy. All of these children had strong dispositions. There were enough of us to take control of the community. There was a serious obstacle to our taking over the community: Our parents would not allow it. We were given specific instructions about living. We were taken to all church services in our local congregation. We were not allowed to talk back to our parents. When we disobeyed, we were denied certain privileges. In addition, if the infraction of the rules was sufficient, we were spanked. Did those spankings make us hate our parents, rebel against the rules of society and become bitter and angry? Among those twelve children, three of us have preached the gospel. I have preached full time for more than fifty-five years. All of the boys, except one, has been or is a song leader. Three of the boys have been or are elders in the Lord's church. Two of the girls married men who were excellent song leaders. One of the men is an elder in the church.

I am not trying to convince you that our parents' spanking of their children made us paragons of perfection. We misbehaved like most other children, but we were not allowed to get by with it. My parents did not spank much, but we knew they would and that

was enough to deter us from gambling, getting drunk, talking back to our teachers or getting in trouble with the law. Of this fact I am absolutely sure: We Claiborne children would not have done so well morally, spiritually and otherwise without an adequate amount of spanking. I have no doubt some of us would have been in jail—if our parents had not spanked us when we needed spanking.

But the arguments I have mentioned and the example from our family are moot in view of a letter to the editor from **The Tennessean** (Saturday, May 8, 1999). I think it would be out of order to mention the writer of the letter, but I want to read it in its entirety.

There are only two reasons why a parent spanks a child: Either the parent is mean in the heart or ignorant in the head. So what is your excuse? Never mind, we have probably heard it lots of times before (p. 12-A).

For more than fifty years I have bought and read books relating to the family, including many books on childrearing. I have not counted, but I am sure I have between 700 and 1,000 books on that topic. Most of my adult life I have conducted seminars and workshops on the home. How absolutely useless all of this is. All I needed was this six-line letter to the editor of **The Tennessean**. Maybe we ought to enshrine this piece of wisdom in some museum somewhere. Or better yet, maybe we ought to add it to the Proverbs of Solomon. If we did the latter, we would have to remove some of Solomon's inspired advice to parents.

Over the past few years, the pages of newspapers have been filled with school shootings, abuse of people from other races or backgrounds, stealing or robbing by children and young people, rape and murder of old

women and other vicious crimes. Dr. William Bennett calls these young criminals "super-predators." The recent killing of twelve students and a teacher in Colorado should send a chilling message to parents all across our nation. We do not know and probably will never know, but do you suppose that many of these violent young people were spanked when they needed it? Spanking has served as a deterrent to crime in millions and millions of lives through the centuries. Should we think that spanking will not work and is not needed in our generation?

The letter to **The Tennessean** manifests an attitude of supreme arrogance and ignorance. To assert that parents who spank their children are "either mean in the heart or ignorant in the head" betrays a lack of understanding of the issues involved and of the history of the human family. I am fairly sure the vast majority of those who are listening to this program today were spanked by their parents. Were your parents mean in the heart or ignorant in the head? I resent such characterization of millions of good parents whose children love their parents and who received the very best care human beings are capable of giving. I am not surprised that someone might write such an unreasonable letter, but I am amazed that a great newspaper like **The Tennessean** would waste valuable space by printing it.

Several middle Tennessean's have responded to the letter I have just mentioned. One of the letters to **The Tennessean** is as foolish—if not more so—than the original letter. On Saturday, May 22, 1999, **The Tennessean** printed a letter with the title, "Better ways to handle kids." The letter writer affirms that "spanking has its sanctions from religious roots, as did slavery."

Slavery did not have its roots in religion, but in irreligion. It is true that some Southern preachers attempted to defend slavery with the teaching of scripture, but they were superimposing their own prejudices on the Bible. The Bible does not endorse slavery, but it does regulate it. In truth, the Bible was responsible for the eradication of slavery in almost every nation on earth. But when we are trying to justify our beliefs and practices, a little thing like twisting the truth is no big deal.

The letter writer says that spanking has no scientific basis. It is traditional, and in some cases, has many clear, positive alternatives (p. 15-A). Does non-spanking have a scientific basis? What kind of experiments have been conducted under controlled circumstances to prove that non-spanking works as well as spanking? Are there sometimes positive alternatives to spanking? Of course, there are and every parent of my acquaintance would readily admit that. But does that mean there are always positive alternatives to spanking? I know children who have kicked their parents, spat on them and even cursed them. Those children deserve spanking—not just a slap on the wrist—but a vigorous spanking which will “cause them to cry genuinely,” to quote Dr. Dobson. The child who does not receive a spanking under those conditions will likely kill someone, rob banks, burn the schoolhouse and land in prison. When a child shows disrespect for all that is honorable and good, he must be corrected. As a preacher, I have had to help put lives back together when children were not disciplined. Is it more compassionate to spank a child or to allow him to become a rogue and a rascal?

The author of the second letter I am reviewing says he has heard two parents threaten to spank their

children if they did not get out of the swimming pool as they were told. He says these were routine threats. He says parents need to examine their own behavior. They must instruct their children how to behave at swimming pools and at other places. You should tell your child how long you plan to stay at the swimming pool and give the child time to prepare himself to leave the pool. He recommends a firm voice and kind words. All of that may be enough for some children. It is not enough for millions of children. What does our letter writer recommend when the children tell the parents to bug off and leave them alone? Does a "firm voice and kind words" always work? Absolutely not! Then what do you do? I know what my father would have done. I also knew what Molly and I would have done. Were my parents wrong in not allowing us to disobey them? Were Molly and I wrong? The proof is in the pudding.

Several years ago, a friend of mine received his undergraduate degree from Pepperdine University. One of his professors had a Ph.D. in psychology. The professor had a six-year old boy. When my friend visited in the home of the psychology professor, the six-year old took his knife and was punching holes in the couch. The professor kept telling his son, "Now, son, I wouldn't do that." What would you have done? Would you have used a firm voice and kind words? My father would have wasted no time in administering discipline that I would not have soon forgotten. Is that cruel, harsh and unloving? It is cruel, harsh and unloving **not** to punish a child when he defies his parents' wishes. Does that mean spanking everytime a child disobeys? Of course, it does not mean that, but when a child blatantly disobeys, he deserves a

spanking. Did I arrive at that conclusion by some kind of scientific experiment? No, it came about by my study of the Bible, by my many years of teaching marriage and family courses and by good common sense.

A third letter to **The Tennessean** has the title, "I spank, and I'm not ignorant." The mother who wrote this letter says she is the mother of a "beautiful, healthy, happy, well-adjusted 8-year old daughter who has been punished by spanking" (p. 1-A). The child's teachers, according to this wise and perceptive mother, praise her child for her compassion, enthusiasm and respect for others. Do you think any of these good qualities came about accidentally? Do I believe the child's gracious behavior could have occurred only because of spanking? I am not sitting in judgment on that mother and neither should anyone else. If that mother believed her beautiful daughter needed spanking, she had the right to discipline her that way. And nobody has a right to call her "mean in the heart or ignorant in the head."

I am aware that the English word "discipline" and the Greek **paideia** do not necessarily require punishment on every occasion. I have never heard anyone argue that they did. But there are times when punishment must be administered if a child is to be turned away from his stubbornness and rebellion. Does punishment mean spanking? It certainly does not always mean that, but to argue that spanking is always inappropriate and abusive is ridiculous on the very surface. There are children who will not respond to any other kind of discipline. I hate to admit it publicly, but I was one of those children. I have also had some spankings in school.

I heard a gospel preacher tell of hearing a psychologist say, "If your little boy comes into the living room and starts boring holes in the radio, just direct his attention to some other activity. Do not criticize him and do not punish him." My preacher friend says there is one of three things we know about that psychologist. Either he does not have a radio or he does not have a child or he does not have any sense. I do not mean to be especially harsh about psychologists, but much of the foolishness which passes for discipline in our day had its origin with some muddled-headed psychologists or psychiatrists. There are some good psychologists and psychiatrists, but they are not the ones many Americans seem to know.

The book of Proverbs has some inspired and inspiring advice to parents. Please listen carefully.

My son, despise not the chastening of the LORD; neither be weary of his correction: For whom the LORD loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth (Prov. 3:11-12).

The author of Hebrews quotes these words from Proverbs 3 and applies them to God's discipline of His children. He adds:

If you endure chastening (or discipline), God deals with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father disciplines not? But if you be without discipline, whereof all are partakers, then are you illegitimate children and not sons. Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live (Heb. 12:5-9)?

That God disciplines His children does not allow for debate. The question is: How does He discipline His children? Does He punish them if and when they disobey? The author of Hebrews says, "He scourges every son whom he receives" (Heb. 12:6). The Greek word for "scourge" is **mastigoo** from the Greek **mastigos** which means a whip. Obviously, God does not take a switch or a paddle and punish the disobedient, but he does discipline the erring. Should fallible parents learn from our infallible God?

I have a few questions I must ask before our time expires. Does spanking always amount to child abuse? There are scholars who argue that it does, but they have no basis for such foolishness. Do the children of social workers, psychologists, psychiatrists and other professionals do better than the children of ordinary people like us? Since many of them claim to know better how to rear children than ordinary mortals do, you would expect their children to be perfect or near perfect. Tragically, that is not the case. Thomas Maedor's book, **Children of Psychiatrists and Other Psychotherapists** (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1989), says, "The simple and rather unexciting answer (about psychiatrists' children) is that some 'shrinks' kids are 'crazy' and most of them are not, much the same as everyone else" (p. 3). If the professionals are not that much better than amateurs, where did many modern Americans learn that spanking is abusive and counterproductive?

As a preacher and as a public school teacher for many years, I believe I can tell in many cases—though not in all—which children have been disciplined in their homes. Determining which parents spank their children may not be that easy, but I am sure in many cases

I could tell that. I know this: Spanking can be a healthy, effective means of helping children grow into maturity—if it is accomplished by love and gentleness. Does it always work? No, but what does? Do you know of any guarantees in dealing with children—either in your home and in the schoolroom? Are there any disadvantages in spanking children? Are there not disadvantages in every form of child discipline? If we parents do our best and seek God's blessings on us, in most cases, we can bring up children who love us and respect the God who made us. There are few greater needs in modern American society than that. May God bless us in the rearing of the next generation.

Theme: The Home

Teaching Children About Strong Drink

The schools I attended as a child seldom, if ever, talked about the destructiveness of strong drink. I knew my teachers in elementary school and in high school were probably not drinkers and almost certainly opposed anyone's drinking. But I do not remember my teachers talking to us about alcoholic beverages. They may have done so. I could have forgotten it. When I went to Freed-Hardeman University, I heard my great teachers strongly condemn drinking. I heard the same when I attended Andrews University—a Seventh Day Adventist seminary. I do not believe my elementary and secondary schooling was deficient in that respect because drinking was not the problem in the 1930's and 1940's it is today.

There were two places I heard strong condemnation of making, selling and drinking alcoholic beverages—my home and the church I attended as a child. My parents discussed many topics of vital importance to my siblings and me. They talked about criminal activity, sexual promiscuity, being active in the church of our Lord, mate selection, marriage, the rearing of children and using our talents in getting a good education and in pursuing a career or occupation. But my father in particular continually emphasized avoiding and opposing strong drink. There were probably several reasons for his uncompromising stand against alcoholic beverages. One was unquestionably what he had observed in members of his own family.

He had witnessed the deterioration which accompanies devotion to drinking. He was determined to help his children avoid such tragedies.

The church we attended as children had a long line of preachers who were just as committed to fighting alcoholic beverages as my parents were. Most of those preachers knew what the Bible says about the dangers of strong drink. They did not hesitate to speak out against this great evil. Most of them probably had never seen the many surveys relating to drinking which have been available for years, but they knew what the scriptures say and had the courage to warn their listeners. I am sure there have been young people who attended my home congregation who destroyed their lives and ruined their families by their devotion to strong drink, but I am sure the numbers have been small compared to most communities. The strong sermons they heard made an enormous impact on their lives. What are churches in our day saying about strong drink? In many cases—maybe most—they are keeping conveniently quiet. The reasons for their reluctance to speak out on this topic are many. Some of the preachers are themselves drinkers and alcoholics. Many of their members are “heroes of drinking wine.” Besides, some of the biggest givers either drink or they sell alcoholic beverages. Money is a mouth-stopper on many topics.

The Tennessean (Wednesday, March 31, 1999) published an article with the title, “Mom never thought about talking to kids about liquor.” The article tells of a mother’s standing beside a hospital bed in Nashville and watching her son’s organs shut down until he was dead. The mother said her son’s death came so suddenly that he never knew family members were

standing by his bedside. At the son's funeral, the preacher discussed the evils of alcohol. The mother hopes the preacher's sermon was not too late for some of the teens who attended the funeral.

The loss of our children to alcohol and to other drugs has to be one of life's greatest tragedies. Since I have two sons and three grandchildren, I can imagine the devastation a parent or grandparent suffers when a child destroys his life or someone else destroys him because of strong drink. I cannot fully understand because I have never had that to happen to me, but I have worked with parents and grandparents who know by experience the great loss one suffers under those conditions.

One of the most troubling aspects of the incident reported by **The Tennessean** was explained by the mother.

We talked about smoking, we talked about drugs, but we just never even thought about talking to any of our kids about liquor....It's just really sad. My son had no idea what he was getting into. He had no idea at all (p. 6-A).

The persons who investigated the accident in which the young man was killed said he had between three or four times the amount of alcohol which the state recognizes as constituting impaired driving.

I have deliberately avoided mentioning the name of the young man who was killed or the name of the mother. Nothing, in my judgment, would be gained by calling names. I do not want to add to the mother's burden of grief and pain. She has suffered enough through the loss of her son. It would do no good to mention the young man's name. But this incident

should not go unnoticed. All of us should want some good to come from these tragedies which occur everyday somewhere in America. The mother said, "I want people to know that kids have to watch out." The whole country suffers when we lose our children and young people. Just think of what might have been.

I have no intention of being hypercritical of the mother and father who did not teach their son about liquor, but in view of the thousands of people who are lost in our nation because of alcoholic beverages, the oversight is hard to explain. Did they not read their daily paper and watch television? Had they not seen what alcoholic beverages had done to thousands of people—both old and young? People under the influence of alcohol shoot their classmates, kill people on highways of our nation, take their own lives and abuse their family and classmates. Have the parents not read the many outstanding books which show the dangers of drinking alcoholic beverages? Apparently some parents see their children as being too wise to drink and drive. Such indifference to the dangers of strong drink leads to broken bodies, broken lives and broken dreams. Am I saying that parents who teach their children about strong drink always help their children to avoid the heartaches I am discussing with you? I am not saying that because I do not believe it. But good teaching would go a long way in avoiding such tragedies.

In 1973 Dr. Joel Fort, a San Francisco physician, wrote a very revealing and disturbing book with the title, **Alcohol: Our Biggest Drug Problem** (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company). According to the information on the book's dust cover, Dr. Fort was at one time consultant to the World Health Organization

on Drug Abuse problems, lecturer in Criminology at the University of California at Berkeley and chief witness for the prosecution in the Charles Manson murder trial. Dr. Fort started the first city drug program in this country. Dr. Fort's background and experience give him the right credentials for discussing the evils of alcoholic beverages and other drugs.

Dr. Fort calls alcohol "by far the hardest drug known to man" (p. 105). He lists a number of standards by which the hardness of drugs can be judged. Addiction is one measure of a drug's hardness. There might be some room for disagreement on this observation, but all who know drugs will have to admit that alcohol is very addictive. Millions and millions of Americans are addicted to alcohol. Some experts estimate the number of alcoholics at 20,000,000 and that is a pretty conservative estimate. In addition, there are millions more who are problem drinkers—drinkers incidentally who are deadly on our highways.

The hardness of drugs can also be determined by the number of people they kill. Dr. Fort says that between 150,000 and 250,000 die every year because of alcohol. Alcohol deaths rank third as causes of death behind heart and blood vessel disorders and cancer. Most of those who die from heart and blood vessel disorders and cancer have brought on their physical problems by drinking. In addition, millions of Americans are killed or disabled by this drug. Almost half of all pedestrians killed by automobiles have "blood alcohol levels of 0.10 percent or more" (p. 108). What is absolutely inexplicable is how much money our government spends trying to stop the sale and use of marijuana, cocaine, heroin, and other drugs and how little they really talk about the dangers of drinking. In

the words of the late Dr. Francis Shaeffer, our nation in many respects is schizophrenic. Alcoholic beverages kill more people than all other drugs combined. The only exception is tobacco which kills about 450,000 people per year.

Many of you probably remember from high school or from college reading the works of Upton Sinclair. His books included **Dragon's Teeth**, **World's End**, **Between Two Worlds**, **The Jungle** and **The Goose Step**. You may not have known that Upton Sinclair—not Sinclair Lewis—was a teetotaler. He not only did not drink, he despised it. He had seen what alcoholic beverages had done to several family members and to many well known American writers, such as Sinclair Lewis, Jack London, O. Henry, Stephen Crane and Isadora Duncan. Upton Sinclair's book chronicles the lives of some of America's greatest authors and what strong drink did to them. I shall refer to only one of those great writers—Jack London.

As a teenage I read Jack London's best known novel, **The Call of the Wild**. I thought it was a great story. Upton Sinclair says at one time Jack London enjoyed great popularity in this country. Whenever he made a public appearance, people flocked to see and to hear him. He was greatly admired by literary critics, sociologists and philosophers. He was unquestionably a great story-teller. In 1913 Jack London published a little book with the title, **John Barleycorn**, on which he was a real expert. He wrote: "Mine is not tale of a reformed drunkard. I was never a drunkard, and I have not reformed...."

"No...I shall take my drink on occasion. With all the books on my shelves, with all the thoughts of the thinkers shaded by my particular temperament, I have

decided coolly and deliberately that I should continue to do what I have been trained to do. I will drink—but oh, more skillfully, more discreetly than ever before. Never again will I be a peripatetic conflagration.” Please listen to Upton Sinclair’s final summary of Jack London’s drinking. “Thus, proudly, Jack London concluded his story. He went on with his drinking, ‘more skillfully, more discreetly,’ for two or three years. And then at the age of forty he gave his last word on the subject of liquor by taking his own life” (pp. 11-12).

I like this final statement from Upton Sinclair’s book.

I cast my vote against social drinking. I will not keep a dog in my house that bites one of every five or nine people who stoop to pet it. Nor will I sanction alcohol because it dooms or harms “just” one of every five, nine or sixteen people who drink it (p. 175).

I do not know if the mother whom I mentioned at the outset of our lesson today is a Bible believer or a church goer. If she did go to the services of some church, what did the preacher talk about in his sermons? Was he more interested in entertaining people, in making them feel good, in getting as much money from them as possible and in building up numbers rather than teaching them what the scriptures say on strong drink and other very vital topics? Doug Murren’s book, **The Baby Boomerang** (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1990), recommends that sermons be light and informal, liberally sprinkling them with humor and personal anecdotes (pp. 217-218). Would Doug Murren’s recommendations exclude speaking about alcoholic beverages? How does one speak on this

death-dealing, mind-altering, and family-disrupting drug in a light and informal way when he knows the family tragedies like the one I mentioned earlier? And if he does not know about the ravages of alcohol, he ought to be digging ditches rather than attempting to preach the gospel.

What should the mother of the young man who was killed by strong drink have taught her son about alcoholic beverages? If she had any knowledge of or respect for the scriptures, she could have found plenty of information to give him a foundation for rejecting alcoholic beverages. I am not arguing the such teaching always works, but it at least gives a young person or older one some very vital information on this subject. Since God is the author of scripture, He knows what we need on that topic and has given us the truth we need for dealing with strong drink.

The book of Proverbs has much to say about strong drink and those who have little enough judgment to use it. "Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging; and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise" (Prov. 20:1). If you want a commentary on this verse from Proverbs, watch your evening news or read your daily paper. Almost daily someone drinks and drives and kills. Strong drink has as great power in our day to deceive as it did in Solomon's day.

The classical discussion of drinking and stupid behavior also appears in the book of Proverbs. "Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has strife (or contentions)? Who has babbling? Who has wounds without cause? Who has redness of eyes?" Solomon answers all these questions:

They who tarry long at the wine; they who go to seek mixed wine. Look not upon the

wine when it is red, when it gives his color in the cup, when it moves itself aright. At the last it bites like an serpent, and stings like an adder. Your eyes shall behold strange women (or see strange things) and your heart shall utter perverse things. Yea, you shall be as he who lies down in the midst of sea, or as he who lies upon the top of a mast. They have stricken me, you shall say, and I was not sick; they have beaten me, and I felt it not.

Surely anyone who has suffered so much and had made an idiot of himself as Solomon outlines would be through with liquor forever. But is that really what occurs most of the time? Please listen again to Solomon. "What shall I awake? I will seek it yet again" (Prov. 23:29-35).

Solomon lived in the days when men and women traveled by horseback or by camel or walked. When they traveled by any of these means, they were in danger. But how much more dangerous when one is driving a 5,000 pound automobile seventy miles per hour down a busy highway? Nobody has the right respect for himself or for others when he drinks and drives. And most people who drink drive while they still have liquor in their system. Some of them even think they are better drivers when they have some strong drink in their systems. They drink a little black coffee and then get out on our nation's highways. They think the coffee has made them sober. Dr. Fort says it has just made them wide-awake drunks.

Solomon was not the only biblical writer who knew and discussed the evils of strong drink. Isaiah prophesied about seven-hundred fifty years before Christ. He knew the nation of Israel was on a downward

slide to destruction. He warned:

Woe unto them that rise up early in the morning, that they may follow strong drink; that continue until night, till wine inflame them (Isa. 5:11).

Isaiah's warning is just as much needed in our day as it was about 2,700 years ago. The same prophet also wrote:

Woe unto them that are mighty to drink wine, and men of strength to mingle strong drink: Which justify the wicked for reward, and take away the righteousness of the righteous from him (Isa. 5:22-23).

The Israelite people had a great number of heroes through the years: Joseph, Moses, David, Daniel and others. But many of the men of Isaiah's day were heroes at drinking wine. They had not won the battles. They had not protected the Israelite people from their enemies. They were ultra successful as drinkers. Does that give you some insight into why the nation was in such deep trouble? The strong drink was corrupting the judicial system and robbing the people of their property and freedom. Is our great nation in danger of losing some of our freedoms because of judges who have been bribed by those who furnish them strong drink? It is time Americans awaken to our greatest drug problem: Alcoholic beverages.

Theme: The Home

Christ's Attitude Toward Women

The controversy surrounding women's roles in the home, in the church and in society has heated to the boiling point in this nation. The radical feminists have demanded that churches and synagogues hire women preachers and rabbis or suffer the consequences. Gloria Steinem and other feminists are working to withdraw the tax exempt status from all churches that will not hire women preachers or priests. What is particularly troubling about the feminists is their almost total disdain for all churches. Why should they care what churches do since they have very little use for churches anyway? Tragically, many of the liberal churches have bowed to the pressures of the Women's Liberation Movement. Accepting women as preachers, priests and rabbis has not kept some of the liberal churches from dying anyway.

For Christians, the real question is: What was Christ's attitude toward women? If we are truly the followers of Jesus Christ, we shall strive to think like He thinks. That was what Paul meant when he wrote: "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 2:5). If we can determine from the scriptures what Jesus thought of women, then we will know what our attitude should be. Peter tells us that Jesus is our example.

For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps (1 Pet. 2:21).

Jesus Himself told His disciples, "For I have give you an example, that you should do as I have done unto you" (John 13:15).

The women liberationists are loudly proclaiming that the traditional roles of women enslave them. The women who choose to stay home to take care of their husbands and children have become second-class citizens. In many cases, feminists accuse Christianity of contributing to the popular view of women or what they consider the popular view of women, that is, they are sacrificing their talents to their husbands and children and are not living a fully adult life. Some of the feminists have compared the woman who stays at home and allows her husband to make the living to little girls who depend on their fathers for support. Betty Friedan's book, **The Feminist Mystique**—the book which launched the modern women's movement—belittles the role of mothers and wives. Her book and many like it have done enormous damage in homes across America and throughout the world.

Of course, all of us ought to be concerned about what human beings think of women. Are women as valuable to the culture as men? Are they "the devil's gateway," as Tertullian called them? We shall study what Jesus thought about women and argue that His attitude toward women must be a model that His children will follow. There are many questions I would like to study with you today, but time will not permit an examination of all of them. I shall concentrate today on what Jesus said and did about women.

It is unfortunate that many unchristian attitudes toward women have been fostered by some who claim to be Christians. For example, occasionally, one hears a man say about his wife or some other woman, "Well,

you know how women are." That is blatant and illogical stereotyping of women. When one woman says or does something foolish, we are tempted to extrapolate that behavior to all women. Or you may hear some man call his wife "the war department," or "the old battleax," or "the ball and chain." Sometimes, perhaps most of the time, the speaker does not mean to injure his wife or any other woman, but such language generates disrespect for women. It is unchristian and unreasonable.

Some members of the Women's Liberation Movement complain that men use women primarily as sex objects. Obviously there is some basis for that complaint. But there is certainly no way New Testament Christianity can be charged with encouraging that attitude on the part of men. In fact, I would be willing to defend the proposition that no system of thought has done so much to elevate and liberate women as New Testament Christianity. I am not willing to defend the behavior of some who call themselves Christians, but I will defend the teaching of scripture.

Some of the feminists have accused the apostle Paul of being a woman-hater. According to Dr. Letty Russel, a woman Presbyterian preacher, Paul was the supreme male chauvinist. How could any honest person accuse Paul of male chauvinism in view of his letter to the Galatians?

