

YOUR FAMILY, GOD'S WAY

Developing and Sustaining
Relationships in the Home

Wayne A. Mack



P U B L I S H I N G

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All personal illustrations in this book, with the exception of those from my own life and family, have been “flattened out,” the names of individuals having been changed and certain identifying features withheld to protect the confidentiality of the people involved. Though factually based, many illustrations are composites of actual situations I have encountered among couples and families I have counseled over a span of many years.

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Preface

In a newspaper article some time ago Marshall Auerbach, a lawyer from Illinois, lamented the high rate of divorce in the United States.

Over the last 30 years I have participated in the break-up of more marriages than I care to remember. I'm a divorce lawyer by profession—I wrote the divorce law for the state of Illinois—but I'm a romantic at heart, so I suffer pangs of sympathy for both parties during the dissolution process. In fact, I make a strenuous effort to reconcile them before they take that final step, and I can tell you that it's becoming more difficult in the last 10 years.

Since 1960 about 40 million people have been divorced. A marriage counselor I know calls divorce "the death of a dream." She is convinced that had Romeo and Juliet lived today in her Chicago suburb, it is likely they would have visited her office for help in preserving their marriage.

How does one explain the magnitude of marital destruction that has allowed us to label the 80's "the age of divorce"? The statistics are shocking. This nation is awash in divorce.

Divorce is big business, by some estimates a "multibillion dollar industry." According to the *Wall