For ye are **all** the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are **all** one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's

seed, and heirs according to the promise (Gal. 3:26-29).

Do you get the impression from these verses that Paul thought women were inferior to men—that they were second-class citizens?

There are a number of fundamental truths in these verses from Galatians which I want to review briefly. All who believe in Christ and obey the gospel in baptism are God's children. There is not one law for the Jew and one for the Gentile. We all become God's children in exactly the same way—belief in Christ and obedience to the Lord in baptism. God does not have any stepchildren. We are all full-fledged children of our heavenly Father. There are no castes or classes of human beings with God, so far as salvation is concerned. At one time and for good reasons, according to Paul, the Jews enjoyed one distinct advantage over the Gentiles, namely, "unto them were committed the oracles of God" (Rom. 3:2). Since the gospel came through Christ, the Jews do not have any advantage over the Gentiles and never will. Paul made it very plain that there are no differences (Rom. 3:22). Both men and women are subjects of the gospel and equally responsible before God for their behavior. While there are positions in the church women cannot hold, such as, being preachers, elders and deacons, the Bible does not allow discrimination against women or against anyone else. Jesus commanded His disciples to go "into **the whole world**, and preach the gospel to **every creature**" (Mark 16:15). If you listened carefully to this brief exposition of Galatians 3, you can understand why the late Dr. Merrill C. Tenney called Galatians, "The charter of Christian Liberty."

But if women cannot serve as elders, preachers

or deacons, does that not involve discrimination? When the scriptures place wives in subjection to their husbands—as they unquestionably do—does that make women inferior to men? These are legitimate questions which deserve further comment. Let me say very plainly: I am not able in every case to give a reason for all God has done—nor am I expected to do so. If we could understand God's reasons for His decisions in every instance, we would not be walking by faith. I am not inferring that a man has to crucify his mind when he becomes a Christian, but we may not know why God has made certain regulations. Unless God has spoken on a given topic, we should not speculate.

The Bible explicitly teaches that a woman may not be an elder or a preacher or a deacon. How could Paul's word be plainer than these?

Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence (1 Tim. 2:11-12).

Paul even forbade a woman to lead prayer in the public assembly of the church.

I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting (1 Tim. 2:8).

The word translated "man" is not the generic term meaning "human being," but the Greek word **andras** meaning males as contrasted with females.

It ought to be obvious to any Bible student that women cannot serve as deacons and elders. In both cases, Paul requires the persons involved to be "the husband of one wife" (1 Tim. 3:2, 13). Since it is very plain that women can never qualify for these

responsibilities, they cannot be elders or deacons. Yet, just a few years ago, Tennessee newspapers reported that one Nashville church had appointed three women as deacons. How could any church show such blatant disregard for the teaching of scripture? Is it any wonder that the liberal churches are in the process of dying?

The Bible demands that "women learn in silence with all subjection" and that they be in subjection to their own husbands (1 Tim. 2:11; Eph. 5:24). Does that mean that women are relegated to second-class citizenship in the kingdom of God? Does subjection imply inferiority? No one who believes the Bible or understands human relationships would ever be so foolish as to believe that. It simply recognizes that order must prevail in all institutions—both human and divine. If nobody were in charge and no one in subjection, chaos and confusion would reign in society. We just simply could not operate.

If you have your Bibles available, please turn to John 4. This powerful chapter tells of a meeting between the Lord Jesus Christ and a Samaritan woman. The woman of Samaria was completely surprised when Jesus Christ, a Jew, asked her for a drink. "For the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans" (John 4:9). In addition to her being a woman and a Samaritan, she was an immoral woman which Jesus knew. But none of this prevented Jesus from talking with the woman about the kingdom of God. He obviously saw an opportunity to win a lost soul and proceeded on that basis.

There is one very vital truth about Jesus which I have already mentioned and which must never be forgotten: He did not regard anyone—male or female, bond or free, Jew or Gentile—as being unworthy of his

attention. If we observe prejudice in anyone who professes to be a Christ, we can know for certain that he did not learn such behavior from Christ. When our Lord said, "Come unto me **all** who labor and are heavy laden," He did not exclude women or blacks or the poor or the socially disenfranchised. The Bible's "whosoever" cannot be harmonized with prejudice, bigotry and discrimination.

Jesus responded the Samaritan woman's question, "How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria?", by saying,

If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water (John 4:10).

The Samaritan woman had difficulty understanding what was occurring. She said to Jesus,

Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: from whence then hast thou that living water? Art thou greater than our father Jacob, which gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle (John 4:11-12)?

Jesus did not belong to that class of men who believe that women have no right to ask theological or philosophical questions. Our Lord talked with the Samaritan woman just as he would have talked to a man. He made absolutely no distinction in this respect.

Jesus responded to the woman's question:

Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him

a well of water springing up into everlasting life (John 4:13-14).

The woman almost certainly did not have any idea what Jesus was saying, but she asked that He give her the living water "that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw water" (John 4:15). If she had fully comprehended what Jesus was saying, she would have known that "living water" did not come from a physical well—not even Jacob's well. It would have to come from the "fountain of living waters" (Jer. 2:13).

John reports that the disciples were amazed that Jesus was speaking with the Samaritan woman. But not one of them asked Him, "What seekest thou?" or "Why talkest thou with her" (John 4:27). They did not fully understand Christ's reasons for communicating with the Samaritan woman, but they apparently trusted him sufficiently not to ask any questions or they did not know what to ask. It took some time for the disciples to understand our Lord's attitude toward people of other races, but even Peter learned the lesson. He said at the house of Cornelius:

Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him (Acts 10:34-35).

The Samaritan woman left her waterpot and, went her way into the city, and saith to the men, Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ? Then they went out of the city, and came unto him (John 4:27-30).

There is one question which almost invariably arises when we discuss Christ's attitude toward women or

the work of women: If women are forbidden to be elders, deacons or preachers, then in what capacity can they serve? The question is certainly appropriate and deserves our prayerful attention.

The reaction of the Samaritan woman can serve as example to all-women included. When she learned that Jesus was the Christ—that is, the Messiah—she immediately wanted to tell others about Him. Can any work be more useful to humanity than to tell men and women about Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world? Countless thousands of men and women will spend eternity with God because some godly woman told them about our loving Savior. The work of telling others about Christ deserves the support of every man and woman who is a member of the body of Christ.

I want to give you an illustration of just how vital it is for us to tell others about salvation to Christ. In a west Texas town several years ago, some small boys were playing marbles on the sidewalk. A devout Christian man was walking to the church services late one Sunday afternoon and noticed the boys playing. He stopped and asked them to attend services with him that night. One of the little boys said, "Let me go ask my mama." The mother consented and the little boy went to the church services that night and on many other occasions. He later obeyed the gospel, attended Abilene Christian University, preached the gospel in Germany for many years, served as president of Michigan Christian College and has written some very fine books on personal work and other topics. His influence through the years has been tremendous. His name is Otis Gatewood. Only eternity will reveal the great good which has resulted from inviting a little boy to attend the services of the church.

My women friends, there are hundreds of good works you can do for the Lord, including going out into the highways and byways and bring others to hear the gospel. Women are among the finest workers in the church I have had the privilege of knowing. There are Priscillas, Phobes, Tryphenas and Tryphosas in virtually every church in the land. In fact, many churches would never have gotten started and could not have survived without the support of good sisters in Christ. The International Gospel Hour has a substantial number of devout Christian women who give regularly and generously to support the preaching of the gospel.

We just cannot overemphasize the importance of the events recorded in John 4. An event which one would tend to think might be disastrous became a victory for Christ and for the Samaritans. Who would expect a meeting between a Jew and an immoral Samaritan woman to produce such wonderful results? Christ did not entertain any prejudice toward anyone for any reason. This was Paul's reason for writing: "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 2:5).

Theme: The Home

Marriage Is For Adults Only

Marriage counselors, psychologists, psychiatrists and preachers are often in radical disagreement over virtually every phase of human sexuality, marriage, family, and child rearing, but there is one area where these professionals are in almost total agreement, that is, the absolute need for those entering marriage to be mature adults. Being a husband or a wife, a father or a mother is not child's play. These grave responsibilities and challenges require that we be emotionally, physically and spiritually mature. Professional counselors may not agree on what constitutes maturity, but they generally do agree that marriage partners ought to be mature. It is because of the need for marriage partners and for parents to be mature that we are devoting the next several lessons to the topic: "Marriage Is For Adults Only."

For many years, Dr. Edward Strecker served as a Professor of Psychiatry and Chairman of the Department at the University of Pennsylvania. He also served during World War II as a consultant to the Surgeons General of the Army and Navy and as an advisor to the Secretary of War. Dr. Strecker's military duties brought him in close contact with thousands of psychoneurotics. In his excellent book, **Their Mothers' Sons** (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1946), Dr. Strecker points out that 1,825,000 young men were rejected for military service because of psychiatric disorders. Another 500,000 were discharged for the

same reasons (p. 6). The United States military establishment commissioned Dr. Strecker to learn, if possible, the cause or causes of this tragic situation. The book I have just mentioned is his attempt to explain why there are so many Americans with serious mental and emotional difficulties.

Several of Dr. Strecker's comments are especially appropriate in our study of the need for maturity in a marriage relationship. Let me read you a few of Dr. Strecker's very wise observations. Just because, Dr. Strecker says,

the two contracting parties in a marriage happen to be a mature man and a mature woman does not necessarily insure the permanence and success of the marriage. Nevertheless, such a marriage definitely has a much better chance of survival than if one of the contracting parties is decidedly immature. It is not easy for an adult to live in a close emotional relationship with a child, and it is notably hard to do it within the confines of matrimony (p. 80).

Dr. Strecker also wisely observes:

The joining together in wedlock does not make the contracting parties capable of living a mature married life, any more than sitting in an airplane makes a skillful aviator. The close relationship of marriage imposes such high emotional and social ideas that no husband or wife may hope to realize them fully. In fact, perfection is not desirable. However, child-wives and child-husbands fall so far short of the minimal requirements and ordinary expectations that it is not even a near miss. They make a travesty of marriage (p. 92).

Dr. Strecker tells of attending weddings he did not enjoy.

When the officiating clergyman solemnly announced, "If any man can show just cause why they may not lawfully be joined together, let him now speak, or else hereafter forever hold his peace," I have often had the desire to say, "Stop! I know just cause why they may not be lawfully joined together. That young man (or young woman) cannot fulfill the conditions of the married state. He is in love with another woman and always will love her more than anything else in the world. It is she he will love and cherish and not this young woman who stands at his side" (p. 192-193).

The other woman in this case was his mother. Dr. Strecker claims that he can

almost see the hand of mom, whether she was living or dead, reach out and unclasp the hands which had been joined together. And I could almost hear her say, "You cannot have this man. He belongs to me. I know what is in his heart. I put it there. He is mine forever" (p. 92-93).

Do you think perhaps that Dr. Strecker has exaggerated this problem? Are there marriages where the parents will not let go of their youngsters or the young people keep hanging on to their parents? It takes precious little experience in working with troubled marriages to be able to answer these questions. Of course, there are marriages where a husband's or wife's separating from parents brings many heartaches—both for the parents and for the young people. That is unquestionably the Lord's reason for teaching in the

beginning of the human race,

Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh (Gen. 2:24).

Our Lord Jesus Christ specifically endorsed this Old Testament teaching and then added:

Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder (Mt. 19:5-6).

Dr. Paul Popenoe was one of the pioneers in the field of family life education, although he was not a sociologist or a psychologist, but a biologist. For the past fifty years, Dr. Popenoe has written extensively—both in journal articles and in books—on marriage and family themes. One of his books, **Marriage Is What You Make It** (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1952), mentions the fact that in some states very young children can marry.

But real marriage, the effective union of two personalities, is scarcely possible except to two persons who have grown up—and physical maturity is not the most important element. Emotional maturity is a decisive factor in marriage, and it does not necessarily go with physical growth (p. 28).

In another of Dr. Popenoe's books, **Modern Marriage** (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1943), he points out that,

one of the main reasons for failure in marriage is that people who have not grown up try to make a child's game out of it (p. 1).

Dr. Cleveland McDonald has written one of the

few marriage and family textbooks which is biblically oriented. His book, **Creating A Successful Christian Marriage** (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1975) quotes Bruce Larson as affirming that most marriage failures result from partners who,

are so immature, so selfish, so unschooled in real living that they cannot take spiritual responsibility for each other or for their children....God in your life means maturity. Maturity is the basis for responsibility. Willingness and the capacity to take spiritual responsibility for the other person are parts of the test of a thoroughly happy and unselfish marriage (p. 129).

But what are we really talking about when we mention the word "maturity?" Before I give you a definition of the word, let me distinguish between two very important concepts which have a bearing on our discussion. Those two words are: childlikeness and childishness. The word "childlikeness" refers to those qualities of a child that are admirable and worthy of incorporation into the lives of all adults. Jesus had this idea in mind when He answered His own disciples' question, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" (Mt. 18:1). Please notice what Jesus did and then what He said,

And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven (Mt. 18:2-3).

What quality or qualities did the Lord have in mind when He told all men that we must become like little children? Jesus explained what He meant in these words:

Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven (Mt. 18:4).

Are there qualities of a child which Jesus would want us to make a part of our daily lives? Paul told the Corinthians:

Brethren, be not children in understanding; howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men (1 Cor. 14:20).

The one quality of a child is mentioned in this verse: Not harboring malice or evil in our hearts. Children have not developed mature understanding, but they do model the right attitude toward evil. They do not conceive of and practice evil.

Childishness, on the other hand, means those attitudes and activities of a child that are reprehensible and must be avoided if we want to be adults. One of these we have already noted in our reading, that is, the understanding of a child. Children understand like children because they are children. Paul instructed the Corinthians not to be like a child in understanding, but to be like men. In Paul's great chapter on love, he says to the Corinthians:

When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things (1 Cor. 13:11).

Those of you who are familiar with Paul's great chapter on love know that Paul's emphasis was not acting like a child. He teaches that the childhood age of the church included miracles. They were essential to the church's maturing. But now that the church has matured, we no longer need the miraculous manifestations. In an age when the scriptures had not

been completed, the church had to have miraculous gifts or they could not have known what God wanted them to know and to do. But now that God's revelation has been completed, we have all things pertaining to life and godliness (2 Pet. 1:3). In other words, the childhood age of the church has come to an end. We live in the mature age of the church.

Even though that was Paul's thrust in 1 Corinthians 13:11, we can still profit from the literal words Paul used. Children speak, understand and think like children because they are children. But what a grave tragedy that men and women in marriage and in other phases of life talk, understand and think like children. But would grown men and women—even members of the body of Christ—act like spoiled brats? Paul shows that the Corinthians at the time of his first letter were still babes in Christ. They were very immature.

And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able. For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men (1 Cor. 3:1-3)?

The Corinthians were acting like little babies. They were so selfish that they did not consider the welfare of their brothers and sisters in Christ. They were dividing into small factions and destroying the body of Christ at Corinth. I know you remember Paul's criticism of this divisive spirit at Corinth.

Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ (1 Cor. 1:12).

When churches or families or communities or nations are divided in such a manner, it is appropriate to accuse them of being carnally minded and acting like children.

The letter to the Hebrews levels the same criticisms at members of the body of Christ. The Hebrew writer was discussing Christ's priesthood. He affirmed that Christ is a priest after the order of Melchisedec and then says very bluntly:

Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing (Heb. 5:10-11).

What was wrong with the Hebrews that they had become dull of hearing? Were they intellectually incapable of comprehending the great truths of the gospel? Had they been unable to understand because of native inability to grasp the message they would not have been held accountable; nor would they have been so severely criticized. So what was the problem? The inspired writer explains in words similar to those I read to you from 1 Corinthians.

For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe (Heb. 5:12-13).

Those early Hebrew Christians were just like many Christians in our own day. They were still babes. Oh, they had been members of the church long enough that they should have understood what the writer was saying, but they were still needing the first principles

of the oracles of God. The Hebrew writer tells them:

Strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil (Heb. 5:14).

How distressed we would be if our children failed to thrive physically or mentally! We would seek help from whatever source would promise us any measure of success. The Hebrew writer was disturbed that the members of the church were not thriving spiritually. Please listen to his pointed instructions. "Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection..." (Heb. 6:1). My friends, there is no shame in being a babe in Christ, but there is shame in remaining a babe.

In Hebrews 6:1 the inspired writer uses the word "perfection." That word is crucial to our understanding the concept of maturity. The Greek word translated "perfection" (**teleiotes**) does not suggest sinlessness or free from moral flaws. The word means fulfillment, completion, an end accomplished as the effect of a process (Vine). In fact, the word "maturity" is an excellent translation of the Greek. The King James translates the word **teleios** "of full age" (Heb. 5:14). So while the King James Version never uses the word "maturity," there can be no doubt that the word "perfection" has that connotation in most biblical passages in the New Testament. You know the word does not indicate sinlessness because Paul refers to the Corinthians as "perfect" (1 Cor. 2:6). The Corinthians had many flaws, as you know full well if you have read 1 Corinthians very carefully.

When members of the church or members of a family are acting like children, what does the Bible

command them to do? Let me give you a few examples.

Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong. Let all your things be done with charity (1 Cor. 16:13-14).

The little expression, "quit you like men," comes from one Greek word, **andrizesthe** and means simply "act like men," be grownups. Almost all versions translate the verb, "act like men." There had been too much childishness among the Corinthians. Paul admonishes them to cease being children and to become men. Do you see the need for the application of that principle to the marriage relationship? If we are old enough to get married, we should act like adults.

There are many passages which have the same message but where the word "perfect" is not used. Please take note of these two passages from Peter's epistles.

Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby (1 Pet. 2:1-2).

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 (2 Pet. 3:18).

Let me repeat one verse from the Hebrew letter.

Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection (or full maturity) (Heb. 6:1).

The message for God's people is clear: He wants us to grow into maturity and to act in a mature way at all times and in all relationships.

In his book, **Marriage Is What You Make It**, Dr. Paul Poponoe outlines five steps which are involved in our growing up. There are other possible ways of outlining the steps of maturity, but these can help us to understand the process. First, Dr. Poponoe says the "infant loves himself" (p. 28). The truth is an infant is the most selfish creature on God's good earth. He wants totally dominate his life. If it were not so, how could such a helpless creature survive? Do you remember the early days of your children's existence? What difference did it make to him or her that you had to get out of a warm bed at three o'clock in the morning to make him comfortable? If you had just been in bed two or three hours, he could have cared less. An infant is totally committed to his own comfort, security and bliss. He acts like a child because he is a child.

But what if he or she never outgrows that stage? What kind of marriage can be built around a husband or a wife who "acts like a child?" What if he always demands his way, his comfort and totally ignores the wishes and needs of his spouse? Are there people—both male and female—so selfish, so indifferent to the needs of their spouses? Every marriage counselor in the world has encountered great numbers of husbands and wives who have such an attitude. They have almost always had what they wanted, when they wanted it or else they threw a temper tantrum. May the Lord have pity on the man or woman who is married to such a baby!

According to Dr. Poponoe,

the child goes on to expand his love life by taking in his parents, particularly his mother (p. 28).

Since the mother is constantly with him—or at least that is the ideal—and does more for him than anyone else, she becomes the dominant figure at this state of life. But, as important as the mother is, she must help the child to expand his horizons beyond her constant care or there is some danger that the child will develop what some psychologists call “a mother fixation.” As was stated earlier, every marriage counselor has had to work with marriages where one of the spouses would not cut loose from the mother or the father or both. When a married partner does not progress beyond this second stage, the chances of having a good marriage with such a person are very slim.

“A few years later,” according to Dr. Poponoe,
the child begins to get outside of the home,
emotionally, and to take an interest in those
of his own age and own sex—the gang,
technically speaking (p. 29).

Sociologists refer to this period of a child's life as the socialization process. Up until this time, the child has learned more from his parents than from anyone else, but during this third stage he learns much from his peers. The child is breaking away from his total dependence on the home. At this stage in life he merely tolerates girls, but does not grant their equality. This third step is absolutely essential if the young person is ever to become a fully functioning adult.

It is unfortunate that some otherwise intelligent adults have gotten stuck in this stage of development. They remain in the “gang age” all their lives. You can imagine the heartaches this would produce in the life of a young bride. Her husband has to be out with the boys many times during any given month. He does not

assume the responsibility for his wife and children. This is one of the most common complaints that marriage counselors hear from distraught wives. Obviously, this is not a very solid foundation on which to build a stable marriage.

"Then comes the interesting period of adolescence," says Dr. Poponoe,

in which the child's emotional horizon expands once more to take in the other sex on a level of equality (p. 29).

Adolescence can be and often is one of the most difficult and troubling periods of a person's life. I personally do not remember any severe trauma associated with adolescence. That might be accounted for from the fact that it has been so long, but I would prefer to think that I have no unpleasant memories of adolescence because there were at least five others in my home who were going through the same development. Maybe we supported each other and that enabled us to get through this tough period with no severe repercussions. But I have worked for more than forty years with hundreds and hundreds of adolescents and I know some of the problems they face during that period of their lives.

Adolescents take a greater and greater interest in members of the opposite sex. They admit that the opposite sex may even be here to stay. But his interest initially is usually rather generalized. Is it possible that some adults have been arrested in this stage of development? You and I both know that there are literally thousands of men and women who have never outgrown adolescence. They are still interested in spreading their sexual favors rather widely. This is a sign of immaturity—an unwillingness to grow up and

become fully functioning adults.

Finally, according to Dr. Poponoe,

little by little, during this period of trial and error, attention has been focused on one person for a longer and longer period (p. 29)

This is the level of adult maturity that we want to examine in considerable depth over the next several weeks. A number of questions demand attention: What is maturity? How do we know when a person has reached maturity? What are the qualities of a mature person? Please continue to listen as we address these vital questions.

Theme: The Home

Marriage Is For Adults Only (No. 2)

Dr. Joe Burton, a prominent Baptist scholar and for many years editor of the Baptist publication on home life, wrote a little book with the title, **Tomorrow You Marry** (Nashville: Broadman Press). Dr. Burton makes these observations about the necessity of people's being mature when they get married.

Most marriages which fail do so because of some form of immaturity—usually because of some lack of emotional balance. Immature people—even though perhaps twenty, thirty or even forty years of age—have tried to make it a child's game, and it is no wonder they have failed (p. 37).

But if immaturity is such a threat to long-lasting and fulfilling marriages, how do we pinpoint immaturity before marriage? In other words, how do we recognize maturity so that we can avoid being married to an immature person? Let me begin our lesson today with some definitions of maturity. **Webster's Third New International Dictionary** defines mature as "attaining to a fulness of growth, an emergence from an undeveloped or an incomplete stage." The dictionary gives the following synonyms of mature: develop, ripen, age. Dr. Edward Strecker's book, **Their Mothers' Sons** gives a much more comprehensive definition of maturity. It is a rather long definition, but one that I shall adopt in our studies on maturity. "I define maturity," says Dr. Strecker,

as the ability to stick to a job, the capacity to give more on any job than is asked for, reliability, persistence to carry out a plan regardless of the difficulties, the ability to work with other people under organization and authority, the ability to make decisions, a will to life, flexibility, independence, and tolerance (pp. 211-212).

We shall say more about Dr. Strecker's definition of maturity as we continue our studies of the topic, "Marriage Is For Adults Only." Let us give our attention now to those qualities which inform us that a person really is mature.

Dr. John Schindler wrote a little book he called **How To Live 365 Days a Year**. Dr. Schindler argues that one of the major marks of a mature person is "responsible independence" (p. 72). The emphasis in this particular quality is on independence, but the independence should be responsible. In other words, an independent person cuts the emotional umbilical cord and with the help of God and the support of friends and loved ones makes a life for himself. As a parent, I know how painful the process of leaving home and starting life on one's own can be. I am afraid that I did not fully understand that until our own sons left home. I remember that September day in 1943 when I left my home in Middle Tennessee to begin my college career at Freed-Hardeman College. I can still see my mother standing on the front steps of our little farm home in Sumner County and shedding tears for the first child who was going away. I am the fourth of twelve children, but I was the first who was really leaving home. I wondered then why my mother would be so upset that a child was leaving. After all, there were almost a dozen more at home. I did not

understand then, but I understand now. With both of our sons gone and out on their own, I now know the sorrow my mother felt on that September day in 1943.

We bring our children into this world so that they can grow up and make a life of their own. But knowing this fact does not always make it easier when our children leave home. The process of cutting the emotional umbilical cord can be painful—as I have just indicated—but it is absolutely necessary. Dr. Evelyn Millis Duvall says that the family is a “launching center” to push the young

from the home base and to sail off into life for themselves....The process of cutting the apron strings characterizes the teen years and sets the stage for the son's or daughter's emergence as an emancipated young adult (Quoted in MacDonald, **Creating a Successful Christian Marriage**, p. 131).

The scriptures use somewhat different language, but the message is the same.

Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh (Gen. 2:24).

Several years ago I heard a story which illustrates the truth involved in this statement from Genesis two. A gracious and loving mother was having a really hard time giving up her only son to another woman. But she made a decision that all good mothers and fathers have to make—sooner or later. On her son's wedding day, the mother handed him a very small package, beautifully wrapped with this note attached: “Do not open until after your honeymoon.” The young man and his bride returned to their home and opened the small package which the mother had given to her son.

In the package were two simple strings—apron strings. This wise mother had cut her son loose so that he could have the freedom to grow and to love another woman. Would to God that every mother and father were so wise!

My young friends, if you are unwilling to turn loose from your parental home and start a new life with your husband or wife, remain single and do not bring unhappiness and tragedy into the life of another human being. There are very few troubles in a troubled marriage that are harder to resolve than this attachment to parents or guardians. Of course, the attachment can run in both directions. The parents may be unwilling to let go or the young person may be too immature to turn loose. In either case, a marriage where this situation exists is in for some tough sledding.

Of course, the parents want to be there when their young people need help and come to them for help. I think all good parents want to support the marriages of their children, but we must not interfere in anyone's marriage, especially the marriage of our children. Maybe we parents are thinking, but my children are to honor and to obey us. Children are to obey their parents in the Lord (Eph. 6:1). They are to honor us as long as they live, but their obedience ends at the time of their emancipation into adulthood. They should never cease honoring their parents, but they must have the freedom to make their own decisions and to run their own lives. We must pull back and give them an opportunity to succeed—or to fail.

I have had parents to say, "But, brother Claiborne, I do not want my child—or children—to make the same mistakes I made. I want to guide them so that they

will not fail." I usually tell such parents, "But they are going to make mistakes. Let those mistakes be their own and not your mistakes." We grow by making mistakes and learning from them. But we may not grow from the mistakes our parents made. I make this plea to all parents in my audience: Do not interfere with your children's marriages! I make this plea to the young people who are listening: Leave father and mother—even if it means going to the other side of the world—and stand on your own two feet.

One more word on the matter of "responsible independence." I have emphasized the independence because I honestly believe that it is of vital importance. But let us not forget that our independence should be "responsible." Our independence should not be a matter of rebellion or anger or frustration. There was a great amount of such "independence" in the 1960s and in the 1970s and it was a disgrace to our nation and to the world. Such rebellion achieves very little that is worthwhile and does enormous damage to millions of people—especially our young people.

But not only does maturity involve "responsible independence," it involves loving unselfishly—not only for what we get, but for what we can give. Our generation has been characterized as "the me-generation." Obviously, there is much truth in that expression. Many of us are concerned only about what we can get—not anyone else's welfare. To show you that the one who coined the phrase, "the me-generation," was not too far off in this characterization, let me tell you of a book that became a best seller in the 1970s. In 1977 Robert Ringer wrote a book, **Looking out for #1** (New York: Funk and Wagnalls), that expresses the most selfish and unchristian attitudes I have read anywhere.

Ringer advocates moral principles that are the exact opposite of what the scriptures teach. Jesus said, for example,

A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another (John 13:34-35).

Paul affirmed in his great chapter on love: "Love... seeketh not her own" or "love is not selfish" (**Good News for Modern Man**). Please listen to what many have designated the Golden Text of the Bible.

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life (John 3:16).

I want to emphasize that little word "so." God SO loved...that He gave. Do you see the mature love that husbands and wives ought to exemplify in their marriage relationships? Do we SO love that we are willing to give of ourselves, our time, our money? If we do not give, we do not love.

Paul reminded the Corinthians of the great love which Christ demonstrated for them and for all mankind.

For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich (2 Cor. 8:9).

Paul quoted Jesus as saying, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35). Can you imagine a marriage or any other relationship where all people involved believe and practice that precept, "It is more

blessed to give than to receive?" Maybe many of us agree with the country philosopher, Hambone, who said,

I know the Bible says that it is more blessed to give than to receive, but the receiving is good enough for me.

Children are often very selfish and seek their own personal interests. Adults, on the other hand, should seek to serve others. Paul admonished the Romans:

Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another (Rom. 12:10).

But if we are so warm and loving toward others, will they not take advantage of us? Obviously, that can and does happen, but are we really better off by being selfish than if someone takes advantage of us? Did they take advantage of Jesus and Paul and other righteous people? You know they did, but in spite of that, we still find encouragement to do good for others and to put them before ourselves. That certainly is one of the main features of New Testament Christianity. "Bear you one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ" (Gal. 6:2). "Look not every man to his own things, but every man also on the things of others" (Phil. 2:4).

The apostle Paul loved his brothers and sisters in the church at Corinth. That was his reason for doing so much for that congregation. He explains his love for the Corinthians in these words:

Behold, the third time I am ready to come to you; and I will not be burdensome to you: for I seek not yours, but you: for the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the

parents for the children. And I will very gladly spend and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved (2 Cor. 12:14-15).

After many years of working with troubled families, I am convinced that most troubles would cease and many of them never begin if both husbands and wives had the attitude we are examining. If every husband would put his wife's needs, desires, and concern before his own and every wife would return such love, how could such people ever consider separation or divorce? But in most unhappy marriages, the husband or the wife or both demand their own way and totally disregard the wishes and needs of their partners. This is a selfish attitude and very destructive.

A third quality of a mature person involves making decisions based on facts—not fantasy. In marriages and in all other human relationships, decisions have to be made regularly. How do we go about making those decisions? Do we decide what we want and disregard the other members of our family? What are the principles we ought to use in making decisions which affect our marriages? The scriptures make it very plain that we fallible human beings need all the wisdom we can get to make sensible decisions. In fact, James encourages Christians to appeal to the wisdom from above rather than the wisdom that is not from above.

But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable,

gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy (James 3:14-17).

The book of Proverbs—more than any other book in the Bible—shows the absolute need for wisdom in every phase of our lives.

Get wisdom, get understanding; forget it not; neither decline from the words of my mouth. Forsake her not, and she shall preserve thee: love her, and she shall keep thee. Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding. Exalt her, and she shall promote thee: she shall bring thee to honour, when thou dost embrace her. She shall give to thine head an ornament of grace: a crown of glory shall she deliver to thee (Prov. 4:5-9).

The wise man also said, "Buy the truth, and sell it not; also wisdom, and instruction, and understanding" (Prov. 23:23).

It would be thrilling indeed if all people getting married and those living within the bonds of holy matrimony made all their decisions using the greatest amount of wisdom available to them. Unfortunately, such is not always the case. Many decisions—especially those relating to the selection of a mate—are made on the basis of "Hollywoodism"—sex appeal. If a guy looks like Paul Newman or Robert Redford, the girls go wild—even if the guy is notoriously evil and a womanizer. If the girl has a pretty shape, guys are often unconcerned about her intellect, her moral values and her goals in life. We are guilty of making decisions about our life partners on the basis of the outside appearance. It would be similar to choosing a new automobile on the basis of the paint job. I am not

condemning physical beauty, nor do I believe the Bible does, but that is a very poor basis on which to build for a lifetime.

Others—particularly in modern times—make marital decisions and even long range financial decisions on the basis of astrology. If their signs are compatible, what else could possibly matter? My friends, I do not wish to be unduly harsh about this, but I need to speak plainly. Astrology in all its forms is heathenism—paganism. It has no foundation in fact and has been demonstrated hundreds of times to be fraudulent. Let me read for your consideration a rather long excerpt from Dr. James Dobson's outstanding book, **What Wives Wish Their Husband's Knew About Women** (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1975), a book incidentally which I have recommended to literally thousands of people.

What does God think of men's consulting astrologers or other heathen sources of information? Fortunately, we are not left with the slightest doubt. Please listen as the Lord instructed Moses about these matters.

When thou art come into the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not learn to do after the abominations of those nations. There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, Or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer. For all that do these things are an abomination unto the LORD: and because of these abominations the LORD thy God doth drive them out from before thee. Thou shalt be perfect with the LORD

thy God. For these nations, which thou shalt possess, hearkened unto observers of times, and unto diviners: but as for thee, the LORD thy God hath not suffered thee so to do (Dt. 18:9-14).

The prophet Isaiah speaks just as plainly and uncompromisingly about astrology and witchcraft as Moses did. Many of the Jews in the time of Isaiah had been accustomed to consulting sorcerers and astrologers. The Lord said to the Jews through Isaiah:

Therefore shall evil come upon thee; thou shalt not know from whence it riseth: and mischief shall fall upon thee; thou shalt not be able to put it off: and desolation shall come upon thee suddenly, which thou shalt not know. Stand now with thine enchantments, and with the multitude of thy sorceries, wherein thou hast laboured from thy youth; if so be thou shalt be able to profit, if so be thou mayest prevail. Thou art wearied in the multitude of thy counsels. Let now the astrologers, the stargazers, the monthly prognosticators, stand up, and save thee from these things that shall come upon thee. Behold, they shall be as stubble; the fire shall burn them; they shall not deliver themselves from the power of the flame: there shall not be a coal to warm at, nor fire to sit before it (Isa. 47:11-14).

Do you get the impression from these Old Testament readings that either Moses or Isaiah thought it was just a matter of indifference or of entertainment for God's people to listen to astrologers or witches or mediums? These activities in God's sight were an abomination. Listening to them or taking their advice in making decisions is just as sinful now as it was in

Old Testament times. Instead of taking the advice of pagan sources—such as those I have mentioned—listen to the Lord your God. Consult the word of God and you cannot go wrong. God said at the Mount of Transfiguration, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased: hear you him” (Mt. 17:5). Is it possible for anyone to do better than to listen to the Son of God? If you have decisions to make—and all of us do on a regular basis—study diligently what God says on the subject and then ask him to help you make the right choices. We can rely on God’s promise “For he has said, I will never leave you, nor forsake you” (Heb. 13:5).

Consulting astrologers for advice is not as safe as playing Russian roulette. Both are extremely dangerous and very foolish. God has given us His word and people who love that word to help us in trying times. Read what God has to say on every subject and then seek the counsel from the wisest and most godly people you know. There are elders, preachers, and others Christians who would delight in helping you through difficult situations.

If you are mature enough to be involved in a marriage, make all your decisions with the greatest wisdom and insight available to you. God expects you to do it and the future of your marriage depends on it.

Our next lesson will be a continuation of our study on “Marriage Is For Adults Only.” At that time I shall be discussing with you such matters as: Self-discipline, adaptability, responsibility and perhaps other matters, as time permits.

Please continue to listen and keep us in your prayers. Thank you. May God bless you and keep you.

Theme: The Home

Marriage Is For Adults Only (No. 3)

Oftentimes we parents say to our growing children, "Don't be a baby. Act like an adult." Or as they approach marriage, we encourage our young people to marry someone who is grown up—someone who is mature. I find no fault with this advice, but what do we mean by terms like "adult," or "mature?" Are we talking only about their physical development? Or do we have in mind their intellectual and spiritual maturity as well? What qualities identify a human being as being mature? I have already mentioned some of the qualities in previous lessons. First, "responsible independence." Second, maturity means loving unselfishly—not for what we can get, but for what we can give. Third, maturity involves making decisions based on fact—not fantasy. Today's lesson will examine some more of the characteristics which show that a person is mature.

The mature person, according to the scriptures, exercises self-control—self-discipline. Almost everyone would agree, it seems to me, that this is certainly a mark of maturity. But what does self-control mean? The King James Version never uses the term "self-control or self-discipline." Instead, it talks about temperance. Let me give you some examples. Solomon argued that the man

that is slow to anger is better than the mighty;
and he that ruleth his spirit than he that
taketh a city (Prov. 16:32).

Solomon's statements may seem to be exaggerated, but they really are not. No man can truly be successful or useful to others unless he can control himself. I shall give some examples very shortly, but let us look at some scriptures that use the word "temperance."

In his great sermon before Felix—who was anything but temperate—Paul "reasoned of righteousness, temperance and judgment to come" (Acts 24:15). "Temperance" is also mentioned as one of the qualities of the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:23). Peter encouraged early Christians to add to their faith

virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness (2 Pet. 1:5-6).

The verb form of the word appears only two times in the New Testament and is translated "contain" (1 Cor. 7:9) and "is temperate" (1 Cor. 9:25). The adjective form is used only one time and is translated "temperate" (Tit. 1:8).

The basic Greek word is **kratos** and means strength. Since the word "temperance" has a modern connotation of refraining from strong drink, it is appropriate to translate the Greek by the English "self-control." It is profitable to examine the opposite of temperance or self-control. Paul mentioned in his second letter to Timothy that "perilous times shall come" when men will be

Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good (2 Tim. 3:3).

The word "incontinent" is the exact opposite of the word "temperance" or self-control. The Greek word is

akrates and literally means without strength or without control. The same Greek word appears in this verse:

Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency (1 Cor. 7:5).

The New American Standard Bible translates the word "lack of self-control."

We know from this brief word study how important it is for a Christian to control his life. The apostle Paul used the metaphors of a race and a boxing match to get that lesson across to the Corinthians.

Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway (1 Cor. 9:24-27).

All of us know how vital it is for an athlete to take the proper amount of exercise, eat the right foods, sleep enough and keep himself free from disease. If he is a glutton or drinks alcohol or is too lazy to exercise, he will not likely compete for long. He controls his body; he does not allow his body to control him. Amateur athletes engage in strenuous training and competition to obtain a corruptible crown. Christians serve the Lord in order to receive an incorruptible

crown. Are we going to allow athletes to work harder and use greater self-control in order to win a trophy than we work to receive the crown of life?

We have established from the scriptures that Christians must be in control of their lives, that is, under the Lordship of Jesus Christ, but what does that really mean? In what areas must we control ourselves? Does the Bible mean that we must not eat too much, sleep too much or too little? Surely the Bible has no control over such mundane and insignificant matters. Actually, the Bible does talk somewhat about gluttony.

For the drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty: and drowsiness shall clothe a man with rags (Prov. 23:21).

I want to say a few words about drinking in a few minutes, but let me dwell briefly on eating too much.

Do you know one of the most common complaints that marriage counselors hear from husbands who have been married for several years? The complaint is often couched in words somewhat as follows:

When my wife and I were first married, she was slim and trim and beautiful. Fifteen years later she is a fat slob. Does she not care how she looks any more? Does my opinion of her count for nothing?

Of course, women often express the same sentiments toward their husbands who have allowed themselves to become too heavy, too slovenly, too greasy. In fact, the song which Arthur Godfrey made popular about forty years ago would be the theme song of some married people. "I don't want her, you can have her; she's too fat for me." I wish this were funny, but it is too serious with many married people to be funny. So, please husbands and wives, do not let yourself get

too heavy. It will shorten your life and probably your marriage.

But surely too much sleep does not present any serious problem in a marriage relationship. Actually, laziness is a major barrier to marital bliss and to success in other areas of life. Please listen to Solomon.

Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise: Which having no guide, overseer, or ruler, Provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest. How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard? when wilt thou arise out of thy sleep? Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep: So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed man (Prov. 6:6-11).

If a man is so lazy that he will not earn a living for his family, he sins grievously against God and his family. Paul insists that such a man is worse than an infidel (1 Tim. 5:8). Many marriage problems arise when the husband is too lazy to work or the woman is too lazy to shoulder her share of the load in the marriage. Sleep is essential to our wellbeing, but too much sleep indicates a flaw in character or some physical abnormality which needs attention. In either case, a marriage can suffer when the partners do not use self-control in their sleep habits.

I mentioned a few minutes ago that the word "temperance" is generally interpreted to mean refraining from strong drink. It certainly does include shunning alcoholic beverages, but it is much broader than that. However, let me emphasize the need for all family members to avoid strong drink as you would avoid a serpent. Solomon says that,

Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise (Prov. 20:1).

All of us know these statements are true—not only because the Bible teaches them—but because we observe almost daily the great number of lives that are destroyed by alcohol. 50% of all broken homes are directly related to someone's drinking alcoholic beverages. 50% of all serious crimes are committed by people who use alcohol. 50% of all highway accidents result from drinking drivers. Can any responsible man or woman think seriously about these facts and then allow himself or herself to participate in such a deadly activity?

From studying the scriptures and from examining the great destruction wrought by drinking, I honestly do not understand how anyone can drink and think he is exercising self-control? Please think seriously about the following questions: How can anyone drink when he knows the embarrassment and shame that alcohol causes in so many families? How can anyone drink knowing that his sons and daughters are likely going to follow in his footsteps? Even if you know how to hold your liquor—which is very doubtful—what if your son or daughter does not know and never learns how to hold his liquor? How would you feel if you killed a child because you were drinking? How would you feel if some drunk killed your child? Can you really be temperate in all things and drink **at all**? Please think seriously about these questions as I read another passage from the book of Proverbs.

Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? who hath babbling? who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of

eyes? They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek mixed wine. Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright. At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder. Thine eyes shall behold strange women, and thine heart shall utter perverse things. Yea, thou shalt be as he that lieth down in the midst of the sea, or as he that lieth upon the top of a mast. They have stricken me, shalt thou say, and I was not sick; they have beaten me, and I felt it not: when shall I awake? I will seek it yet again (Prov. 23:29-35).

Does the self-controlled, self-disciplined person have any dealing with an activity as destructive as drinking alcoholic beverages?

Another serious marital problem which has a direct relationship to self-control is anger. Men who cannot control their anger will often strike a member of the family and do serious damage. It is not that the person intended to harm his wife or a child. He simply does not control his anger. I know a case where a young husband became angry with his wife. He turned to hit the wall with his fist, but missed the wall and ran his arm through a glass door. He had to be rushed to the emergency room of the local hospital. How utterly foolish that we allow our tempers to get so out of control! Let me repeat a statement from the book of Proverbs.

He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city (Prov. 16:32).

Probably the most serious problem of self-control relates to the tongue. Solomon recognized the

enormous damage the tongue can do in any situation.

Death and life are in the power of the tongue:
and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof
(Prov. 18:21).

A soft answer turneth away wrath: but
grievous words stir up anger. The tongue of
the wise useth knowledge aright: but the
mouth of fools poureth out foolishness (Prov.
15:1-2).

As children we used to say, "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me." As adults we know how foolish that childish saying was. Very few of us have ever been seriously injured by sticks and stones, but we have been cut to the heart by unkind and angry words.

One marriage counselor has been quoted as saying: "The thing that is most often opened by mistake in marriage is one's mouth." When James discusses the tongue in James 3, he did not specifically have in mind the misuse of the tongue in the marriage relationship, but all careful observers of the marriage scene know how the words of James apply to marriage. As I read these words from James, please think seriously of your marriage and how easy it is to speak hurtful words to your spouse or to your child.

For in many things we all offend. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body (James 3:2).

Please remember that the word "perfect" in the New Testament almost always means "mature." James is simply affirming that a mature Christian has the power with God's help to bridle his tongue.

Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth! And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell (James 3:5-6).

Does James seem to exaggerate the damage the tongue can do? You know both by reading the Bible and by observation that James does not exaggerate. How many homes have been broken because someone talked too much or said the wrong thing to someone? How many churches have been split because of gossiping or backbiting members? The tongue really is a fire and a world of iniquity. Furthermore, James accuses those who misuse their tongue of being children of the devil.

James demonstrates how hypocritical some of us are when we claim to be devout followers of Jesus Christ and yet use our tongues to damage a fellow-man.

Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be. Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter? Can the fig tree, my brethren, bear olive berries? either a vine, figs? so can no fountain both yield salt water and fresh (James 3:9-12).

May God help us to remember these words from James when we are tempted to use our tongues in an ungodly fashion.

But it is not just what we say, but how we say it. Paul admonished the Colossians:

Let your speech be always with grace,
seasoned with salt, that ye may know how
ye ought to answer every man (Col. 4:6).

I have no doubt that Paul was speaking of a Christian's obligation to use tact and kindness in answering questions about the faith. But the principle applies in every situation in life—in the home, in the church, in the community. Even when we are being badly treated by someone, we should be thoughtful and gentle in our response to others. We must remember that by our words we shall be justified and by our words we shall be condemned (Mt. 12:37).

One other aspect of self-control must be mentioned before we examine another phase of maturity. Self-control often involves postponing immediate pleasures and benefits for future blessings. This is a vital part of the growing-up process. We see this often in our working with high school and college students. Many of these young people could get jobs and begin to make money or to gain prestige in their occupations, but they know the value of an education. So they are willing to make sacrifices in order to gain their goals. It takes considerable maturity to make that decision.

Another mark of maturity is adaptability—the capacity to change—the opposite of petrified. Judge John A. Sbarbaro's book, **Marriage Is on Trial** (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1947), calls adaptability "plain, old-fashioned common sense which your partner is able to apply to you, as well as to himself" (p. 14). The scriptures use somewhat different language, but the conclusion is the same.

Whoso loveth instruction loveth knowledge:
but he that hateth reproof is brutish (Prov.
12:1).

Solomon says, in effect, that a wise person loves to learn—not just for the joy of learning, but that he may apply wisdom to his life and to the lives of others. Dr. Evelyn Millis Duvall thinks that “this love of growth that probably more than anything else is a measure of maturity” (Allan Peterson, Editor. **The Marriage Affair**). J. Allan Peterson edited an excellent book entitled **The Marriage Affair** (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, 1971). One of the chapters was written by Peterson. In that chapter he makes these statements.

The life of the mature person reveals a willingness to change; he is not content with mediocrity, and he believes “good enough” is not enough. The key to maturity is desire; in the final analysis we have the kind of marriage we really desire—what we are willing to work and pray for (p. 7).

When we get married, there is so much that we do not know and by the very nature of the case, cannot know. Even though you may have been reared in a Christian family, attended a congregation where marriage and the family were emphasized, and had high school and college courses on family life, there is so much that you cannot know. If we enter marriage with our minds made up about every phase of our lives, we are unlikely to grow into the kind of person who will be a good mate. We certainly should not compromise our moral convictions, but we must be willing to grow—both for our own sakes and for the sake of our partners. There is a problem, however, with growth in marriage: Where one partner outgrows the other one. It takes a very wise person to grow and to help his partner to grow at the same time and at about the same rate.

In the first lesson in this series, I emphasized "responsible independence." The major thrust in that lesson was on "independence." At this time I want to say more about the need for being responsible in all phases of one's life. We do not expect small children to assume full responsibility for their behavior. However, parents must begin with the children are very small to teach them what it means to be responsible. We are often surprised and pleased at how well some children learn to be responsible in their various relationships and duties. Let me suggest several areas where we adults must not shirk out responsibilities.

If we are acting as adults, we shall accept the full consequences of our sinful behavior. We will have the courage of David to say, "For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me" (Psa. 51:3). Of course, David's attitude was the very opposite of that of Adam and Eve. Adam sought to excuse his misconduct by saying, "The woman whom thou gavest me to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat" (Gen. 3:12). The inspired text seems to have Adam placing the ultimate blame on God: "The woman whom **thou** gavest me." When the Lord confronted Eve with her transgression, she replied, "The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat" (Gen. 3:13). Adam and Eve were unwilling to say, "We have sinned. We bear full responsibility for our sins."

Marriage counselors have encountered almost every excuse it is possible for human beings to invent. For example, when a man has been involved in an adulterous relationship, he will often blame his wife. It is quite common for a man to say, "But my wife was not attentive to my needs. She is not a warm and

receptive wife." That, dear friends, is a cop-out. Such feeble excuses sound like Flip Wilson's famous, but not very funny line, "The devil made me do it." The truth is that the devil has never **made** anyone commit a sin. He sets the temptation before us, encourages us in every conceivable way to yield, but he does not have the power to make us transgress the law of God. Paul makes that truth very plain in the following passage:

There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it (1 Cor. 10:13).

Men who drink or gamble also seek to place the blame for their irresponsible behavior on their wives. "She drove me to drink" is an excuse that men often give for their reprehensible behavior. The wives may even accept such indictments, but they are excuses and not reasons. If the devil does have the power to drive men to drink or to gamble or to engage in illicit sexual behavior, then surely wives do not have such power. The men are just looking for a comfortable way out of their childish behavior. My friends, that kind of thinking does not deceive anyone. The Lord knows that we are merely looking for excuses—that we are failing to act as men (1 Cor. 16:13).

There are a number of other areas of responsibility that both husbands and wives must assume, such as, responsibilities in the home, in the community, and in the church. The Lord willing, I plan to examine these in our study next Lord's day and continue to discuss other characteristics of adults who have

achieved full maturity. If you have questions or comments about our lessons, please let me hear from you.

I am grateful for your response to these lessons on "Marriage is for Adults Only." Please continue to listen.

Theme: The Home

Marriage Is For Adults Only (No. 4)

If young people considering marriage want to select the right kind of mate and then be the right kind of mate, there is one very important question they must ask themselves: "How does a mature person behave?" If in the selection process they can find such a person and then they can be that kind of person, their marriage has a much better chance of surviving and being a fulfilling and rewarding experience. I do not want to be discouraging, but finding such a mate is not the easiest task in the world. Solomon asked, "A virtuous woman who can find? for her price is far above rubies" (Prov. 31:10). The words "virtuous" and "mature" are not synonymous, but a mature mate is probably as hard to find as a virtuous one. "Virtuous," incidentally, means moral courage—not just pure.

One of the qualities of a mature person—one that must be high on any list of qualities—is being fully responsible for all phases of one's life. That means—among other things—that every husband and father has the responsibility of providing for his family. The feminists, oddly enough, have sought to overturn that duty of husbands, but it is still their duty. Paul warned:

But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel (1 Tim. 5:8).

All of us know that there are husbands and fathers

who will not work or who work only the bare minimum. They expect the government or the church or someone else to provide them with the necessities of life and even with some of the luxuries. Such men—if not physically or mentally incapacitated—are emotionally and spiritually immature. In other words, they simply have not grown up. They are still thinking and acting like children.

Occasionally, you will find a man who is perfectly willing to work to provide for his family if he can start in an executive position. If it means hard, manual labor, he will allow the government or the church to provide for his needs, but he will not stoop to such demeaning activity. My friends, mature men find ways of supporting their families, regardless of the sacrifices we have to make. I doubt if any of us have always been able to find clean, pleasant work to support our families, but we are responsible for our families. If we are unwilling to work to provide for them, we should remain single.

Of course, the wife has reciprocal responsibilities in the home. Regardless of what the feminists say, being a wife and a mother should be a woman's highest priorities—if she is a wife and a mother. I am not inferring—because I do not believe—that every woman has to get married or that every married woman to be a woman has to have children, but if she is married and if she has children, her greatest obligations—right next to her duties to God—are to her husband and children. In fact, these are part of her duties to God. She must not ignore what the Bible says about being a good wife and a good mother. Her happiness on earth, her hope of reward in heaven and the welfare of our nation depend on it.

There are many duties in the home that I wish time permitted me to discuss, but one in particular, I want to mention in passing: the husband-wife responsibility for handling their money wisely. Money problems are very common in marriage and may stem in many cases from immaturity on the part of the husband or the wife or both. Dr. Sylvanus M. Duvall's excellent book, **Before You Marry** (New York: Association Press, 1949), insists that "an inability to live on an income may be the symptoms of some emotional disturbance" (p. 49). If we can learn to make money or other material objects our servants instead of our Master, we should be able to resolve many of the financial difficulties which many marriages face.

Mature married people and even mature single people must realize that they have community responsibilities. If our communities have problems with crime, pollution—including polluting the mind through pornography—alcohol, gambling, it is your obligation and mine to do something about it. It is not good enough to complain against the governor or the mayor or the county commissioners. All of us have duties to our communities.

I hear a great number of complaints against our public school system—and many of those complaints are legitimate. But if all we do is complain and make no effort to change the situation, we are not worth very much to our schools. If our public schools are failing the American people, then we should make some changes and **we can make changes**. We can replace our current superintendents or school board members with those who are more amenable to wishes of the people. We can get involved in the Parent-

Teacher Association of our schools. You can rest assured that there will be resistance from the powers that be, but the schools do not belong to the teachers or to the school boards or to the superintendents. They belong to the American people. The teachers, administrators and board members simply work for us. Let us demand more accountability on their part and let us be as supportive as we can possibly be.

If you are a mature individual, you will want to be deeply involved in the work of the church. We have responsibilities to the church and God will hold us accountable for discharging those responsibilities. It is not enough just to attend church services—although that certainly is a good place to begin. We must actively engage in all the activities of the church that we can. I do want to qualify the last statement by the words “that we can.” Some churches keep their members so busy that they have no time for their families. In my judgment that is a serious mistake on the part of any congregation. A part of my duty to God is to take care of my family. Every church ought to be deeply concerned about that truth. Churches must not keep their members so busy that homes suffer. But mature Christians will want to attend Sunday School, the regular worship services, Wednesday evening Bible study, gospel meetings and other worship and learning activities. They will also want to allocate a substantial portion of their financial resources to support the work of the Lord. We will not begrudge the money we give to the Lord but will realize that we have work to be done that cannot be done without our generosity.

Maturity, from a Christian viewpoint, means accepting yourself and loving yourself. Obviously, loving one's self can be overdone and is being overdone by many popularizers of psychology, such as Leo Bascalgia

or Wayne Dyer, and by positive thinking theologians, such as, Robert Schuller and Dr. Norman Vincent Peale. But there is a sense in which we must accept who we are and love ourselves because God accepts us and loves us.

On one occasion, a lawyer from among the Pharisees came to Jesus with a very important question:

Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself (Mt. 22:36-39).

There may be a greater danger that we love ourselves too much than that we do not love ourselves enough, but the scriptures certainly seem to teach that we are justified in loving ourselves.

The Bible specifically and emphatically teaches that each person is important to God and should be to himself.

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life (John 3:16).

If God loves us so much, how can we refuse to love what God does?

J. Allan Peterson edited the book, **The Marriage Affair** (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, 1971). Dr. Peterson includes in this book some comments by E. Stanley Jones on the expression: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." Dr. Jones argues that we must accept ourselves.

But the snag is this: you cannot accept

yourself as you now are. If you did you would accept self you could not respect. This would mean that you would be adjusted to a half-self.

When psychiatry urges you to accept yourself, both truth and fallacy are involved. It is true that you must not be rejecting and hating yourself. To live in a state of self-rejection and self-hate is as bad as living in other-rejection and other-hate. But there is a sense in which you cannot accept yourself—cannot accept yourself as you are. If you did you would settle down to accepting a half-self instead of a whole self. You would be adjusted on a very low level. And to be adjusted on a very low level is a very high tragedy. The end in view must not be adjustment, but adjustment to the highest—and that highest is Christ.

Then the Christian position, as I see it, is this: **Accept yourself in God.** In yourself you do not accept yourself, for that would mean the acceptance of a low type of self. It would mean a moral and spiritual stalemate. But when you surrender yourself to God then you can accept yourself there. First of all, because God accepts you, and if He accepts you then you must accept when He accepts. And, second, because you accept a self that is in the process of being made (p. 39).

But not only does maturity mean accepting yourself and loving yourself, it also means accepting other people—even with their imperfections. Christians know—because the Bible plainly teaches it—that no one is perfect.

As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth,

there is none that seeketh after God. For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:10-11, 23).

Until we recognize that fact and learn to deal with it, we are not going to be very happy with ourselves or with others.

Unfortunately, the more intimate the relationship, the easier it is to discover the flaws of another's life. If you encounter a person only once in a life time, chances are his faults will not bother you too much. But marriage is a three hundred and sixty-five day a year arrangement. We cannot ignore the faults and foibles of our mates. But if we take a careful look at our faults, we shall be more understanding and sympathetic to our less-than-perfect mate. We have no choice: We must learn to live with the imperfections of others.

When young people are dating seriously and approaching marriage, they often have trouble seeing the faults in their prospective mates. That is one reason that I recommend that all couples have premarital counseling. An impartial counselor—gospel preacher, godly Christian woman, or perhaps others—can often see basic incompatibilities when the young people themselves cannot. Unless the dating couple does understand that we all have faults, they are in for a rude awakening. Someone has wisely observed that love is blind, but marriage is an eye opener.

The mature person says, "I am not perfect; my mate is not perfect, but by the grace of God, we can and will make a go of it." My friends, I am not attempting to gloss over serious moral flaws, such as, sexual immorality, drunkenness, gambling and drug abuse. If you discover any of these in your prospective mate,

please give a great amount of mature thought and prayer to your future life. Do not be deceived into thinking that your love will change that person. Chances are very slim that he will make any basic changes. Millions of men and women are suffering because they thought they could change their partners after the wedding bells. Please do not risk your life's happiness on such a flimsy foundation.

Maturity means mastery over life's circumstances. There are some aspects of life that you cannot change—regardless of what the so-called “positive thinkers” say. For example, if you lose a loved one by death, there is nothing you can do about it. You have to accept death as fact of life or you cannot function properly. Years ago I read the biography of Queen Victoria by Lytton Strachey. Queen Victoria may have been England's last great monarch. She was happily married to Prince Albert for more than fifty years when he died. She would not emotionally accept his death. She secluded herself in her living quarters and would hardly come out for any reason. On the walls of her living room, she kept a picture of Prince Albert in his casket. Queen Victoria had not learned the lesson Abraham had taught hundreds of years ago. He bought a parcel of land so that he could bury his dead out of his sight (Gen. 23:8).

My friends, I am not attempting to belittle death or the seriousness of losing a loved one, but once a person has died, we can do nothing about it. God does not want us to quit living at the death of a loved one. He expects us to suffer loss and to mourn the passing of a friend or loved one. The Son of God Himself wept at the grave of Lazarus (John 11:35). But the mature person accepts the inevitability of death

and learns to live with it.

So many human beings have crippling accidents or diseases or they are born severely handicapped. There is a great temptation for parents, brothers and sisters, and the people themselves to throw up their hands in great despair. But mature people learn to accept what they cannot change. What if people like Helen Keller, Ray Charles, Stevie Wonder, Franklin Delano Roosevelt and others like them had just given up—and people far less handicapped have done so! According to Dr. Dobson, "the key to mental health is being able to accept what you cannot change" (**Hide Or Seek**, p. 127).

One of man's greatest temptations when death arrives for a loved one or when we face some other tragedy is to worry. But this is not an option for Christians. We must trust His goodness that all things will work to His glory and to our benefit. The apostle Paul expressed our need to turn our heartaches over to the Lord in these most comforting words:

The Lord is at hand. Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus (Phil. 4:5-7).

Let me put the problem of worry very simply: There are only two things about which you can worry: the things you can change and the things you cannot change. If you can change things, then by all means get busy and change them. If you cannot change them—and we have already shown that we cannot change some things—then why worry about them? "Casting all

your worries or cares upon him, for he careth for you" (1 Pet. 5:7).

As we draw this series of lessons on maturity to a close, let us summarize the ten marks of maturity that I have discussed with you. First, maturity means "responsible independence." That is, when we are mature enough to get married, we are old enough to leave father and mother and cleave to our spouses (Gen. 2:24). Even when it is painful, we sever the emotional umbilical cord and sail off into life for ourselves. Dr. Theodore Adams argues that

you should be emotionally independent of your parents and able to stand on your own feet and make your own decisions (**Making Your Marriage Succeed**. New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1953).

I wholeheartedly agree with Dr. Adams.

Second, maturity means loving unselfishly—not for what we can get, but for what we can give. Mature love seeks the welfare of the one loved. In fact, that is a pretty good definition of the Greek word **agape** which is the love of 1 Corinthians 13. Mature people know that it is more blessed to give than it is to receive (Acts 20:35). Unlike babies who are very selfish—but for good reasons—mature people "look not just for their own welfare, but also for the welfare of others" (Phil. 2:4).

Third, maturity involves making decisions based on facts—not fantasy. If we have grown up, we will use all the wisdom at our disposal. We will not make decisions based on sex appeal or on the position of the stars and the planets of the day of our births.

Fourth, maturity means that we exercise self-control in every phase of our lives—in refraining from

strong drink and other drugs, in controlling our tongues, and even in the amount of sleep we get. We are to be temperate in all things.

Fifth, maturity means adaptability—malleability—the capacity to change. We must not only have the ability to change; we must actually change in the direction of improvement. We must not be content with mediocrity.

Sixth, maturity demands that we assume responsibility for all phases of our lives. We cannot blame others when we fail. It is not good saying, "The devil made me do it." When we sin we should have the courage of the prodigal son, "I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight" (Luke 15:21). We must also accept our duties in the community, in the home and in the church. God has assigned each of us the work of making this a better world than when we arrived. Mature people accept the challenge and use their God-given talents and opportunities to make a difference in this world.

Seventh, maturity means accepting yourself and loving yourself. With gratitude we must accept who we are and we must love ourselves because Christ loved us and gave Himself for us (Eph. 5:25). But we must be realistic and acknowledge that God loves us in spite of our sins and imperfections. We must also admit that God is not done with us yet. He is still working on us.

Eighth, maturity means the ability to accept the imperfections in others. If God accepts us with all our sins and weaknesses, why should we not accept others regardless of their status? This does not mean condoning sin, but it does mean that we confess our weaknesses and transgressions.

Ninth, maturity involves mastery over life's circumstances. My friends, you and I have not been promised smooth sailing throughout life. We have to encounter some of the heartaches as well as some of the joys. The mature man or woman learns to adjust to life and make the best of every situation. In this veil of tears, we are going to shed tears, but with God's help, we shall overcome. We must remember these words of comfort from the apostle John: "Greater than he that is in you than he that is in the world" (1 John 4:4).

If you have questions or comments about our lessons on maturity in marriage, please let me hear from you.

Theme: The Home

Ten Commandments For Husbands

A number of years ago I read one of Abigail Van Buren's columns in which she had listed "Ten Commandments for Husbands." Since that time I have seen these commandments to husbands in a number of different books and magazines. I have copied these commandments from the 1984 Freed-Hardeman College lectureship book (Winford Claiborne, Editor. **Everyday Christianity**. Henderson: Freed-Hardeman College, 1984). During the 1984 lectureship at Freed-Hardeman College, brother John Dale who preaches for the Glendale Road Church of Christ in Murray, Kentucky, spoke on the subject, "Skills in Human Relationships." In today's lesson and also in next week's study, I shall be reading these commandments from John's lecture.

The ten commandments for husbands which I shall be studying with you today are not divinely inspired. They do not come from the word of God and yet they contain some great wisdom which should help every man to become a better husband. These observations give me the opportunity to make some comments on husbands that I honestly believe will be helpful. The only change I have made in these commandments has been to update the language and not to use the old fashioned language of Puritanism. I believe the changes will make them more understandable.

First, "Remember that your wife is your partner

and not your property." As I understand the scriptures—and this commandment—we husbands are not forbidden to speak of "my wife." The feminists see red when they hear husbands use that expression, but I have no intention of changing to win their approval. They want us to say, "my spouse" or "the spouse." But whatever they desire, I intend to keep on saying that Molly is **my wife**—not the wife or the spouse. Oh, I am fully aware that she does not belong to me absolutely. That prerogative belongs to God alone, as Paul makes very plain in the following passage.

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? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's (1 Cor. 6:19-20).

Because our wives are our partners and not our property, we ought to share with them and treat them as fellow human beings. In fact, Peter taught that if men fail to treat their wives with respect and honor, they need not pray (1 Pet. 3:7). Peter affirms that husbands and wives are fellow heirs or joint heirs. What could the scripture say that would make the truth I am emphasizing more impressive?

Second, "Think not that your business is none of your wife's business." If, as I have just read from 1 Peter 3:7, men and women are fellow heirs, should we men not share our business lives with our wives? Some of us men probably think that women are not as adept along these lines as men are. We do not want to discuss financial or business matters with them. If

your wife is not as knowledgeable and capable along these lines as you are, there is even more reason for you to work with her on these important issues until she understands them. But the truth is that she may have far greater knowledge than you give her credit for having. She may surprise you how quickly she learns about the family finances.

Besides, my friend, you are likely going to leave her a widow. What happens to her then? Are you going to leave her at the mercy of our legal system or some shyster who is just waiting for another sucker? If you think I am exaggerating, let me encourage you to do some investigating. Many wives have no idea about their husband's insurance, his investments, his income, his retirement arrangements and hundreds of other financial matters. Unfortunately, some wives have never written a check or balanced a checkbook or paid an insurance premium. If you die without giving your wife help along these lines, she may really be in deep trouble.

I know a case where a wealthy man died and left his estate in great confusion. When he bought a piece of property, he would simply make a note and put it in his desk drawer. It took his wife and children several years to get his estate straight. It was fortunate there was enough money for them to survive until his estate was settled. But the family probably lost thousands of dollars because he kept all his financial dealings in his head and had not shared them with his family. I am sure you do not want your wife—who probably will not have a large bank account—to suffer during the time your financial affairs are being straightened out. Tell her about your business and your investments. It will make her life easier and more enjoyable, in spite of

your having left her.

Third, "You shall hold your wife's love by the same means that you did to win it." Do you remember all the plans you made to win that lovely woman to be your wife? You probably wore your very best clothes when you dated her, even shaved more than one time each day, took her to good places to eat, sent her flowers or candy or both. Am I right? Have you continued to do those things for her now that she is yours and you are hers? Have you allowed the romance to die? Do you still tell her that you love her as you did when you probably did not really love her? Now that she has paid you the greatest compliment any woman could give any man—agreeing to be your wife—do you let her know just how important she is in your life?

Women often complain to marriage counselors and to others that their husbands do not love them anymore or at least they do not show it. Does your wife feel that way about you and is she justified in doing so? If she were worth the effort to win her, is she not worth the effort to keep her in love with you? So whatever you did to win her love, will you please put forth the effort to make her the best husband you can?

Fourth, "You shall cooperate with your wife in establishing family discipline." Many of us fathers act as if mothers alone are parents. We attempt to leave the major part of child rearing responsibilities in the hands of our wives. I am not denying the enormous influence of mothers on the future generation. Mothering is of vital importance, but so is fathering. God made the reproduction of the human race dependent on both fathers and mothers and He expects

both to contribute their time and talent and energy to the welfare of their offspring.

Actually, the Bible lays far greater stress on the father's contributions to the welfare of the children than it does that of the mother's. Let me give you a few examples.

Hear, ye children, the instruction of a father, and attend to know understanding. For I give you good doctrine, forsake ye not my law. For I was my father's son, tender and only beloved in the sight of my mother (Prov. 4:1-3).

And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (Eph. 6:4).

Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged (Col. 3:21).

Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live (Heb. 12:9).

Children so desperately need the love and the guidance of fathers. Modern psychologists and psychiatrists have discovered just how vital fathers are to girls and guys developing the proper sexual identity. If the father is dead or otherwise absent from the home, boys lack a male figure as a model of what it means to be a man. Girls often fail to learn how to relate to a person of the opposite sex. Some girls become sexually promiscuous—not because they prefer such a lifestyle—but because they are searching for attention from their fathers. We fathers just may not

know how vital we are to the family. Fathering is a grave responsibility, but it is also one of the most rewarding experiences human beings will ever know. So, please fathers, let us help our wives to establish family discipline.

Fifth, "You shall not let anyone criticize your wife to your face and get away with it—neither your father, nor your mother, nor your brothers, nor your sisters, not any of thy relatives." Sometimes one's parents and other relatives imagine that a man has married beneath his standing in the community and in his profession. Obviously, that could and probably does happen, but once a man has made his choice, others must respect it. Theoretically it could happen, but most of us marry someone much like ourselves—religiously, financially, educationally, racially and culturally. We usually choose someone who has the same basic commitment to life that we enjoy. But obviously, there are notable exceptions.

When you marry, others must come to respect your choice. If they have criticisms of your wife, let them make them to someone else—not to you. Like most of you, I want to be a peace-loving, peace-promoting man, but I might have some difficulty in being peaceful if someone were to begin to criticize my Molly. I would not look upon such action with approval and with equanimity. It would disturb me tremendously and I would seek to stop such criticism. I did not allow our sons to criticize their mother and I would not want anyone else doing so.

I knew a case a number of years ago where the parents interfered in a marriage until they destroyed

the marriage. Their daughter was dating a splendid, but poor young man. The young people were deeply in love and planned to get married. They made a grievous mistake of going too far in their affections and a child was conceived out of wedlock. Since the young people had planned to marry anyway, they went ahead with their plans and the child was born a few months after their marriage. Their marriage seemed to be going well, but the girl's parents never let up on criticizing their son-in-law. Eventually, the parents succeeded in separating the couple.

I would plead with all in my audience today not to let your friends or relatives criticize your spouse. If you are happy with him—or her—purpose in your heart that with God's help, you are going to make your marriage work. There will always be people who will tell you that you made a mistake—that you could have done better. Be protective of your wife and the two of you can grow together and become the kind of partners which have God's approval—whether or not you have anyone else's approval.

Sixth, "You shall not take your wife for granted." When you were dating your wife, I feel quite sure, that you did not take her for granted. You were probably afraid if you did that someone else might beat your time and you were probably right. Neither men nor women want to be treated as if they did not really matter. They do not want their family members or friends to act as if their wishes and needs did not matter. Women still want to be courted—even after they get married. They want to be the center of their husband's attention.

A very common complaint from married women goes somewhat as follows:

Before we were married, my husband could not do enough for me. He dressed tastefully; he kept his person clean; he bought me flowers and candy for my birthday and other special occasions. Now he has let himself go. He does not even take a bath regularly. He has allowed himself to get too heavy; he drinks beer with the boys all the time. He just not seem to care for me anymore.

In some cases these complaints are probably overdrawn, but in others they are not. This is precisely how careless and unconcerned some men are.

Seventh, "You shall not praise your neighbor's wife; praise your own." Men, do you ever notice what your wife is wearing? When she dresses up to look good for you, do you compliment her for looking so beautiful? Many wives go to considerable expense and a lot of trouble to look beautiful for their husbands, but their husbands pay no attention to them. I would urge all of us husbands to make a habit of noticing what our wives are wearing and make appropriate comments on their looks. I know they will appreciate it.

On the other hand, it would almost certainly be very wise to hold to a minimum your comments on how beautiful some other woman looks. I know it is foolish and dangerous to make favorable comments on how other women look if you never compliment your own wife. She might not resent it if you speak favorably about some other women if you regularly notice what she is wearing or what she says or what she does. Our wives want to believe—and they have a right to—that we are more concerned about them than we are about anyone else. We should

make a point of telling how important they are, but we should go beyond that. We should also demonstrate in appropriate ways how important they are to us.

Eight, "You shall not be stingy with your wife." These so-called "ten commandments for husbands" have grown out of someone's experience or observations. I have no idea who wrote them, but I would almost guarantee that he or she had either known husbands who were stingy with their wives or the author was a woman whose husband was stingy with her.

I am aware that many—if not most—marriages lack strong financial resources. Some marriages survive from one payday to the next. We may not have sufficient funds to enjoy what most would consider luxuries. Most of us, in other words, have to be very careful with our money. I understand all of that. But husbands do not treat their wives fairly when they put them on an allowance—just as they would treat their children. How can we build strong, loving relationships when we deal with our wives just as we do our children?

Let me tell you what I have observed. For many years, my wife and I owned a sporting goods store in Dalton, Georgia. Through the years I had the opportunity of observing families who traded with us in our store. I have known many cases where the husband would almost literally spend money on guns, ammunition, fishing equipment, etc., that his wife and children desperately needed for clothing and food. I have seen men come into our store who could hardly afford to buy food and spend hundreds of dollars on expensive guns or similar luxuries.

Please understand me. I am not arguing that a man should not have a good gun to go hunting or target practicing or buy boats and fishing equipment. That is not the point I am making. But how do we husbands justify spending hundreds of dollars on our wishes and not granting the same privileges to our wives?

Money matters have always been sources of conflict in marriages. They may continue to be for a foreseeable future. But they need not be. There are few simple principles which would help all couples to spend their money—or save it—agreeably. A couple needs to realize that money must be their servant—never their master; that would go a long way in helping them understand the importance of money in their marriage. But no better advice could ever be given than Jesus gave in the Sermon on the Mount. I understand that Jesus was not specifically talking about money, but what He said applies.

Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets (Mt. 7:12).

What if every husband treated his wife in matters relating to money the way he would want to be treated? If he would not like to be put on an allowance, he would not put her on an allowance. They would work at developing an understanding on how the money is to be spent and what freedom each is to experience in the financial arrangements.

I recognize that there are marriages where the wife does not manage money wisely. Incidentally, there are also marriages where the husband does not deal well with money. In such cases, the couple may have

to work out an agreement where one manages the money so they will have enough to eat, a place to stay and some laid back for a rainy day.

Sometimes in my marriage and family classes at Freed-Hardeman College my students want to know which partner in marriage should pay the bills, do the banking, keep up with the checkbook? I usually tell them that the one who does it best should handle such matters. Who does it is not so important as their agreement on who does it and how it is done.

Ninth, "You shall not fail to kiss your wife goodbye every morning." When I read these ten commandments for husbands to my marriage and family classes, I always ask them if this ninth commandment is all that vital. Is it significant that a man kiss his wife goodbye every morning before he goes to his office or to other places of employment? Our young people agree almost 100%. They insist that they want their marriages to be such that this intimacy will exist. While it may not seem important to some husbands and even to some wives, it is very vital that husbands and wives continue such romantic encounters. More than likely they enjoyed such attention before they were married, so why stop just because they are married?

Tenth, "You shall be especially kind when she is experiencing trying times." If a man dwells with his wife according to knowledge—as the apostle Peter commanded—then he will know that at times in her life she will experience trying times. He should be kind to her all the time, but especially when difficult situations arise. He not only has the obligation as a husband to show her such love and understanding, but it will pay rich dividends throughout their married

life. It will strengthen the bonds which hold husbands and wives together.

I believe the wisdom in these so-called "Ten Commandments for Husbands" should be obvious to anyone who has listened carefully. But these commandments did not originate in the form that I have read to you. If we husbands would follow them, I am sure we would have better marriages. But for the remainder of our time today, let us examine briefly a few scriptural principles which will help us to have better marriages. Please listen as I read from Paul's letter to the church at Colosse.

If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory (Col. 3:1-4).

This beautiful and soul-stirring passage from Colossians raises a number of questions about human relationships. For example, if you have been raised with Christ from the watery grave of baptism (Col. 2:12) and you are genuinely seeking those things which are above, what difference will that make in your relationship to your wife or to your husband or to your children or to anyone else? How could any man neglect his wife and his children if he is really seeking those things which are above? Loving one's wife and providing for her are not optional matters; they are commandments of Almighty God. So Christian husbands and all others who wear the name Christian must continually seek the things which are above

"where Christ sits at the right hand of God."

Paul commanded the Colossians to "set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth." The phrase, "set your affections," literally means to think about heaven. The tense of the verb says "keep on thinking about heaven." If you are thinking about going to heaven, how could you mistreat your wife or child or anyone else? You can readily understand that what one believes about God, Christ, the Bible and life after death influences every facet of his life.

Paul tells the Colossians that they are dead and their life is hidden with Christ in God. Obviously, Paul does not mean that the Colossians are dead physically. All Christians die to sin when they believe the gospel and obey it from the heart. Paul asked the Romans, "How shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein" (Rom. 6:2)? Being dead to sin means that Christians seek to put Christ first in their lives. They will not allow their fleshly appetites to dominate their lives.

For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace (Rom. 8:5-6).

All of Paul's instructions and promises to the Colossians make sense only if Christians are going to live again—if they are going to heaven to be with Christ and the saints of all the ages. Paul announces that promise to the Colossians and to us. "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall you also appear with him in glory" (Col. 3:4). If a man knows that he will be raised to stand before God in the final judgment—and he can know that if he reads the Bible—he will

surely treat his wife and all others in such a way that God will approve his behavior. The commands of the gospel and the exceeding great and precious promises of God form the solid foundation on which all human relationships must be constructed. Otherwise we are building on a flimsy foundation.

Theme: The Home

Ten Commandments For Wives

Last Sunday's lesson was devoted to a study of "Ten Commandments for Husbands." I do not want to be accused of unbalanced speaking on the family; so today I am discussing "Ten Commandments for Wives." I want to emphasize in the beginning—as I did last Sunday morning—that these ten commandments are not from the Bible. I do not know who originated them. But there is certainly great wisdom involved in them and they should be very useful to all who are willing to listen and to profit from them. If you have questions or criticisms concerning any of these ideas, please let me hear from you. These "Ten Commandments for Wives" are included in the 1984 Freed-Hardeman College lectureship book, edited by your speaker and published by the college.

The first commandment is: "Expect not your husband to give you as many luxuries as your father has given you after many years of hard labor." The current generation of young people—as a rule—has matured in a period of great prosperity. Most of our young people have had, in terms of material goods, all that they have needed and, in many cases, more than they needed. Very few of our young people have ever been deprived of good clothes, health-giving food, a comfortable house and other physical possessions and blessings. So few, comparatively speaking, have ever been really hungry or cold. The middle decades of the twentieth century American

have seen almost unprecedented prosperity. Yet many of our young people in new marriages experience some irritation and conflict. How do we explain this problem?

Young people often fail before they get married to sit down and calmly, intelligently discuss their future financial situation. Many young women never stop to think that their future husbands will just be starting out in their chosen professions or occupations. The men will be learning a new trade or a new profession and in the first few years of his work they probably will not make much money. They may have a very bright future in their work, but the first few years are almost always very difficult. If they have opened a new business, they may have to plough back into the business most of the profits they make. This could cause some belt-tightening and some sacrifices.

If the woman has grown into womanhood in a home where such budget restrictions were unknown, the situation may get rather frustrating for both husband and wife. Very few young husbands can support their wives in the manner they have been accustomed to enjoying. But if the wife has the welfare of her home uppermost in her mind and if she is willing to give support to her husband, in almost all cases, the family will prosper financially and in other ways. Money matters can be too strongly emphasized in marriages, but they also can be emphasized too little. We ignore family finances to our own detriment.

Second, "Forget not the virtue of good humor, for verily all that a man has will he give for a woman's smile." I gladly confess that one of the most appealing

features that my wife exhibited when we first met was her sparkling laughter and good humor. The best way I know to describe it is to say that she bubbled. Her good humor was spontaneous, enthusiastic and infectious. She was a joy to be around and still is. Her laughter can still bring happiness out of gloom and victory out of defeat. After living with Molly for forty years, I can better understand these words from the book of Proverbs: "A merry heart doeth good like a medicine: but a broken spirit drieth the bones" (Prov. 17:22).

Several years ago, Norman Cousins became critically ill from a supposedly incurable disease. He was hospitalized and made as comfortable as possible, but assured that he could not recover. He asked his doctor for massive doses of ascorbic acid (vitamin C) and then ordered all the humorous films that he could think of and had them brought to his hospital room. There were films by the Three Stooges, the Marx Brothers, and any others that he could get. He began to improve slowly and eventually was able to assume his normal responsibilities as a writer and editor. He now lectures to medical groups throughout the United States and abroad on the healing qualities of laughter. Cousins' book is **The Anatomy of An Illness**. It is a fascinating book, but one does need to be apprized of the fact that Norman Cousins is deeply involved in the New Age movement.

Does humor have healing qualities for both the body and the spirit of man? I have no doubt whatsoever that it does, but proving it may not be easy. But whether or not it does, humor in a marriage or in any other relationship has great value. Can

you imagine living with someone who never sees the rainbow, but always notices the dark clouds? I remember a friend in Georgia who never one time in his life thought anything good was going to happen. He just knew that the very next year would bring on another great depression. He was quite intelligent, but could not be convinced that we were not on the verge of some great disaster. I think most of us try to avoid much contact with such people. But what if you were married to someone of that disposition?

I am not encouraging giddiness or silliness, but husbands love to see smiles on the faces of their wives and of course wives want to see smiles too. Sometimes, when husbands come home, their wives hasten to tell them just how bad the children are, the fact that the washing machine broke down during the day, and on and on. Under such conditions, the husband just might delay coming home. But, men, let us not forget that being a wife and mother also entails work, frustration and despair. When we have had a reasonable time to calm down from our day's work, let us listen intently to our wives' problems, heartaches and disappointments. For communication to be useful in any relationship, it must be a two-way street.

Third, "You shall not nag." Do you think maybe that Adam registered a complaint of nagging against Eve? If he did not, he may have been one of the few men in history who did not. But, it is my opinion, that many women have received bad press in this area of life. Are there women who nag? Does every woman nag at some time in life? The answer to both questions is affirmative, but what about us husbands?

Are there husbands who nag? Does every husband nag at some time in his life? You know what the answer is without my having to tell you. So let us all be honest and admit that we sometimes nag and let us resolve with God's help that we shall cease doing so.

Socrates may have more enthusiastically drank the hemlock because he was married to Xanthippe. Historians tell us that she was a shrew. But whether or not they were correct, we know that nagging from a wife or a husband is destructive of marital happiness. I would not want anyone constantly criticizing me—whether that someone is a wife or a neighbor or a supervisor. Strong, stable relationships cannot be built on this approach to living.

But what if you have agreed that the husband will take out the garbage and he does not do so? Should a wife not stay on his case until he does so? In the first place, if you constantly pressure your husband to do his duty, he probably will resent it and not do it anyway. Instead, why not just let the garbage pile up until he decides to do it? Better yet, why not sit down together and discuss the situation in a peaceful, adult manner? Does that always work? No, but it is better than having a conflict that can disrupt a good relationship. Love, joy, peace, longsuffering...are much better ways of approaching differences. Nagging does not work or if it does, it can create long range problems.

Fourth, "Remember that the frank approval of your husband is worth more to you than the sidelong glances of many strangers." There are women—and

men, too, may I add—who seem to be more interested in and concerned with what their friends, neighbors and even strangers think of them than what their husbands think. I am not saying that a woman should not be interested in what people other than her husband think of her. If she is a Christian, she cannot avoid being concerned about others and their view of her life. But a woman's main concern should be her husband. After all, he is her companion, her supporter, and her confidant.

Fifth, "You shall coddle your husband, for verily every man loves to be fussed over." I have no doubt this is good advice, but not just for wives, but for husbands also. Most human beings want someone who will love them more than anyone else in the world. We want our wives or husbands to show us just how special we are to them. They probably went to great lengths to demonstrate before marriage how caring, attentive and loving they were. Why should that cease after marriage? Should we not seek to use every means at our disposal to make our husbands and wives as happy and contented as we possibly can? It not only should be a pleasure to do so, but it also pays handsome dividends.

Several years ago I had the privilege of hearing Judge Sam Davis Tatum, juvenile and domestic relations judge from Nashville, Tennessee, speak at Mayfield, Kentucky. Judge Tatum had married late in life and seemed to be very happy in his marriage. He told the audience at Mayfield that he had done more baby talking in his short married life than a baby would do in many years. He was simply saying that he felt an intimacy with his wife that had stimulated what young people used to call "sweet nothings." That

may sound juvenile to anyone who has never been in love, but it will not sound strange or be strange for all happily married couples, or for that matter, serious courting couples. To show you that your speaker has been guilty of such talk, let me relate an incident that occurred many years ago. Molly and I married in 1949 and moved to South Georgia in 1952. I was teaching at Georgia Christian School and preaching for the Dasher Church of Christ. One of the members of the Dasher congregation wanted to address my wife on one occasion and could think of nothing else to call her than "honey." He seemed a little embarrassed and then explained: "I have forgotten your name and besides, all I have ever heard brother Claiborne call you is 'honey.'"

I honestly believe that wives—and husbands—should never cease their courtship, including special names for each other and special occasions that have meaning for them. Marriage does not have to be boring. Obviously, a forty-year marriage cannot have the intensity of the honeymoon years, but there is no reason it may not continue to be exciting, fulfilling and challenging. When a marriage does lose its beauty and joy, someone has ceased caring adequately. Perhaps both have quit caring, but there is no excuse for that. If the spark has gone out of the marriage, it can be rekindled. Do we not have anymore inventiveness, excitement and initiative than to let a relationship die? May I repeat this fifth commandment for wives: "You shall coddle your husband, for verily every man loves to be fussed over." Ditto for wives and for all other human beings.

Sixth, "Permit no one to assure you that you are having a hard time of it; neither your mother, nor

your sister, nor your maiden aunt, nor your kinfolk, for the Lord will not hold her guiltless who lets another desparage her husband." This particular commandment causes me to turn the clock back for more than forty years. When I approached Molly's father about marrying his youngest daughter, he said, "I think you are a fine young man and I have nothing against you, but nobody is good enough for Molly." I know what Dr. Doron was trying to say to me, but nobody ever supported his daughters in their marriages anymore than Molly's father.

If you have anything to say about two young people's dating, say it before they get married. Once they get married, you have an obligation to support that marriage with all your being. It is destructive and evil for parents or for anyone else to attack their daughter's husband and try to break up a marriage. But all of us have known parents or grandparents or other family members who have told a young woman, "That husband of yours is not good enough for you. Why did you ever marry such a character?" My friend, you and I have no right to do that. Nor should a woman allow anyone to do it. When you have married a man—for better or for worse—stick to that man like glue and do not permit anyone to disparage your husband. You may not have made the wisest choice, but when you made your choice, both God and good men expect you to live with that choice and to make the very best of it.

Seventh, "Comit your ways unto the Lord your God and your children shall rise up and call you blessed." This probably should be the first commandment for wives and not listed as number seven. All that I have said about wives would mean

nothing without this one. If a woman truly wants to be a good wife—the best wife she can possibly be—she must commit her ways unto the Lord our God. Please listen to the book of Proverbs.

Strength and honour are her clothing; and she shall rejoice in time to come. She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness. She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness. Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her. Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all. Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the LORD, she shall be praised. Give her of the fruit of her hands; and let her own works praise her in the gates (Prov. 31:25-31).

There have been innumerable attempts on the part of humanists, atheists, agnostics and other unbelievers to build a value system without any reference to God's revelation of His will in scripture. All of these attempts have failed miserably and will always fail. Moral values cannot exist without God and without His word. If wives want to built stable homes and stable lives, they must do so according to the Bible. There simply is no other way. In the following passage Solomon was not talking exclusively to wives, but the message certainly applies:

Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. Be not wise in thine own

eyes: fear the LORD, and depart from evil.
It shall be health to thy navel, and marrow
to thy bones (Prov. 3:5-8).

Every woman becomes a better wife when she is truly committed to her Lord and Savior. Her desire to please God will make her a better wife. This truth was illustrated in a survey conducted by **Redbook** magazine. **Redbook** sent thousands of questionnaires to women asking them about their marriages, their intimate lives and similar questions. They learned—much to their chagrin—that devoutly religious women are better intimate partners with their husbands than are non-religious women. The **Redbook** editors were surprised and reevaluated their data to see if they had made a mistake. They had not made a mistake. But why should anyone—except perhaps, the editors of **Redbook** and **Ms**—be surprised? After all, a woman whose main goal in life is to please her God will also meet her husband's needs because God commands her to meet his needs. God's will is the only foundation on which to build for time and for eternity. Any other approach to life is building on sinking sand.

Eighth, "You shall not fail to dress up for your husband, with an eye to please him, as you did before marriage." This commandment probably seems trivial, but I can assure you that it is not. Men often complain that their wives no longer seem to care about how they look. Before marriage, the wives seemed to want to dress in such a way as to look their very best, but after marriage, they seemed not to care. While the husbands may occasionally exaggerate the situation, there can hardly be any doubt that the wives are

sometimes guilty.

Of course, the matter of dress can be overdone. It is my judgment that Marable Morgan's book, **The Total Woman** (Old Tappan: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1973), goes too far in some of her suggestions regarding a woman's dressing to please her husband. It is also my judgment that some popular columnists and marriage counselors go too far. For example, one columnist suggests that a woman should never let her husband see her with her hair in curlers or wearing her bathrobe. She should present herself at breakfast as if she just stepped out of a bandbox. This is totally unrealistic and not at all what I have in mind. But if a woman values her husband's opinion of her, she will surely want to please him in her dress and deportment.

Ninth, "You shall not hesitate to assure your husband that he is, at least to you, the greatest man alive." That may be pushing it a little too far, but it is of great importance that a woman stand behind her man and give him great encouragement. Very few men who have accomplished much in life would have done so without the aid and support of a good wife. This is what the inspired writer had in mind when he wrote:

She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life...Her husband is known in the gates, when he sitteth among the elders of the land (Prov. 31:12, 23).

There is no work or profession which requires the support of a good wife any more than being a preacher of the gospel. If a preacher is to do his best in serving God and his fellowmen, he must

have the love and encouragement of a good wife. In our forty years of marriage, Molly has stood by my side and worked diligently wherever I have worked. Every church where we have worked has been made stronger—to a great extent—because of her working with me. I have not done a survey among those churches, but I am confident they would agree with me.

Ladies, let me plead with you to speak words of inspiration to your husband—regardless of the kind of work he does. You might be surprised how much better he would do if you get behind him and support him in every worthwhile endeavor. We men often give the impression that we can handle our work and our lives by ourselves. We do not want to appear weak and undecided. In a great number of cases, this appearance is a facade. We have the same doubts and fears which characterize the human family and will confront the problems in our lives when we have help from Almighty God and from our companions. It is not a weakness to admit that we all need help. Give your husband all the help you can and you both will profit thereby. God Himself said concerning the first man, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him" (Gen. 2:18, RSV).

Tenth, "You shall make every effort to be a warm wife. Live as a wife to your husband and you shall never have to worry about another woman." How I wish that commandment were true, but I know it is not. There are men with wondering eyes and I guess there always will be such men. It does not matter how warm and loving their wives are, they will stray from their families and be involved in gross

immorality. They are like the false teachers of whom the apostle Peter speaks: Their eyes are "full of adultery" (2 Peter 2:14). The Greek word translated "adultery" in the King James Version is really "adulteress." There are men who cannot see a woman—almost any woman—and not entertain evil thoughts of her. If you are married to such a philanderer, there may not be much you can do about it.

But, the advice of this tenth commandment is good and generally would work. Every woman should want to be a good wife for her husband. She must strive to be warm and loving. It may not prevent his being unfaithful, but it surely should go a long way in doing so. Besides, it is what God expects of wives. Older women are commanded to teach the younger women "to love their husbands" (Titus 2:5). The Greek word for love is not **agape**, but **philos**. **Philos** generally means brotherly love, although one must not be too dogmatic about it. Paul seems to be asking wives to be warm and affectionate toward their husbands. That certainly is not always easy to do, but it is what God wants for all families.

But what if your husband is not a Christian? Do you still have the same obligations to him? Yes, dear lady, you have just as much responsibility in living with a non-Christian husband as in living with one who is a Christian. In fact, Paul stresses that a Christian must continue to live with her unbelieving husband if he will remain with her (1 Cor. 7:13). By remaining with her non-Christian husband, she might win him to Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 7:16; 1

Pet. 3:1-6). Your obligations may even be increased if you are married to a man who is not a member of the body of Christ.

Wives and husbands have wonderful privileges, blessings and challenges in their marriages. By being the right kind of spouses and the right kind of parents, we can make a difference in our world and the Lord expects us to do it. The best place to begin a moral and spiritual revolution in our world is to begin at home.

Theme: The Home

Abraham Will Command His Children

The responsibility of Christian parents to bring their children up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord can hardly be over-stressed. If we are observant, we know that many of society's ills can be traced to a lack of proper teaching by parents and to poor examples on the part of most adults in our nation. In view of the many moral and spiritual problems which confront us, we must make every effort to follow the Lord's plan for child rearing. We must imitate biblical examples of good parents and avoid the bad examples. I sincerely urge you to listen to our studies on the topic, "Abraham Will Command His Children."

The call of Abraham—scripturally speaking—was one of the most significant events in history. God instructed Abraham,

Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee (Gen. 12:1).

The Lord promised Abraham that He would make him a great nation, bless him abundantly, make his name great and make him a blessing to others (Gen. 12:2). In addition to blessing Abraham and his posterity, God told Abraham that He would bless those who blessed him and curse those who cursed him (Gen. 12:3).

From Genesis 12 to the end of divine revelation, the man Abraham occupies a prominent place in God's dealings with the people of the Old Testament and well as with the people of the New.

James calls Abraham "the Friend of God" (James 2:23), a fact he no doubt learned from 2 Chronicles 20:7. Paul informs us that Jesus came of the seed of Abraham (Gal. 3:16). The book of Hebrews has much to say about this faithful servant of the most high God.

By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God...By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure (Heb. 11:8-10, 17-19).

The great faith of Abraham has been a constant theme for gospel preachers in every generation. His faith led him to do exactly what God told him to do and do it in exactly the way God said do it. That was unquestionably Paul's reason for writing as follows to the Romans: "Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness" (Rom. 4:3). Abraham is the "father of all them that

believe" (Rom. 4:11).

One verse in Genesis will serve as the basis for our studies of the theme, "Abraham Will Command His Children."

For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment; that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him (Gen. 18:19).

The Revised Standard Version gives this translation of that same verse.

No, for I have chosen him, that he may charge his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice; so that the Lord may bring to Abraham what he has promised.

Several concepts in this verse need to be emphasized. First, the one speaking so approvingly of Abraham was not a friendly neighbor or his adoring family members; it was the God of heaven. God knew the character of Abraham and knew that he would comply with God's wishes for his family. Second, God knew that Abraham would command or charge or teach his children the right way. God knows us just as well as he knew Abraham. Does He know that we, too, will teach our children the way of the Lord? Third, teaching is absolutely essential that our children will to justice and judgment. Teaching our children will not guarantee that our children will always do right, but failure to teach them will almost certainly guarantee that they will do wrong. Fourth, God wanted Abraham to teach his children in order that God would be able

to bring upon Abraham and his posterity what God had in mind for them.

My friends, Abraham and all other parents enjoy one of the greatest honors and privileges known to human beings. The beauty and wonder of being parents. This great honor and responsibility began in the Garden of Eden. The Lord instructed our first parents: "Be fruitful, and multiply and fill the earth, and subdue it" (Gen. 1:28). We lowly human beings cooperate with the God of this universe by bringing a living soul into this world. Through that cooperative effort we pass our names, teachings and heritage to another generation. How wonderfully blessed that God would entrust us with such enormous tasks. What finite creatures are worthy of such blessings?

Many married couples in the United States choose not to become parents. So far as I understand the teachings of scripture, all couples are free to make that decision. However, they should examine their motives for such a decision. Some couples are selfish and do not want a child's interfering with their freedom—or what they perceive as freedom. Dr. Bernard Nathanson's book, **Aborting America** (New York: Pinnacle Books, 1979), tells of a woman who requested an abortion because she wanted to travel to Europe with her husband. How utterly selfish such a decision is! What if her mother had made such a choice?

Some couples prefer to remain childless because of the enormous expense of rearing a child in modern America. Having a child and taking care of that child until he or she attains maturity can be very expensive. Some experts estimate that a child born in 1990 could cost his parents as much as \$100,000. Costs for educating a child at some of our American universities

can run as high as \$80,000. Just getting the baby into the world can run many thousands of dollars. Obviously, if complications arise the costs can be astronomical—as much as two or three hundred thousand dollars. I can understand why some couples are reluctant to have children.

There is a popular notion that having a child will strengthen a failing marriage. Some married couples reason: "Our marriage is not going too well; let's have a baby to stabilize our marriage." The decision to have a baby under these circumstances has several glaring weaknesses. In the first place, babies have a right to be born to a marriage that is solid and secure. Babies must not be used to build marriages from weak foundations; they deserve to come into homes that are already strong. Besides, troubled marriages often become more troubled with the advent of a child. Sometimes mothers resent being tied down by a baby. This can certainly reflect adversely on the marriage.

The Women's Liberation Movement has convinced some women that motherhood is burdensome, cruel, barbaric and degrading. Shulamith Firestone, a radical feminist, complains that it is not fair for women to have all the babies. Men either ought to have half the babies or take care of the babies for the first nine months of their existence. What Firestone would really like to see is the birth of all babies by artificial means—in vitro fertilization, artificial wombs, and such like.

There are couples who feel that they simply are not equipped—spiritually, morally, financially, or otherwise—to become parents. Couples who have such feelings are doing themselves and the human race a

great favor by not having children. Those who have failed to prepare themselves to be parents will not make the kind of parents God expected Abraham to be. They will be unwilling to make the kinds of sacrifices required for being godly, successful and responsible parents. There is much good they can do with their lives without burdening children and society with poorly trained offspring.

Finally, there are some people who do not like babies. They have absolutely no desire to have children. They do not like to be around children. I do not know how these people feel. From my earliest childhood—at least, as far as I can remember—I wanted to get married and have a family. I cannot imagine not being married and not having children. I respect those who choose not to have children, but I never wanted to belong to that group.

But having children entails enormous and awesome responsibilities. God has given parents the responsibility of providing for the children's physical well-being. Parents must provide food, clothing and shelter. This need not mean that children have to be given an abundance of life's luxuries. In fact, too many material goods can be as destructive as too few. Our materialistic society has done great damage to many of our young people. Many of them believe fancy clothes, expensive automobiles and gadgets constitute the good life. They want too much and are damaged for life when they are given too much.

The greatest need young people have is a home where love abounds. Selma Fraiberg, an American psychiatrist, wrote an excellent book which she called **Every Child's Birthright: In Defense of Mothering**

(New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers, 1977). Dr. Fraiberg points out that the

human capacity to love and to make enduring partnerships in love is formed in infancy, the embryonic period of development (p. xi).

She insists that,

the child loves because he is loved, and the beloved partners may be his natural parents or his foster parents or his adoptive parents (p. 64).

In other words, the child must have love—regardless of the source of that love—or he will not learn to love. He will not be able to form lasting relationships based on love.

Joseph Goldstein, Anna Freud and Albert Solnit—all experts in dealing with troubled children—wrote a book with the title, **Beyond the Best Interest of the Child** (New York: The Free Press, 1973). These distinguished authors argue that every child has a need for an “unbroken continuity of affectionate and stimulating relationships with an adult” (p. 6). If loving caretakers are not available for a child, he will pay in destructive ways for the rest of his life. Most psychologists agree that crime and delinquency are more likely to occur where children are reared in loveless homes—homes which fail to provide the emotional nurturing which is so essential to proper development.

But there are millions of homes where children are provided with all the physical blessings they could imagine. The children are also given generous amounts of love and caring. But those children are not taught the moral and spiritual values which will give meaning

and stability in their lives. To put it very simply: Children in countless numbers of homes of America know nothing about God or Christ or the Bible. They have no basis on which to build their ethical or moral behavior. Such children are among the poorest who live on earth, even if they are given nutritious food, warm and attractive clothing, a mansion in which to live and a strong academic education. Leaving God out of children's education results in a great void in their lives.

Solomon instructed parents:

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

The apostle Paul taught the same truth.

And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (Eph. 6:4).

Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged (Col. 3:21).

These passages require parents to do their very best for their children. God knows that parents are not perfect (Heb. 12:10), but He wants us to develop the skills and knowledge which we lack.

The God who gave us our children will hold us accountable for the welfare of our children. Our children's earthly happiness and their success in this life depend to a great extent on the training they receive at our hands. In addition, their eternal destiny rests with the teaching and example we provide for them. These are fearful duties, but they are ours when we choose to bring children into this world. May God help us that we will not fail them, as a number of

parents in biblical times failed their children.

The Old Testament tells us of a priest who served during the days when Samuel came on the scene in Israel. His name was Eli and he failed in training his children to serve the Lord. Eli's sons were called "the sons of Belial." They knew not the Lord (1 Sam. 2:12). The high priest's sons were guilty of grievous sins against God and against God's people. The sons of Eli "abhorred the offering of the Lord." The priest's servant was permitted to go to the pot where the offering was being boiled. He would take a three-pronged hook and reach in to get the priest's portion. Whatever the hook brought up was given to the priest.

The sons of Eli were not satisfied with the amount which was normally provided for them. They were greedy for more. The priest's servant demanded: "Give flesh to roast for the priest; for he will not have sodden flesh of thee, but raw." If anyone objected to the servant's demands, he would reply, "If you do not give it to me, I will take it by force" (1 Sam. 2:13-16). You can see how unworthy were the sons of Eli to be leaders among the Jews.

In addition to their greed, the sons of Eli committed fornication with the women who came to the tabernacle to worship God (1 Sam. 2:22). Eli was somewhat disturbed about the reports he heard concerning his sons. He inquired into their behavior. "Why do you such things? for I hear of your evil dealings with all the people." Eli accused his sons of causing Israel to transgress the law of God. They had not only sinned against their fellow Jews; they had brought reproach on the God of Israel (1 Sam. 2:22-25).

Please remember who Eli was. He was a high priest—a God-ordained leader among the Jews. He

should have set an example of holiness for the Jews. Instead, he was weak and failed to rear his sons properly. The inspired writer affirms that Eli's sons became vile because "he restrained them not" (1 Sam. 3:13). Eli almost certainly took care of his sons' physical needs. He probably sent them to school and saw that they learned the three R's. But he failed his sons because he restrained them not. He may have thought—like some many modern parents think—that restraining his sons would have interfered with their freedom and growth. But in failing to discipline his sons, he encouraged greed and sexual immorality in their lives.

The great prophet Samuel grew up while Eli was the priest in Israel. He could hardly have been ignorant of the evils which Eli's sons had committed. Yet this prophet of God failed to teach his sons properly. Samuel made his sons judges over God's people (1 Sam. 8:1-2).

And his sons walked not in his ways, but
turned aside after lucre, and took bribes,
and perverted judgment (1 Sam. 8:3).

Why would the prophet Samuel fail to teach his sons the great truths which had guided his life? They became obsessed with money and took bribes—as some modern preachers and other church leaders have done.

Even bad examples—like those of Eli's and Samuel's sons—can give us information which should help us to be better parents. But we need to examine some good examples from both the Old and New Testaments. The parents of Moses—Amram and Jochebed—let us see an entirely different kind of parental model. Moses was born to Jewish parents, but grew up in Pharaoh's house. When one examines

the life of Moses, he might think that the influence of Egypt would be the dominant factor in his life, but he would be forgetting that Moses was reared by his Jewish mother. We know practically nothing about the training Moses received, but it must have served him well while he lived in Pharaoh's house and during his many years in Midian. Think of the good which Moses did as the leader of the Jews, of the many sacrifices he made for God's people. Where did he learn the principles which governed his behavior? He had to learn these from his mother. How tremendously powerful is the teaching and example of a godly mother.

One of the outstanding mothers of all time was Hannah. This godly woman was barren and asked the Lord for a son (1 Sam. 1:5-6, 11). She promised the Lord that if He would give her a man child he would become a Nazirite and would be dedicated to the Lord (1 Sam. 1:11). God gave Hannah a son, Samuel, who was the last of the judges and the first of the prophets. She dedicated her son to God's service with these words: "Therefore also I have lent him to the LORD; as long as he liveth he shall be lent to the LORD" (1 Sam. 1:28). Even as a child Samuel ministered to the Lord. Each year his mother would make him a new coat and take it to him (1 Sam. 2:18-19). Would to God that every mother would dedicate every child to the service of God!

One of the most fearless preachers of all time was a man sent from God whose name was John (John 1:6). Of course, I am speaking of John the Baptizer. John was courageous, dynamic and uncompromising. He did a wonderful work in preparing the way for our Lord Jesus Christ. How does one

explain the goodness and accomplishments of John the Baptizer? There were unquestionably many influences which had a bearing on his life, but none greater than that of his earthly parents. Both Zachariah and Elizabeth belong to the priestly tribe (Luke 1:5). While many of the Jewish priests were greedy, sexually immoral—like the sons of Eli—John's parents were godly people.

And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless (Luke 1:6).

We probably agree that devout parents cannot guarantee godly children, but the chances that children will emulate their parents' example are very good. John could have chosen to disregard his parents' godliness, but he decided to follow them in their devotion to the Lord.

An angel of the Lord had given promises concerning John the Baptist.

And thou shalt have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth. For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb. And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord (Luke 1:14-17).

From this brief study of John's parents, we have every

reason to believe that they were excellent examples of devotion to God and to duty.

Let me mention briefly one other New Testament example of a good parent. One of Paul's most faithful companions was a young man named Timothy. We actually know very little about Timothy's background and training, but what we do know helps us to understand his goodness. It also helps us to want to be better parents. On Timothy's father's side he was a Greek, but on his mother's side he was a Jew. Paul has some most complimentary remarks regarding his young co-worker. Please take special note what Paul says to the Philippians about Timothy.

But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timotheus shortly unto you, that I also may be of good comfort, when I know your state. For I have no man likeminded, who will naturally care for your state. For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's. But ye know the proof of him, that, as a son with the father, he hath served with me in the gospel. Him therefore I hope to send presently, so soon as I shall see how it will go with me (Phil. 2:19-23).

In Paul's second letter to Timothy, he makes it plain that his young companion had the advantage of a good home life.

When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also (2 Tim. 1:5).

But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of,

knowing of whom thou hast learned them;
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 (2 Tim. 3:14-15).

All parents are wonderfully blessed, but God expects us to take care of the children He has so graciously given us. The children are not ours in an absolute sense. They are given to us for a short time that we may give them back to the Lord.

Theme: The Home

Abraham Will Command His Children (No. 2)

The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ was very complimentary about Abraham, "the friend of God."

For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment; that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him (Gen. 18:19).

Through this statement about Abraham, we can learn much about what God expects of parents in every generation. God demands that we teach our children that they may walk in the way of the Lord. He wants to bless us and our children, but can do so only if we obey His commandments.

If you have your Bibles handy, you may want to turn to the book of Deuteronomy and read along with me. Deuteronomy 6 gives some of the best advice on childrearing to be found anywhere. God instructed the Jews through His prophet Moses to teach their children by divine precept. He emphasizes that teaching must precede doing.

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 (Dt. 6:1).

The law of God in the Old Testament was filled with instructions, commandments and ordinances which the parents were to teach to their children. If the teaching were not done faithfully, the Israelites would not obey their Lord and would have to suffer the consequences.

Deuteronomy explains the purpose for which the teaching was to be done.

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 (Dt. 6:2).

God's commandments were not burdensome, although many of the Jews thought they were. The only way the Jews could enjoy freedom and life was to walk in the ways of the Lord. How desperately modern men need to learn the same lesson! There is no freedom without the law of God.

This beautiful chapter emphasizes that God must be first in our lives.

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. Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD: And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might (Dt. 6:3-5).

Can man expect to enjoy God's richest blessings if he fails to teach his children the ways of Almighty God? If he fails to teach his children, does he really love God with all his heart and soul and might?

Teaching their children was not really an option for God's people. He required them to teach and would not hold them guiltless if they failed. Please listen carefully as I read to you Deuteronomy 6:6-15.

And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: 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. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates. And it shall be, when the LORD thy God shall have brought thee into the land which he sware unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give thee great and goodly cities, which thou buildedst not, 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 full; Then beware lest thou forget the LORD, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage. Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God, and serve him, and shalt swear by his name. Ye shall not go after other gods, of the

gods of the people which are round about you; (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 (Dt. 6:6-15).

There are several outstanding emphasizes in these verses which need to be stressed in our lesson today.

First, take special note of the manner of teaching which the Lord required of His people. The teaching was to be done diligently. "And you shall teach them diligently unto your children" (v. 7). The teaching could not be left until the parents could find time to do it. It had to be done diligently, enthusiastically, and faithfully. The teaching was also to be done repeatedly. "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" (v. 7). The parents are encouraged to seek every opportunity available to teach their children about their God and His way for their lives. Notice also that the teaching was to be performed personally. The Lord commanded the Israelites, "**You** shall teach your children." They were probably prone to wait for the prophets and priests to do their teaching for them, but the Lord instructed parents to do the teaching also. In our day, we are tempted to have the Sunday School teachers or the public school teachers to do our teaching. All of these may be helpful, but they do not relieve us of our obligations to teach personally.

Second, the Bible outlines the purposes for which the teaching is to be done. The teaching was to assure

the keeping of God's commandments (Dt. 6:1). It would also encourage the Jews to fear God (Dt. 6:2). The people of God were to be taught that they might prosper in the land where God was taking them (v. 3). Moses wanted the parents to teach God's word that they might love God with all their hearts and souls and might (v. 5). The Lord knew that all people have a tendency to forget the Lord. The teaching was intended to prevent their forgetting (v. 12). If the Jews followed the faithful teaching of God's truth, they would not go after other gods (v. 14). They would also avoid being destroyed for their disobedience (v. 15).

The New Testament does not use the kind of language I have read to you from Deuteronomy, but there can be no doubt that the Lord wants His word taught to every generation and for the same purposes for which God gave His word to the Jews. Christianity—like Judaism—is a religion based on truth and knowledge. It is just as essential that Christian parents teach their children as it was that the Jews teach theirs. That was Christ's reason for telling the Jews of his day: "You shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32).

But are those parents who claim to be Christians teaching their children? Are they imparting unto them the great truths of the gospel of Jesus Christ? To answer that question, let me refer you to a book, **The Search for America's Faith**, by George Gallup, Jr. and David Poling (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1980). The Gallup organization interviewed thousands of parents and asked them about their religious practices. Let me read a statement from this book.

Parents of children under 18 years old who lived in the same household were asked

whether or not they had done the following in the previous seven days, with their children: said grace at meals, attended church, attended other church-related activities, read the Bible together, talked about God and religion with their children, watched or listened to religious programs on TV or radio with their children.

Please listen carefully to their findings.

- 42% of the parents said grace before meals with their children.

- 38% attended church services with their children.

- 28% attended church related activities with their children.

- 17% of the parents read the Bible together with their children.

- 44% of the parents talked about God and religion with their children.

- 31% of the parents prayed or meditated with their offspring.

- 23% watched or listened to religious programs on TV or radio (pp. 50-51).

My friends, it does not take a genius or even a near-genius to examine these statistics to discern what is happening to religion in America. When parents who have the God-given responsibility of teaching their children about God, about the Bible, about Jesus Christ and about Christian living take so little interest in their children's spiritual and moral welfare, how can we expect them to be committed to Jesus Christ and His kingdom? When one considers these facts, it should not come as a surprise that so-called

"Christian young people" participate in about the same activities as do the people of the world. They drink, gamble, do drugs and engage in about the same amount of other forms of immorality as do the young people who claim no religious affiliation.

But teaching by precept alone will not bring our children to Christ and His kingdom. Nobody denies the need for teaching our children by precept, but most people will agree that such teaching is not enough. We must exemplify the principles which we desire our children to incorporate into their lives. It is never adequate to say to our children. "You do as I say—not as I do." Our young people have no difficulty seeing through such hypocrisy.

In the book I have just mentioned, Dr. George Gallup, Jr. and Dr. David Poling sought to learn the differences between the home training of the "churched" and the "unchurched." They found the following factors to be significant:

1. "Father attends church regularly."
2. "Mother attends church regularly."
3. "Young person attends church school every week."
4. "Young person attends communicants' or confirmation class."
5. "The person's family does not move around a lot" (p. 108).

I hope you noticed that number one on the list was: "Father attends church regularly." How tremendously vital it is for the head of the house to be the spiritual leader in the family! My fellow-fathers, God expects so much of us in our homes and we so often disappoint Him.

Elvis Huffard, a former professor at Freed-

Hardeman University and a member of the Board of Trustees, spoke on the Freed-Hardeman lectureship in 1983. His assigned topic was, "The Influence of the Home on the Church of Tomorrow." Brother Huffard gave the following material on why young people are not remaining faithful to our Lord.

Lately, several congregations have made in-depth studies of all the factors available concerning all their young people, with an eye to learning what might be done to help this problem (that is, the problem of dropouts from the Lord's service). What do we need? More youth programs? More rallies? Special teachers? From the material that has been published on these studies, it seems to me that one great central truth has begun to emerge. Faithfulness of the young person to Jesus doesn't have anything to do with special programs and teachers. It is not dependent on whether they are members of a large congregation or a small one. The single most important value is their own immediate family.

One congregation found that where both parents were faithful to the Lord, and that includes active interest in the local congregation's program, 93% of the kids remained faithful. On the other hand, if only one of the parents was faithful, that figure dropped to 73%. Where the parents were only what we would call reasonably active in the Lord's work, only 53% of the young people maintained their faith. Now here comes the shocker: In cases where both parents attended only infrequently, the percentage of their children who remained faithful to the Lord dropped to 6% (p. 196 of the 1983 FHU lectureship book).

Since most of us recognize the importance of parents' setting the right example for their children, maybe we need to dwell for a few minutes on the areas of religious teaching and practice which are so essential to our young people's growth in spiritual and moral matters. What kind of example do you and I set for our young people in Bible reading, in prayer, in church attendance and in our attitudes toward the church?

Since all who call themselves Christians—at least, New Testament Christians—profess to believe the Bible to be the word of Almighty God, how often do your children see you reading the Bible? Since most churches preach that men need the Holy Spirit's guidance through His word, the people who are members of those churches must let their children know how vital it is for all men to read and to study the sacred scriptures. Paul said to Timothy,

But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; 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 (2 Tim. 3:14-15).

How does the time you spend reading the Bible compare with the time you spend watching television, reading the newspaper, and attending shows or sporting events? Are our children so naive or unobservant that they cannot tell what our priorities are by the way we live? If our children read the Bible as much or as little as we do, will they ever become good Bible students?

Is becoming a good Bible student one of the goals you would like to see your children achieve?

Do you convey to your children the impression that Bible study is a kind of necessary duty or that it is exciting, challenging, uplifting and fulfilling? Do you even share with your children some great Bible truth that stimulates and comforts your heart? If you talk about work, the events of the day, some dynamic football or basketball game you have seen, but you never talk about the word of God, what impression will your children have of your devotion to Bible study? We generally dwell on what is important to us and our children are wise enough to discern that.

Are you as concerned about your children's preparation for their Bible classes as you are about doing their homework for the public schools? I am not downgrading children's doing their homework in their public school classes. As a schoolteacher, I want my students to do their homework and do it well. But if we talk only about their history or science or math and not about their Bible classes, our children will likely spend very little time on their Bible studies. Do you provide good children's books on the Bible?

And what about prayer? Have your children ever heard you pray? Do you offer thanks at meals? Do you have family devotionals where you pray to God for His guidance and for His blessings? In the presence of your children, do you pray for your lost neighbors, the sick, the homeless, the distressed? Do you pray for your children in their presence? Augustine, Bishop of Hippo, maintained throughout his life that his mother's prayers saved him from a life of dissolution.

I read to you just a moment ago that the faithful attendance of both parents at church services meant that 93% of their children will remain faithful to our Lord. Let me raise some questions regarding church attendance. Before I do, let me explain very plainly that I do not believe that being a Christian means only attending church services—regardless of the regularity of that attendance. There is so much more to being a Christian, but church attendance is very vital.

Do you attend all the services? Do you do so enthusiastically or is it a burden? What attitude toward worship do you demonstrate to your children who are watching your every move? Do they learn from your attitude toward church attendance and toward other activities of the church that your life is being directed by the Lord of heaven and earth? Do you think that attending only on Sunday morning convinces your child that the church occupies a central place in your life? One elder of the Lord's church was accused of teaching his teenage class that it is not necessary to attend all church services. He denied that he had taught that. A fellow-elder reminded him that he was teaching such by his example. Parents teach that attending all services is not necessary when they fail to attend all services.

One of my most memorable experiences as a boy relates to the mad scramble in my boyhood home as ten children and a mother and father made preparation to attend church services. We walked about one and a half to two miles to church. It did not matter whether it was cold or hot, raining or snowing, we always went to worship services. We were there for Sunday morning Bible study, Sunday

morning worship, Sunday evening worship and Wednesday night Bible study. We attended every night of every gospel meeting.

My friends, I am not boasting of our goodness. In the first place, I was not the one who made arrangements for our attendance at church services. But our parents were concerned about our spiritual and moral growth. They placed these matters above all else in our lives. Does that fact explain why there are preachers, elders, deacons, Bible class teachers and song leaders from our family?

What attitude toward the church have you exhibited to your children? I am aware that some of that is tied to your attendance or non-attendance at worship services. But there is much more. Our attitudes toward the church are revealed also by our prayer-life, our Bible reading, our visitation activities, and our teaching about the church of the living God. But let me ask you a few questions about our attitudes toward the church.

Are you constantly critical of the church's appeals for money? I am aware that some churches and particularly parachurch groups make too many appeals for money. It is easy to get the impression from such groups that their main reason for existing is to raise money. But churches must have generous contributions if they are to do the work of the Lord in their respective communities. In addition, most churches have endless appeals for doing mission work—both at home and abroad. All of this requires giving on the part of Christians. Parents must be very careful not to give their children the wrong impression regarding money.

What attitudes do you display toward the elders

of the church? Are you always criticizing them for what they do or fail to do? Do you criticize them behind their backs or go to them and confront them face to face? If your children constantly hear adverse criticism of the leadership of the congregation, they will likely not respect the leaders. Have parents ever considered the possibility of such criticisms driving their children away from the church?

What do you say about the preacher in the presence of your children? This preacher is certainly not above criticism—nor is any other preacher—but many children think negatively about preachers because of the criticisms they hear. We need to realize that the preacher for most children represents the church. He is usually more visible than any other person in the church. He stands before the church at least two or three times each week to preach the gospel of Christ. An open criticism of the preacher in the minds of many children is a criticism of the church. As children grow older, they will learn the proper role of the preacher, but while they are young, they may have difficulty separating the preacher from the church. Severe criticisms of the preacher could have a detrimental effect on children.

It is not unusual—so I am told—for some families to have roast preacher for lunch. Following are some of the criticisms that are made about the preacher. "That sermon was much too long." I wonder why one seldom—if ever—hears, "That sermon was much too short." Occasionally, one will hear: "The preacher lives in an ivory tower. He simply does not know all the hardships we have to face." I have also heard: "The preacher never works much. All he does is sit in his office and read a book." All of these criticisms may

be legitimate at times, but they should be carefully offered when children are present. They can turn young people off to religion.

Christian parents should do all within their power to bring their children up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. They must carefully avoid any attitude or activity which will turn their children away from believing in and obeying the gospel.

Theme: The Home

Is Celibacy More Honorable Than Marriage?

One of the most destructive teachings of the Roman Catholic Church pertains to marriage and human sexuality. The Catholic Church has taught for centuries—and in many cases still does—that celibacy is more honorable than marriage. Why do you think Roman Catholic popes, cardinals, archbishops, bishops, priests and nuns do not marry? The Catholic Church definitely forbids the marriage of any of these leaders or officials because they have determined—and without scriptural warrant—that these people must not marry. Incidentally, if they marry they are guilty of spiritual adultery. They are severely disciplined in every case. Oddly enough, Episcopalian priests who decide to leave their religious fellowship to become Roman Catholic priests are not required to sacrifice their wives and children. Many Roman Catholic priests have complained bitterly about this double standard.

The Catholic Church's practice seems to hinge on two theoretical concepts. First, men and women who remain unmarried will have more time to devote to the Lord. That certainly can be the case, as Paul teaches in 1 Corinthians 7. If a man or a woman has a special gift to remain single and chooses to use his or her time in serving God, that is the person's choice. God will surely bless the person who does so. But nobody has the right—nobody—to bind celibacy on anyone. In fact, Paul told Timothy that forbidding to marry was one of the signs of the coming apostasy (1 Tim. 4:3). Each individual must make that

determination on his own. It is immoral and unscriptural for any church or parachurch to prevent marriage to anyone who is eligible and who desires to marry.

Second, refraining from any sexual contact—even in the marriage relationship—makes one more righteous, more godly, more committed. From a very practical viewpoint, this idea makes no sense at all. Yet most of the so-called “church fathers” and many modern Catholic scholars think of sexual communion even in marriage as being somehow degrading and second-class behavior. There is no foundation for such an idea. How can anyone entertain such an idea in view of these words from the Hebrew letter:

Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge (Heb. 13:4)?

The word “bed” in this verse is **koite** and refers to the sexual intimacy of marriage.

My friends, marriage and sexual communion within the marriage relationship are God’s arrangements. How does one explain the unbiblical doctrines which developed among the church fathers and in the modern Catholic Church? They do not come from God and they do not make any moral or scriptural sense. These teachings have done enormous damage to hundreds of thousands of individuals who embraced them. Unfortunately, millions of people outside the Roman Catholic Church have been influenced by these strange concepts.

Our lesson today will involve two major emphases. First, the question of marriage itself (1 Cor. 7:1). Second, marriage can prevent sexual immorality (1 Cor. 7:1). I am not attempting to prove—because it cannot be done scripturally—that everybody ought to get married. I may inadvertently leave the impression because of my devotion to the family that everybody

should be married, that they would be happier if they did marry. I do not believe that everybody should get married. I hope I would actually discourage some persons' marrying. They are not mature enough or they are too selfish to make a lasting and happy marriage. Besides, millions of people are not happier just because they are married. Ideally, marriage should contribute to one's happiness and usefulness, but we are not living in an ideal environment. We are living in a real world where unhappiness in marriage abounds.

The members of the body of Christ at Corinth had apparently written Paul a letter asking him questions about marriage. We cannot know the precise form any of these questions took, but we can guess what the questions were based on the answers that Paul gave. The first question Paul seems to be answering in 1 Corinthians 7:1 is this: Is marriage an honorable and godly approach to life for Christians? The question about human sexual expression in marriage was almost certainly involved. These questions are very vital today and somewhat controversial in some religious circles.

Why would the Corinthians have to write Paul about answers to their questions on marriage? Why did they not consult the pages of the New Testament? The early Christians—including the one at Corinth—did not have God's completed revelation as we have it. It was in the process of being completed, but it was far from it at the time of Paul's writing to the Corinthians (about 55 A. D.). There were many at Corinth who were blessed with the supernatural gifts of knowledge, wisdom, discernment and others (1 Cor. 12:8-11), but they wanted answers from the apostle to the Gentiles. This explains the questions which are found in 1 Corinthians 7.

The first question, as I have already mentioned,

related to the propriety of marriage as option for Christians. As odd as the question may sound to modern ears, we must remember the background of the Greeks at Corinth. Many of the Greek philosophers, such as Plato and Philo, taught that any concession to the flesh was a necessary evil at best. The flesh was considered evil. The Greeks used the expression, **soma sema**. The Greek **soma** means body and the word **sema** means tomb. They believed the human body to be the tomb of the human soul. Only when the body and spirit were separated at death could mankind be truly free. Of course, the word of God does not teach such dualism.

This Greek philosophical position resulted in two extreme forms of behavior. (1) Some responded by denying themselves virtually all earthly benefits. They ate too little; they would not sleep enough—in fact, one church father would not lie down to sleep; he would not give in to the body's need for rest. Engaging in sexual activity—even in marriage—was considered to be a compromise with one's earthly body. The church fathers went to incredible lengths to deny the gratification of legitimate desires. Sex could be used only for the perpetuation of the human family.

(2) It has been unfortunate and destructive that many of the so-called "church fathers" and later Roman Catholic theologians have followed the Greek philosophers rather than following the word of God. Many of the enemies of New Testament Christianity, including modern feminists, assume incorrectly that the Catholic Church's position on Paul's writings concerning human sexuality constitute the Bible's teaching on sex. It would be difficult to imagine an interpretation which is further from the truth.

So what does Paul mean, then, when he says, "It is good for a man not to touch a woman?" It is a

grievous mistake, my friends, to imagine that this expression relegates those who marry to second-class status in the church or in the mind of God. After all, who made marriage in the first place? Who affirmed through the Hebrew writer that marriage is honorable in all? Who inspired the apostle Paul to compare Christ's relationship to the church to the husband-wife relationship? If God had thought that marriage was somewhat less than the best for man, he would not have instituted marriage at all. He would have made some other arrangement for human companionship and for the reproduction of the human race. Why cannot theologians understand that when they are critical of God's arrangement for marriage they are critical of God?

The word "good" (**kalon** in Greek) in verse one may certainly mean that in some instances it would be better not to marry, at least, for some people. But the word "good" does not mean morally good, that is, ordered by the law of God. If the word "good" in this context means "morally good," then getting married would mean "morally bad." But we know from this chapter it cannot mean that. In this same chapter Paul wrote:

But and if thou marry, thou hast not sinned;
and if a virgin marry, she hath not sinned...
(1 Cor. 7:28).

...let him do what he will, he sinneth not: let
them marry (1 Cor. 7:36).

It should be obvious that Paul does not seek to establish a universal practice with regard to marriage. He is simply arguing that under some circumstances—"the present distress," he calls it in verse 26—it would be better not to marry.

If Paul meant this statement to apply to all, regardless of the situation, he has just brought a halt

to the human family. If marriage is less than honorable—if it is not in the will of God—Christians would want to refrain from getting married. But nobody can establish such a ridiculous position from the word of God. Please listen to what Solomon says about the legitimacy of marriage and the beauty of the sexual relationship between husbands and wives.

Drink waters out of thine own cistern, and running waters out of thine own well. Let thy fountains be dispersed abroad, and rivers of waters in the streets. Let them be only thine own, and not strangers' with thee. Let thy fountain be blessed: and rejoice with the wife of thy youth. Let her be as the loving hind and pleasant roe; let her breasts satisfy thee at all times; and be thou ravished always with her love. And why wilt thou, my son, be ravished with a strange woman, and embrace the bosom of a stranger (Prov. 5:15-20)?

The Hebrew word translated "infatuated" in Proverbs 5:19 is translated "ravished," "intoxicated," "exhilarated" and by other such forceful verbs. Do these expressions convey to you some distaste in the mind of our Creator regarding sexual expressions of love in marriage? And as I have already pointed out, the Bible uses marriage as a metaphor of our relationship to Christ.

Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God (Rom. 7:4). For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy; for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ (2 Cor. 11:2).

Would divinely inspired writers use marriage as a figure of our relationship to Christ if marriage were less than honorable?

The word "touch" (**hapto** in Greek) has given some writers and preachers considerable trouble. The word does not refer to sexual activities outside the marriage relationship, as it is often interpreted. Paul does condemn premarital sex—even in this context—but that is not what he has in mind in this verse. The word "touch" is used as a euphemism for sexual expressions of love in the marriage relationship. Incidentally, Paul certainly is not talking about what should happen in marriage, but the question of marriage itself: Is it better to marry or to remain single? The answer which Paul provides can be summarized in this simple statement: "It all depends." In using that expression, I am not endorsing situation ethics or accusing Paul of such. But one cannot examine this context without seeing this.

As I have already indicated, Paul does not bind celibacy on anyone, although he does recommend it in some cases. In 1 Corinthians 7:7 Paul expresses the wish that all men were like him, that is, single. Then he says, "...But every man hath his proper gift of God, one after this manner, and another after that." If you choose to remain single—if you honestly believe you can serve God better by remaining single—then there is no reason for you to be ashamed or to feel less than a full citizen in God's kingdom. On the other hand, if you choose marriage and are committed to using your marriage in service to your God, then choose wisely and expect God's blessings upon your choice.

Think about the apostle Paul for just a moment. Do you believe he could have accomplished so much in God's kingdom if he had been a married man? Would it have been fair to a wife and children if Paul

had been away from home months and even years at a time? He was in the city of Corinth for about eighteen months at one time and at Ephesus for almost three years. Can you imagine the hardship on his family such long absences would have created? If he had taken his family with him, their lives would have been in constant danger. On one occasion he was shipwrecked and spent a night and day in the water. Unquestionably, Paul did more with fewer pressures and fears because he was a single man. Does that mean I could do more or that I should remain single just because Paul chose that manner of life? In other words, is Paul's example binding on preachers and other church workers? You know it is not since Paul required elders of the church to be married men and to having an obedient family (1 Tim. 3:2, 4; Titus 1:6).

What if a man thinks he would face temptations of a sexual nature if he did not marry?

But if they cannot contain, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn (1 Cor. 7:9).

The Greek word for "contain" means to have power or strength, literally to have power over oneself. If a man would have to live in a constant state of irritation regarding sexual matters—if he could not control his sexual thoughts—it would not make sense to remain single. Why the church fathers and some modern theologians did not comprehend this truth is not easy to explain. In this chapter on marriage, Paul does not mean to downgrade the sexual relationship between a husband and a wife.

In fact, Paul argues very forcefully in verse two that marriage can prevent sexual immorality.

Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband (1 Cor. 7:2).

If a man or a woman prefers to marry—even in “the present distress” (v. 26)—Paul does not discourage it. He thought that some would confront pressures and afflictions by getting married that single people might not, but he does not forbid anyone’s getting married. Nobody has a right to forbid eligible people from getting married—nobody.

Paul’s observation about marrying to avoid fornication has been roundly criticized—both by theologians and by others. Bertrand Russell, for example, castigated Paul for denigrating marriage by saying, in effect, that marriage was for the prevention of immorality. If Paul had said that marriage exists only to prevent sexual immorality, he might have been open to such criticism. He does not say that—either here or elsewhere in scripture. Marriage had many legitimate purposes. Prevention of sexual indiscretion is just one of the purposes. Modern men use similar approaches in dealing with drugs or alcohol or gambling.

Perhaps it would be profitable to discuss briefly the word “fornication.” Incidentally, the Greek word in this verse is plural, indicating many temptations to engage in sexual immorality. If one were not married, he certainly might face many temptations along these lines. We need to remember that the word “fornication” (**porneia**) means any form of sexual immorality—not just premarital sex—although in this verse it means that. Paul was addressing single people and saying to them: To avoid premarital sex—since they were single they could not commit any other kind of sexual immorality—get married. “It is better to marry than to burn” (1 Cor. 7:9).

Sometimes the word “fornication” is used of incest.

It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication

as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife (1 Cor. 5:1).

In some verses, the word clearly refers to what we would call adultery.

And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery (Mt. 19:9).

Jude uses the word "fornication" to mean homosexuality.

Even as Sodom and Gomorrha, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire (Jude 1:7).

"Fornication" in this verse is from **ekporneuo**, an intensified form of the Greek word, and probably should be translated "exceeding fornication" or "perverted fornication."

Let me return to what Bertrand Russell said about Paul's statement in verse 2: "To avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife." Russell was a very immoral man, incidentally, and so was his first wife, Dora, and has precious little reason for criticizing Paul or anyone else. But he says that Paul does not exalt marriage by giving a negative reason for marriage. If the Bible gave only this reason for marriage, Russell's criticisms would have more strength. But the Bible gives several reasons for our getting married. First, human beings need fellowship, companionship, support and encouragement. When God had created Adam—the first male—He said,

It is not good that the man should be alone;

I will make him an help meet for him (Gen. 2:18).

God made the woman and gave her to the man because she would complete him and he would complete her. They were designed by the God of heaven to provide companionship—to prevent one another from being lonely.

Second, God made us male and female so that our marriages could perpetuate the human race. It is for sure that homosexual relationships cannot do that. Please listen to the Psalmist.

Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD:
and the fruit of the womb is his reward. As
arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so
are children of the youth. Happy is the man
that hath his quiver full of them: they shall
not be ashamed, but they shall speak with
the enemies in the gate (Psa. 127:3-5).

God established homes so children could be brought into stable and loving relationships. He did not arrange for single people to be parents and must look with great disfavor on such a trend in the United States.

Third, marriage was ordained of God so that a husband and wife could enjoy their sexual union and communion.

Therefore shall a man leave his father and
his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife:
and they shall be one flesh (Gen. 2:24).

There is no question in my mind that the “one flesh” arrangement means more than the sexual relationship, but it certainly does include that. Anyone who complains about this plan is complaining about the wisdom and goodness of God. I do not want to be guilty of that, do you?

Paul concludes verse two by saying: “Let every

man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband." If there were anything morbid or sordid or inappropriate about marriage, this would have been a great opportunity for Paul to say so. Paul did not oppose marriage; he did not criticize those who chose to marry. Instead, he places it on a very high plane—just as God had done.

The feminists have criticized Paul for using the possessive in verse two: "His own wife" and "her own husband." Paul should have said, "the spouse," "the wife," etc. The feminists may say what they wish, but I say and I intend to keep on saying, "My Molly" because she is mine and I am hers. O, I know we do not belong to each other in an absolute sense. Since we are Christians, we actually belong to the Lord.

For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's (1 Cor. 6:20).

Paul's inspired words make it very plain that he believed in monogamy, that is, one marriage. Paul did not speak out against marriage as an institution, but he would have been aghast—and so would our Lord—at the enormous number of divorces in modern America. He knew marriage was God's order and that it would be best for most people. But he does not demand that anyone marry or that anyone remain single. Paul would not have agreed with any theological position which placed marriage in an inferior mold.

The book of Revelation pictures heaven as the new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband (Rev. 21:2).

If marriage were not honorable and beautiful, would our Lord Jesus Christ have used such language?

Theme: The Home

Christian Homes Contribute To Church Growth

Many modern religious groups are troubled about the lack of growth of their particular bodies. Religious periodicals and numerous books have expressed grave concern about the lack of growth or even about negative growth. Most liberal denominations and several rather conservative ones have lost heavily in the past twenty or thirty years. The losses in membership in these religious bodies have spawned a great number of seminars, workshops, lectureships and meetings. Searches for answers have been very intense. I am troubled that the churches of Christ are now growing in 1988 as they were in 1948. What can churches do about this great problem? Our lesson today is designed to show what homes can do to encourage church growth. I am calling the lesson: "Christian Homes Contribute to Church Growth."

The significance of the home to a nation has long been recognized. Scholars in past generations have been almost universally agreed that no nation can long endure when its homes are weak or broken. President James A. Garfield, America's twentieth president and a gospel preacher, expressed the belief that

the sanctity of marriage and the family relation
make the cornerstone of our American society
and of civilization.

Could it be that churches are suffering a loss of membership and a decreasing influence because of the many troubled homes which exist? Have homes adversely affected the church? I think most of you would agree that this has been the case in the United States.

The scriptures make it very plain that both the home and the church are essential to our well-being. Christopher Lasch refers to the home as "a haven in a heartless world." If you believe the Bible, you know that God designed the home for companionship, for love and support, and as a foretaste of the heavenly home that Jesus has gone to prepare for His faithful followers. God ordained the church that we might extend fellowship and love to a much wider realm. The church is composed of those who have been saved by the blood of Christ (Eph. 1:7).

Since both the home and the church are God's arrangements, they should certainly work together to accomplish the Lord's purpose in establishing them. The church should do everything within its power to strengthen, stabilize and support the home. On the other hand, the home must contribute in every honorable way to the growth of the Lord's kingdom. The home has great opportunities and grave responsibilities in helping the church of our Lord. Today's lesson will be devoted to discussing the ways that the home helps the church. Then I shall study with you some ways that the church can support the home.

The Christian home must provide an atmosphere where God, His Son, His church and His word will be respected and obeyed. Let me raise some questions relating to these vital aspects of our homes. Do we

teach about God and honor Him in such a way that He becomes real to our children? Some parents talk about God in such a way that our children are afraid of Him. They even threaten them with horrible pictures of God. They may picture Him as an ogre, a monster, who is just waiting to pounce on them if they misbehave. Who could ever learn to love and to respect a God like that?

It is my judgment that children should never be disciplined by threatening them that God will get them or God will not love them. The image of God that we implant in our children's minds while they are young may stay with them the rest of their lives. Occasionally I meet people who have some really weird ideas about God. They may have learned them from their parents or from other family members. How can we harmonize these foolish and unscriptural views of God with the fact that Jesus called God His heavenly Father and ours?

Jesus taught His disciples to pray, "Our Father, who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name" (Mt. 6:9). Since we have every reason to follow the example of Jesus and refer to God as our Father, then we earthly fathers have enormous responsibilities to show the love to our families that God has shown to us through Jesus Christ. What kind of feeling toward God does your child gain from knowing you as a father? There is no question in my mind that many children do not grow up loving and honoring God because they have seen so much hypocrisy and unfaithfulness in their earthly fathers. If the father is arbitrary, despotic, oppressive and unapproachable, children will likely think our heavenly Father is of the same disposition. Conversely, if the father is loving, kind, firm, forgiving

and approachable, their children can learn much about God from them.

What are we teaching our sons and our daughters about God's Son? Occasionally, when I am visiting in Christian homes, I see a plaque which reads: "Christ is the head of this home." If Christ really is the head of that home, how would that home differ from others? Does Christ in the home make all that much difference? Do our children see Christ living in us? Do they see us imitating His example? Paul was not writing specifically about the personnel in the home in the following passage, but the message certainly applies. "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 2:5). Peter called on all Christians—family members included—when he challenged all to follow Christ.

For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps (1 Pet. 2:21).

If our children observe that Christ truly dwells in our hearts—and our children are generally very keen observers—they will almost certainly want to turn and glorify our Father who is in heaven (Mt. 5:16). Most children are able to separate the genuine from the counterfeit. They know when we are pretending to love the Lord. Their decision to follow Christ or not to follow Him will be determined in many cases by our attitudes toward Him.

Do you take your children to every service of the church? Please notice that I did not say: "Are you sending your children to every service of the church?" If being involved in the activities of the church has so much value for our children and our young people,

why does it not have the same value for older people? Do you not think that children can see through the behavior of their parents on this issue? That is the reason many children cease attending church services when they reach the age that they make their own decisions. They have gone because their parents sent them—not because they have been taught about the church and its importance in their lives.

I know some families who get up on Sunday morning and have a family conference on whether or not they are going to the church services. That was one topic I never heard my parents discuss. Long before the twelve Claiborne children came into the world, our parents had decided about church attendance. We went to church regardless of the weather or whether or not we had clothes which were appropriate for the occasion. The subject was simply never mentioned. In my family of procreation, the same was true. Molly and I decided before we were married what our family life would be. When our sons were born, there was never any question about church attendance. We all went to church because we believed that God wanted us to do so.

Your children know about your love—or lack of love—but also by the extent you support the church financially. Children witness their parents' spending on new automobiles, luxury items, extended and expensive vacations and such like. Do you think that children can understand how important the church is to their parents by the sacrifices the parents are willing to make for the cause of Christ? When I was in business in Georgia, I had a friend to tell me: "I go to church every Sunday, every Wednesday night and on other occasions, but I am having some second thoughts

about church attendance. I am the principal of a school and my only time to hunt and to fish in on Sunday. I would like to spend the money I give to the church on a new boat or a new shotgun or some fishing equipment." Do you think the man's children were likely to know their father's attitude and be influenced by it?

Let me ask you a very sensitive question. Have you ever said in front of your children, "All the preacher ever talks about is money, money, money. You'd think we were made of money." Let us suppose, just for the sake of argument, that all the preacher talks about is money. Should your children hear such criticism of the preacher or the elders or the deacons coming from you? What impression are you making on your child? Remember also that Jesus said "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Mt. 6:21). Do you think children are wise enough to understand that principle?

I have mentioned the criticisms of the preacher's talking too much about money. Are there other areas where your children hear you criticizing the church? Do your children hear you ridiculing other church members, questioning the integrity of the elders and being severely critical of the preacher? "The preacher talks too long or too short (or does anyone ever criticize the preacher for talking too short?). He uses words that we cannot understand or he talks down to us. His sermons are not relevant; he has not kept up with the times." In some homes, the favorite topic of table talk is other church members: their sexual indiscretions, their crooked business dealings, their **cliqueishness** or some other fault or foible. How often do we discuss the good works and the devotion of faithful Christian

men and women? Do we give the impression by our discussion of other church members that none of the members are what they ought to be? How can we expect our children to develop much respect for the church under such circumstances.

Occasionally, members of the church go to the beach or to the mountains or go fishing on Sunday or stay home and watch the World Series on television when they should be meeting with God's people for worship. How can our children learn about the importance of serving God—the need for developing the right priorities—when they see such behavior on the part of their parents or other members of the church? When our children forsake the church and turn to worldly pursuits, do we ever wonder how much our unfaithfulness and the influence of ungodly members have contributed to their rebellion against God?

My friends, the home is not the church, but does not the home have responsibilities for helping the church to grow? Children need to see their parents visiting the sick, making contacts with their neighbors for the purpose of teaching them the gospel. So many of our splendid young people lack vision and zeal for evangelizing the world because they have never observed any efforts on the part of their parents or other adult church members to reach the lost for Jesus Christ.

How can our children learn compassion for the downtrodden, the discouraged, the despised and the distraught unless their parents demonstrate love and concern in concrete ways? Most of us know parents whose only concern seems to be their own welfare and that of their families. Paul shows conclusively that

a Christian man must take care of the needs of his family, but that is only the start in a Christian man's life of devotion to God. He needs to show his children what it means to love others as Christ loved us and gave Himself for us.

Before we talk about an atmosphere of respect for the word of God, let me raise one other question about parental example? Do your children ever hear you pray? Do you make a practice of offering thanks to God for every meal? Many who claim to be Christians do not. But thanks at meal times is not enough. Our children deserve parents who seek wisdom from our heavenly Father (Jas. 1:5). What a difference it would make in the lives of many young people if they knew that they were always in the prayers of their parents. Do we regularly lift the names of our children in prayer to Almighty God? Do they know about those prayers? How fortunate are young people whose parents pray for them on a regular basis.

What are you teaching your children about the Bible—God's revelation of Himself and His will to fallen men? When God was preparing Israel for entrance into the promised land, He commanded Moses to teach the people of God.

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD: And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: 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 (Dt. 6:4-7).

God was saying, in effect, I want my word taught to

the younger generation so that they will devote themselves to my service. If our children are not taught the word of God, they will grow up with no direction in their lives.

God Almighty honored Abraham by expressing these thoughts about him:

Seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him. For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment; that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him (Gen. 18:18-19).

Please notice carefully the points which God stressed in this evaluation of Abraham. First, God said, "For I know him." Dr. H. C. Leupold translates the Hebrew word **yadha**, "I acknowledge him to be my intimate friend" (**Exposition of Genesis**. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1975, volume 1, p. 544). Second, God knew that Abraham would "command" or teach or charge his children to be faithful to God. Does God know the same about us? Does He know that we will teach our children?

Third, God knew that the children of Abraham—like everyone else's children—would have to be taught if they were to become a great nation. The children had to be taught to "keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment." We are not born with the knowledge which we must have to serve God faithfully. If we are to become a mighty force for God and His kingdom, parents, preachers and all other responsible people are going to have to teach the word. There

simply is no other way for the kingdom to grow.

The New Testament stresses this truth just as strongly as does the Old Testament.

And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (Eph. 6:4).

The Hebrew writer stresses the great concern that God has for disciplining His children—a concern that every Christian parent will want to share with God.

Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby (Heb. 12:9-11).

My friends, let me ask you a few questions about the place of the Bible in your home. How often do your children see you reading and studying the Bible? If you are like me, you probably read at least one newspaper everyday. In my case, I read two. You probably also read some professional journal or **Time** or **U.S. News and World Report** and other magazines. If your children watch you read the newspapers and journals but not the Bible, what impression does that make on them? Does that make them think that you are devoted to the study of God's word? How much more do you spend watching television than you do reading the Bible? I am not inferring that reading

newspapers or magazines or watching television should be avoided. I am merely asking which is most important in our lives.

How much money have you spent in buying good commentaries on the Bible, good dictionaries and encyclopedias and other helps for studying the Bible? I would especially appeal to the young parents in our audience. There are some great Bible story books which would be of tremendous help in teaching your children about God, about Jesus Christ, and about the great men and women of Bible times. Most children love to have their parents read good stories to them. Why not take a substantial portion of those stories from the Bible? I would also encourage you to sing about the great characters of the Bible—Jesus Christ, Daniel, David and Paul.

In order to help the church to grow as we know God wants it to grow, let me make one further recommendation. The home must provide an atmosphere where the young men will desire to preach the gospel, to become elders and deacons in the church and where the young women will aspire to become wives of preachers, elders and deacons. I am aware that certain groups will object to my mentioning only men for the work of preaching and for serving as elders and deacons. But the scriptures plainly teach that only men can serve in these offices or positions. I have neither the time nor the disposition on this occasion to defend that idea, but I shall be glad to do so if challenged.

In the last several years, there has been a far greater need for preachers than colleges and schools of preaching can provide. Most schools of preaching among the churches of Christ and most colleges whose

controlling boards and teachers are members of the churches of Christ have experienced a considerable decrease in the number of young men who want to preach. Churches—both in the United States and abroad—are crying out for more men who are qualified to preach the gospel. How are we going to meet the needs of these churches? What are our homes doing to encourage young men to preach?

Let me speak very plainly to you parents in my audience today. What are the goals that you have for your sons and daughters—material success or rendering the greatest service to God and to men? If you have an especially bright son, would you be disappointed if he decided to make a preacher rather than becoming a doctor? Please understand that I am not downgrading the medical profession. It actually has many characteristics which are comparable to preaching the gospel. But why do we think that our young men who are very intelligent ought to become engineers or accountants or physicians and not preachers? Could it be that many churches are declining in membership and influence because many men with second rate minds are standing in pulpits across our nation?

My friends, preaching generally does not enjoy the material success or the worldly prestige that some other professions do. That is especially true in modern society, but if we would think in terms of eternity, maybe we would have a different view of the situation. There is no greater work on this earth than preaching Jesus Christ and Him crucified. But obviously not all parents—and not even all churches—are convinced of that fact. Until parents have a better understanding of the church and preaching, this condition will not likely be corrected.

What kind of climate must exist in a home that will produce preachers and elders and deacons? Several years ago, I conducted a very unscientific survey among some families which have given our brotherhood several outstanding preachers. I asked some preachers whom I know quite well if they could explain what inspired them to preach. One splendid preacher and teacher explained: "We ate, breathed and slept the church." In other words, the church was the most important aspect of their lives. I asked this good brother if his parents had suggested that all the men in that family preach. He replied in the negative. But the home had created the atmosphere we have been talking about. The parents' devotion to the Lord, the Christian atmosphere which permeated the home, their regular attendance at all services and perhaps other items influenced three men in this one home to become great servants of the Lord.

I do not believe that parents should pressure their young men to preach. In my judgment such pressure would be counterproductive. But if the church and Christ and God are really meaningful in the lives of parents—if they really put God and His kingdom first in their lives—young people are almost certainly going to be inspired to want to work diligently in the Lord's service. Conversely, if the parents do not love God with all their minds, souls and might, their children will emulate them by being lukewarm Christians or turning away from God altogether.

For the next two Lord's days, our topic will be: "The Church Supports The Home."

Theme: The Home

The Church Supports The Home

Most Americans know that homes and families are in deep trouble in the United States and in many other countries in the world. The following facts are merely representative of the very discouraging statistics relating to American homes. In 1976 for the first time in the history of our nation, there were 1,000,000 divorces. In 1987 the number was approximately 1,250,000 divorces in one year. But the divorce picture tells only part of the story. There are millions of other homes where there is no joy or fulfillment or peace. Husbands and wives in these homes may never divorce because of their religious convictions or because their finances will not allow it, but the two live together in irritation and anger and bitterness. They have simply agreed to disagree.

Illegitimacy, venereal disease, homosexuality, teenage suicide, vicious crimes of all sorts, are rampant in our nation. Drug and alcohol abuse has reached epidemic proportions in some areas of our country. Parents are guilty of physically, mentally and emotionally abusing their children. At least two thousand children die each year from being beaten or scalded or burned. Hundreds of thousands of boys and girls are running away from home and are being forced to be child actors in pornographic movies or they are being sold into prostitution. In general, our homes have

deteriorated into a very discouraging condition. But in spite of these severe problems, the situation is not hopeless. With God's help, we can make some changes.

What can and should the church do about the problems which I have outlined? If there are any two institutions on earth which ought to support, strengthen and sustain each other, it ought to be God's oldest institution—the home—and His youngest institution—the church of the living God. God desires that the church and the home be the staunchest allies in helping to extend the borders of God's kingdom and in preaching the divinely inspired moral code. Cooperation between these two God-given organizations would work wonders in our world. When either of these institutions suffers, the other will suffer with it.

In our discussion today and next Lord's day, I want to emphasize several steps the church must take in supporting the home. If you have other suggestions about how the church and the home can work together for their mutual benefit, please let me hear from you. Let me begin by insisting that the church must preach "all the counsel of God" (Acts 20:28). I am convinced that preaching alone will not solve all the home's problems—or for that matter, all the church's problems—but there is no substitution for preaching "the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth." In the following passage, Paul did not specifically have the home in mind, but I think no reasonable person would deny that it is applicable to the home.

And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more. Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel

of God....Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears. And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified (Acts 20:25-27, 31-32).

Since the Bible teaches on such topics as: mate selection, courtship, marriage, human sexuality, childrearing, how could we possibly preach the whole counsel of God and not discuss these matters? And yet it has been my observation that many—if not most—churches avoid most of these subject. I am not going to offer any possible explanations for our neglect in these areas, but whatever our reasons for neglect, we are hurting the individuals involved as well as making it hard for the home and the church to achieve their God-ordained missions.

Paul commanded parents to bring their children up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (Eph. 6:4). The word translated "nurture" (**paideia**) means "the whole training and education of children" (Thayer, p. 473). What should be included in "the whole training and education of children?" Should parents, preachers, elders and other influential people in children's lives talk with them about mate selection? Please listen to Solomon. "Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies" (Prov. 31:10). If young people ought to exercise wisdom and caution in selecting their mates, then the church and the home ought to provide instruction on mate selection. Failure to provide that instruction means that we are not teaching the whole counsel of God.

Does the word of God teach us concerning the

sanctity and exhilaration of sexual expressions of love in the marriage relationship? Solomon speaks so explicitly that no one should miss the message on human sexuality.

Drink waters from your own cistern, flowing water from your own well. Should your springs be scattered abroad, streams of water in the streets? Let them be for yourself alone, and not for strangers with you. Let your fountain be blessed, and rejoice in the wife of your youth, a lovely hind, a graceful doe. Let her affection fill you at all times with delight, be infatuated always with her love (Prov. 5:15-19, RSV).

Even though some parents and preachers are embarrassed to speak about sexual matters, how can we justify failing to speak as the oracles of God on sex and related issues?

Paul's instructions to young Timothy included preaching the word in season, out of season (2 Tim. 4:1-8). Whatever the word of God teaches, we have an obligation to teach. Since the Bible discusses marriage, divorce, remarriage, fathering and mothering, we must be diligent to teach the truth on these subjects. I am fully aware that some churches simply would not endure such teaching, but if we preachers are going to be faithful to our calling, we have no choice except to follow the Lord's instructions.

Paul commanded Titus to "speak all things which become sound doctrine" (Tit. 2:1). What would an inspired apostle include in "sound doctrine?" We are not left to our imagination. Paul gave advice to the older men (Tit. 2:1-2). He then told the older women that they should

be in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things; That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed (Tit. 2:3-5).

If the men who stand in pulpits across our land would preach the great truths outlined in Titus 2, many of our problems relating to marriage and the family could be solved. I sincerely appeal to every gospel preacher under the sound of my voice today to preach on these topics regularly, scripturally, and humbly—taking heed to ourselves lest we fall into temptation and a snare in family matters.

The apostle Peter mentioned the fact God has given to us all things which pertain to life and godliness (2 Pet. 1:3). Do marriage and family and human sexuality pertain to “life and godliness?” My friends, you know they do and you also know that the church ought to be dealing with these topics on a regular basis. Our young people grow up so much more quickly than most of us realize. If we fail to teach them at critical times in their lives, they may never learn how to have good families. We cannot wait until they are dating or engaged to be married before we begin to discuss marriage and mate selection and human sexuality with them.

Do you believe that God will hold the church accountable for its teaching on marriage and the family? Surely you remember the words of God to the prophet Ezekiel? God instructed Ezekiel to warn, to teach and to charge the people of Israel. If Ezekiel failed to warn the people, God would hold the prophet accountable

for the downfall of the nation (Ezek. 33:1-6). We preachers, elders and parents must take seriously the task of preparing our young people for marriage and for strengthening the marriages which exist in the congregations where we work.

A significant aspect of the church's obligation to prepare young people for marriage must rest on the shoulders of the elders of the church. Elders of the church have a duty to watch for our souls as they that must give an account (Heb. 13:17). That means that elders must be deeply concerned about preparing young people for marriage and about resolving the difficulties which relate to marital incompatibility and divorce.

Elders of the church must be informed about the causes of divorce and of marital unhappiness. I have no desire today to discuss at length the causes of divorce that are usually given. I am confident that the mobility, urbanization and secularization of our society and of the church have had and still have a bearing on the number of divorces. Alcohol abuse and the abuse of other drugs are also involved in divorces. In fact, fifty percent of all divorces are directly related to alcohol. But is it possible that alcohol abuse and drug abuse often signify a deeper, more basic problem in a person's life, such as, spiritual insecurity, immaturity and a hedonistic philosophy of life? It is my judgment that the basic cause of divorce is either ignorance of God's will for our lives or disregard for what the Bible says on the topic. The liberal moral and spiritual attitudes of preachers, elders and other Christians will lead them to the divorce courts. Have you ever seen so many who call themselves "gospel preachers" being sexually immoral and obtaining divorces from their lawful wives? When men's and women's hearts are not

right with God, divorce can be the disastrous result.

Elders are to be the leaders in building strong marriages. The qualifications of elders give us some insight into what God expects of them in relation to the home. The King James Version teaches that elders are to be "apt to teach" (**didaktikos**), but the original Greek means "skillful in teaching" (Arndt & Gengrich, p. 190). In addition, Paul affirms that an elder is to be

One that ruleth well his own house, having
his children in subjection with all gravity; For
if a man know not how to rule his own house,
how shall he take care of the church of God?
(1 Tim. 3:4-5).

You can see from these scriptures that elders are not only to teach orally; they are also to teach by example. If an elder does not have a Christian family, how can he be effective in teaching others about having a Christian family?

In most cases elders are not professional counselors—which may work to their advantage—but they should create a climate of trust with the members so that members will feel free to consult them about their family problems. That means that elders must hold in strictest confidence the problems that members discuss with them. It also means that they should not—and neither should preachers or other counselors—listen to just one side of a marriage dispute. In order for elders to judge righteously, as God judges, they must weigh all matters very carefully. They need to remember that God is no respecter of persons (Rom. 2:11) and neither should they be.

If elders of the Lord's flock would assume the responsibilities of shepherding, thousands of unhappy homes could be avoided. If elders are caring, loving

and helpful, they will desire to judge—to arbitrate—family disputes. If I were an elder of a congregation, I would be afraid and ashamed if I failed to teach on such vital topics and if I failed to help all members in need—whatever that need.

Of course, elders do not and cannot know the solution to every problem confronting marriages. Gospel preachers should be used by elders—if and when the occasion arises where their services are needed. Elders may call upon godly women—preachers' wives, elders' wives and others—in some situations. I have been amazed how some Christian mothers have been able to help troubled marriages, in spite of the fact that those mothers probably never heard of Carl Jung or Alfred Adler or Carl Rogers or Sigmund Freud. Or maybe their success in helping marriages was because the did not know Freud or Rogers or Jung.

I would caution elders of the church and preachers of the gospel about using professional counselors. Many psychologists and psychiatrists entertain entirely different moral values from what you may hold. They might encourage couples who were experiencing marital conflict just to separate and to divorce without attempting to work through their problems. As a matter of fact, I have encountered several couples who have told me of having had contact with secular counselors. Those couples were discouraged because of the counsel they received from professional counselors. If and when you choose to work with a professional, please use the best judgment you can muster. It might be appropriate to ask these questions with regard to any counselor. What are the basic assumptions underlying his counseling approach? Does the counselor love God, respect the institution of marriage, have high personal moral values and have a good

marriage of his own? Some marriage counselors have been miserable failures as husbands and fathers. How helpful can such a man be in working with troubled marriages? Does the counselor encourage sexual expression outside the marriage relationship—what Gay Talese calls “healthy adultery”—to solve one’s sexual hangups? Does he insist that his clients be aggressive to the point that they tell everyone what they think of them regardless of the hurt that such aggression inflicts?

Since preaching should be such a major factor in preparing the young for marriage and in helping to build stronger homes, we must vigorously oppose the compromising, mediating, vacillating preaching which is being done—not only on topics relating to marriage—but on other subjects as well. The weak preaching which characterizes so many modern pulpits has led many to conclude that the pulpit has lost its power. Has the pulpit lost its power? R. C. Foster, a conservative Christian Church preacher, authored an excellent book on **Studies in the Life of Christ** (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1971). Foster makes these comments on whether or not preaching can be useful and effective.

Not when Christian martyrs, instead of craven cowards or selfish worldlings, stand in the pulpit. Whenever the gospel is proclaimed, victory is nigh. When the churches substitute theatrical performances, pie suppers, and pooltables for the preaching of the gospel, then downfall is inevitable. When the husks of philosophical and scientific speculation, modernism, and infidelity are substituted for the gospel, God’s people are starved and the kingdom suffers defeat (p. 465).

Even liberal sociologists can see a radical change in the moral stance of many modern churchmen. In his book, **The Sexual Wilderness** (New York: Pocket Books, 1968), Vance Packard, a nationally respected writer, mentions the decreasing influence of religion in the lives of modern men.

As the number of people deeply influenced in their everyday personal behavior by religious belief has decreased, religious leaders have shown some signs of wavering on the issue of premarital intimacy. A writer in the **Christian Century** said intercourse before marriage was the aspect of morality where "the traditional armour seems to be crumbling fastest," and clergymen have been arguing the pros and cons of **Playboy's** highly permissive and hedonistic philosophy in, of all places, the pages of that journal. An Episcopal minister in Raleigh, N.C., wrote that **Playboy's** philosophy "has opened many doors for me and has caused some deep and exciting thoughts as well as discussion" (p. 35).

Vance Packard quotes O. Hobart Mowrer, psychologist at the University of Illinois, regarding the changing role of the church in the shaping of moral values. "By and large," says Dr. Mowrer,

religion has become sophisticated and soft. Good theology, taking its cue from psychiatry and clinical psychology, is supposed to be accepting rather than in any way 'judgmental.' Hell has been conveniently liquidated, and that leaves heaven, where **everyone** is presumably "accepted." Preachers are told that if they say anything about "sin" it will only make people feel guilty; and everyone

knows that guilty feelings are the foci of neurotic suffering. So, if you don't want to make people feel sick, don't talk to them about being good or bad (pp. 35-36).

It seems to me that both Vance Packard and O. Hobart Mowrer have a better understanding of many moral issues that some who call themselves "preachers of the gospel." That is a sad commentary on the state of modern religion.

In an excellent book, **The Inspiration and Authority of Scripture** (Chicago: Moody Press, 1969), Rene Pache, a French writer, bewails the loss of biblical authority in most Protestant churches. Dr. Pache affirms that when the Bible is viewed in a "foggy half-light,"

preaching itself becomes paralyzed, since the speaker is compelled to talk about doctrines that he is not sure of and accounts which he considers only legendary. He generally will not dare say from the pulpit that creation, the fall of man and the deluge are the only myths and the Pentateuch a collection of counterfeit documents. What can men preach, furthermore, who find mythological the miraculous birth of Christ, the cross, the resurrection and the glorious second coming? One man declared recently in a very conspicuous place: "When I was a student of theology, my friend and I used to spend a good deal of time arguing about whether the tomb of Christ was empty or not. But I have come to see that it really doesn't make any difference" (pp. 64-65).

My friends, I hope you can see the relationship between the weak preaching that is being done in modern times and the change in ethical values which permeate our society. If God does not exist and if the

Bible is not the word of God, then each man is free to choose what moral principles he will follow. Every man is free to do what is right in his own eyes. Both the yea-sayers and the nay-sayers are simply expressing their personal likes and dislikes. No wonder heterosexual promiscuity and homosexuality are rampant in modern society. Many churches will no longer oppose the gross evil associated with our secular society. As Dr. Mowrer said, preachers are afraid they will make someone feel guilty and everyone knows what a great tragedy that would be!

I want to appeal to the men who stand in the pulpits across our land. Spend enough time studying the Bible and learning about the evils and problems of our society that you can speak knowledgeably on the topics that are so vital to our survival as a nation. Then have the courage to stand up for the Lord Jesus Christ. You may be fired from your present position, but surely there are situations worse than being fired. If every preacher sought with all his heart to know the will of God and to preach it as faithfully as possible, radical changes could be brought about in a relatively short time. Revival in our time would not be just a remote possibility. God demands faithful preachers and the world desperately needs them.

I would also appeal to elders of the church. Select for your preachers only men who will preach the whole counsel of God. That means, as Paul said, preaching in season and out of season. Since God will call you to account for the sheep of your flock, you dare not allow some soft-peddling, compromising, weak back-boned preacher to lead your people astray. If your preacher fails to teach on vital topics, ask him to discuss ideas that you consider essential to the growth of the Lord's church. If he is offended by your

suggestions or requests, he needs to examine his own motivation and behavior.

The world and the church are in need of strong preaching and devoted Christian living. Nothing else will bring about the changes in our lives which will preserve us individually and nationally. If we want to save our homes and build great homes for the future, then the church must take a much more active part than has been true of our immediate past. Regardless of how well parents prepare their young people for Christian family living, homes cannot be what they ought to be without the support and strength of the church.

But the preachers and elders cannot carry the whole load of getting young people ready for good marriages or for supporting the marriages which already exist. Deacons, Sunday School teachers and all other members of the body of Christ have a responsibility to our young people and to our older ones as well. We must keep the welfare of homes uppermost in our minds and never behave in such a way as to weaken and to destroy families.

In our lesson next time, I want to make specific suggestions regarding the church's obligations toward the family. In the meantime, if you have any questions or suggestions, I would appreciate hearing from you. We want this radio program to be a joint effort. Questions and comments from you will have a bearing on what is discussed and the good that this program will do. I sincerely urge you to tell me what you have on your mind.

Next time we shall continue our study on the subject: "The Church Supports the Home."

Theme: The Home

The Church Supports The Home (No. 2)

Since churches are so directly tied to homes, then churches must always be deeply concerned about the quality of homes which compose those churches. This means that preachers and elders and all other church members must have as one of their goals the teaching of the whole counsel of God. Preachers are to teach from the pulpit what the Bible says about marriage, divorce and remarriage. They are not to compromise the truth of the gospel to prevent offending their listeners. Elders of the church are to provide the leadership which will make homes stronger and prepare young people for the responsibilities of marriage. In every way, Christians are to work for better homes in our nation. Please remember that the influence of even one good home in a community can make a difference.

When controversial issues which adversely affect the home arise, elders, preachers and others should have the courage to take a stand on the side of right and truth. There are people in all communities who are not particularly religious—they certainly would not call themselves “Christians”—but they are deeply disturbed about the deteriorating morals of our nation. They are angry when their homes are invaded by thieves, when their sons and daughters are sexually

molested—whether by strangers or by friends and family members. They know that sexual promiscuity and homosexuality are destructive and not just because of the threat of AIDS or of genital herpes. Many of these young people are crying out for leadership from churches of our land. I urge the churches of Christ to provide the moral and spiritual leadership for the people of our nation and of other nations.

You may think I am being too pessimistic when I affirm that many modern churches are unwilling to take a stand on controversial moral issues. Even some churches of Christ are now insisting that they do not want controversial issues discussed from their pulpit. Let me give you just one example. In the 1970's the Equal Rights Amendment was the center of attention all across our land. A Georgia congregation had asked me to visit on a Sunday and to speak on the ERA, the Woman's Liberation Movement and the Gay Liberation Front. Just a few days before I was to speak, I received a call from one of the elders informing me that the elders had decided to withdraw the invitation. The elder who called said that the elders had given two reasons for withdrawing their invitation. First, they were afraid they might have to face a lawsuit from some of the radical elements in Atlanta. I wonder how that eldership would have fared in the days of the Roman Empire. Second, the elders did not want any controversial issues discussed from their pulpit. Do you suppose they knew any other kind of issues? Do you know any topic that is not controversial with someone? If you do, please let me know because I do not.

During the same period I have just alluded to, I was active in speaking out on the Equal Rights

Amendment on our radio program at Dalton, Georgia. I was seeking by moral persuasion to involve the other preachers in Dalton. The Dalton Ministerial Association apparently began to feel some pressure—either from our radio programs or from their members. The members of the Ministerial Association had a meeting to decide what their position of the ERA ought to be. They published an article in the Dalton paper in which they said that there was no definitive position on the ERA. In other words, they decided they could preach it either way. What a tremendously disappointing decision for preachers to make. Many of their members stood with us in our fight against the women's movement. The members of those groups also expressed to me their unhappiness that their preachers were unwilling to stand up for the family and for their country.

These incidents remind me of a cartoon I found in one of my books, Dr. Frank E. Gaebelin, a former editor of **Christianity Today**, edited a book with the title, **A Christianity Today Reader** (New York: Meredith Press, 1966). The book consists of a compilation of articles which appeared in **Christianity Today** between the years of 1956-1966. In this volume there is a cartoon of a modernistic preacher pretending to act like Martin Luther when the great reformer nailed the ninety-five theses to the church door in Wittenberg, Germany. The caption for this cartoon reads: "Here I stand...at present...I think...But then again, I could be wrong" (p. 37).

Some churches of Christ and some other religious groups seem to want to be above the fight against pornography, alcoholic beverages, abortion, prostitution, cleaning up television, and such like.

Everyone should be able to understand how each of these activities constitutes a threat to the home and to our young people. How can churches or individuals think they are supporting the home when they refuse to take leadership roles in these abominable evils? So often we sit on the sidelines and complain about all the evil that afflicts our society and then do precious little to make changes. It is high time that we help homes by destroying the enemies of the home.

But there is more to be done than simply removing the thorns and thistles. The churches must have educational programs which include preparation for marriage and for family living. I have made a practice for the past nine years to ask the students in my marriage and family classes at Freed-Hardeman College how many of them have worshipped in congregations where mate selection, courtship, human sexuality and such like are discussed from the pulpit or taught in a concentrated way. The numbers of young people who have attended such congregations are very small. I have not kept an exact record of their responses, but I seriously doubt that more than fifteen percent of our splendid young people have ever really studied marriage and the family.

I recognize some problems for churches which decide to have a formal program of family life education. Let me mention some of the difficulties which most churches would face if they started such programs. First, many churches would not find it easy to get qualified people to teach the classes. They have not done adequate research in the area and they do not know the teachings of the Bible on marriage, divorce and remarriage. Very few church members have enough information about human sexuality and

many would be uncomfortable discussing it with almost any group.

Elders should be very careful in selecting teachers of marriage and family classes to be sure that the teacher has the right attitude toward marriage. If the teacher is soured on marriage or on men or on women, he would not be qualified to discuss such a vital topic with young people. A radical or a moderate feminist would do more damage in a short time than could be corrected in a lifetime. The elders should also select someone who genuinely loves young people. If a teacher of teenagers does not love teenagers, why would he be teaching? The person who thinks all young people are going to the dogs does not need to be teaching any subject, but especially marriage and the family.

Most important, the teacher of marriage and family should have a good marriage himself. A teacher of marriage and family sociology in one of Tennessee's state universities boasts to his classes about his three marriages. How could such a man teach what young people need to know? His influence would unquestionably be detrimental. He or she is making a mockery of the sacred institution of marriage.

A second problem which churches face if they decide to initiate a course on marriage and the family has to do with the scarcity of good teaching material available. There are literally hundreds of books on marriage which are readily available, but many of them teach moral values which are anti-biblical. Besides, many books are not adapted to the various ages and groups which so desperately need such teaching. When I do workshops on the home and on human sexuality, I am often asked what good books I can recommend

for young people. It is unfortunate that not many are being published. I sincerely hope that condition can be corrected in the near future.

Why are we not producing good books on this vital subject? Could it be that many church leaders do not think it is very important? I can assure you that there is a tremendous interest among young people on this topic. There are also highly qualified men and women who could write good material. We may excuse ourselves by pleading a lack of money or of time. But we absolutely must get busy preparing good material for our children and young people.

The churches of Christ and other religious groups may create an atmosphere which stifles honest questions from young people. In my marriage and family classes at Freed-Hardeman College, I always tell my students that they are free to ask any questions which are troubling them. If any question arises which they would like for us to discuss in class, they are free to ask whatever they wish or to make whatever comments they have on the minds. Here are some samples of the questions I have been asked. "Is it true that it is almost impossible to go a long time without engaging in sexual activity? I hear it can hurt a guy." Please discuss how far a couple can go when they go "parking." "What is your opinion of necrophiliacs, as pertains to adultery? Is the act of having sex with a corpse considered adultery and therefore grounds for divorce?" "What is your opinion of the intrauterine devise? Is it an abortifacient?" "If a person has premarital sex, should he or she tell the person he is marrying?" My students have asked about transsexualism, transvestism, incest, homosexuality, pedophilia, genetic engineering, surrogate mothering

and dozens of other topics. These questions are not just philosophical or theoretical interests among young people. They are serious concerns to so many in our society.

Do we as preachers and parents and elders have an obligation to answer the questions our young people are asking? Or are we going to tell them that they do not need to talk about such matters? When they hear sexual matters so freely and frankly discussed on television, they have a right to the right information from people who have high moral values and who know the scriptural answers to give. We must not neglect to answer our young people's questions.

But what strategies should we use for dealing with marriage and family? If we teach on the subject—either from the pulpit or from the Sunday School class—only once every fifteen or twenty years, we are not getting the job done. Let me illustrate how foolish it is to wait too long between classes on courtship, mate selection and human sexuality. You may have in your class or in your home a little guy of nine or ten who has no interest in girls. In fact, he may think that girls are totally unnecessary and a nuisance. But give him four or five years and he cannot understand what has happened to him. The lovely creatures which he thought were so unnecessary to his happiness are now so very attractive to him. If we wait ten or fifteen years between classes on marriage and family, we could easily lose a whole generation of young people.

Young people's classes—whether in Sunday School or in Vacation Bible School—should be devoted to teaching on marriage. In the first place, most young people are intensely interested in the topic and are more likely to attend church and Bible class if they

are learning about it. Youth rallies that I have attended and at which I have spoken are often used just for motivational speeches—which are needed—but we should also use these gatherings to talk about dating and marriage.

In addition to Sunday morning Bible study and Wednesday evening gatherings, churches do well to have seminars, workshops and other special teaching on marriage and the family. I have been privileged to do between seven and ten such workshops a year for several years. Young people are almost always interested in these workshops and they usually attend them well. I have just completed a workshop on the home at the Florence Boulevard Church of Christ in Florence, Alabama. The average attendance at each service was between 450 and 500 which shows the great interest that both old and young have in their homes. If you are really interested in increasing church attendance and interest, workshops on the home will generally do it.

Another important step in teaching on marriage and the family is to send your children to a Christian college. The reasons for such a recommendation are many. Not only are our marriage and family courses taught from a biblical viewpoint, but so are all other classes on campus. You would not find at Freed-Hardeman College any teach who ridicules the Bible and its inspired teaching. Nor would you find a teacher who makes fun of marriage and who teaches young people unchristian moral values. Teachers with severely troubled marriages are simply not invited to teach in our Christian schools.

Let me mention one other distinct advantage of attending Christian schools. The students on the

campus at Freed-Hardeman College have dozens and dozens of teachers whom they can consult if they are having problems in dating, mate selection and such like. I know teachers in the Department of Communication as well as in psychology or sociology or in Bible who spend countless hours counseling with students. We also have teachers who provide premarital counseling for our splendid young people. We have specialists in marriage and family, in finances, in law, in psychology and in Bible who are willing to give of their time to help young people plan for good marriages. What a tremendous blessing this is and should be to our students. But the chances of having this kind of counseling available on a state college campus are very slim or nonexistent.

Another very important consideration should be the married Christians who demonstrate how marriages should be lived according to God's truth. Nothing is more powerful than good Christian examples. Our young people need to see couples living together in peace and harmony. I can remember as I was growing up how certain couples had marriages that I wanted my marriage to be like. Of course, I also knew some couples who were always fighting. I can remember wanting a marriage that was certainly different from those marriages.

In our lesson today and the one last Sunday, I have talked with you about what churches can do to support Christian homes. I am deeply interested in that subject or I would not have spent so much time researching it and discussing it. But lest you get the wrong impression, let me say emphatically that I believe the main responsibility for teaching on the topics I have been discussing with you rests on the shoulders

of parents. Both the Old and New Testaments make that truth very plain. Churches, child care centers and schools must not become substitutes for the home.

Too often our homes are just filling stations for the stomachs of our children. Dr. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, an English theologian, argues that "a home should not be a place where children spend their holidays" (**Life in the Spirit**, Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1973, p. 295). No organization or institution can replace good fathers and mothers. Dr. Harold Voth, a senior psychoanalyst and psychiatrist with the Menninger Foundation, insists that "mothering is probably the most important function on earth" (**Alabama Journal of Medical Science**, volume 15, number 3, 1978, p. 311). Parents cannot wait for someone else to teach their young people about marriage and the family.

Although the home must be the primary institution for rearing children—which includes getting them ready for family living—the church must assist, encourage, strengthen and support the home. The church must never engage in activities which are destructive of home life. But I can assure you that some churches do—even though they almost certainly do not intend to. Let me illustrate what I mean. Some churches have so many meetings and other activities that husbands and wives do not have time for their families. My friends, you cannot attend some kind of meeting every night—even if it is a church meeting—and have a good family life. Good relationships take time to build and that includes the husband-wife relationship as well as the parent-child relationship.

Unfortunately, some of us preachers are the worst offenders in this respect. We feel we have to work

seventy or eighty hours per week to do the work of the Lord. That many hours will not leave much time for wife and family. Obviously, I am not attempting to prevent anyone's working diligently for the Lord, but taking care of family responsibilities is also working for the Lord.

But just how much does the church mean in the lives of young people? In 1955, Dr. Benjamin Fine, then education editor of the **New York Times**, wrote a very disturbing book with the title **1,000,000 Delinquents** (New York: The World Publishing Company, 1955). Dr. Fine talked at length about the fact of juvenile delinquency and its causes and then made these observations:

The effect of the church is salutary in maintaining good community relationships. There is no question that it is desirable to encourage our youth, the teen-agers as well as those of all ages, to go to church with their parents. "Families who pray together, stay together," is a slogan based on sound commonsense. Parents who do attend church regularly are less inclined to live in constant tension (p. 229).

In the late 1970's, Truman Dollar, a fundamentalist Baptist preacher, and Dr. Grace Ketterman, a child psychiatrist from Kansas City, published a book entitled **Teenage Rebellion** (Old Tappan: Fleming H. Revell Company, n.d.). These authors mentioned the fact that in the 1970's three of ten marriages ended in divorce. They reveal in their book the results of a national survey relating to divorce and its association with religion. Please listen carefully to these statistics. When both husband and wife attend

church service, the divorce rate dropped to one in fifty-five marriages. When the husband and wife are really active in their church work, that is, when they pray together, read their Bible regularly, and attend church services faithfully, the rate of divorce dropped to one in 1,018 marriages. I do not know how scientific this survey was, but it does lend credence to the slogan I read a few moments ago from Dr. Fine: "Families that pray together, stay together."

The Judge of Nashville's Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court for many years was Sam Davis Tatum, an outstanding juvenile judge and a faithful gospel preacher. I shall not soon forget the privilege of hearing Judge Tatum at Mayfield, Kentucky, when I was just a young preacher. Judge Tatum made these observations about juvenile delinquency and church attendance.

There is nothing so fraught with power as the church in the saving of the youth of our land. Since I have been Judge of the Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court in Nashville, Davidson County, Tennessee, I have tried approximately eight thousand boys and girls under seventeen years of age for violating the law. Of that number there has not been a child in the Court whose father and/or mother went to church and/or Sunday School regularly. Of that approximately eight thousand boys and girls under seventeen only forty-one of them went to Sunday School or church regularly (**The Home**, "Juvenile Delinquency," Murfreesboro: DeHoff Publications, 1951, p. 75).

As we close our lessons on the topic, "The Church Supports the Home," let me summarize briefly the

major thrust of our discussion. First, the church must have and support the preaching of the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:28). If mate selection, courtship, human sexuality, marriage, divorce and remarriage are Bible topics—and you and I both know they are—how can we pretend that we are preaching the whole counsel of God if we neglect these topics? Compromising and mediating preaching will not get the job done.

Second, elders of the church must be concerned about preparing young people for marriage and about resolving the difficulties relating to troubled marriages. The elders do not have to do all the teaching on these topics, but they have to see that the teaching is done. God will hold the elders accountable for the sheep in their flocks. They are to provide for all the needs of the flock and that means teaching about marriage and the family.

Third, the church must not be afraid to take a biblical stand on controversial issues. Homosexuality, alcoholic beverages, gambling, and the Women's Liberation Movement are destructive elements in our society. They are not only enemies of the home; they are enemies of every aspect of our society. The church must speak out against these great evils.

Fourth, educational programs of the church must include continuing classes on preparation for marriage and family living. Our culture has almost made an idol of the needs of mankind, but one of the greatest needs we have is to be able to live peacefully and successfully in our families. Why are we neglecting that need?

Please remember the influence that the church has on homes. Where God is the center of our homes, they are more likely to be happy and useful. May God bless the homes of America.
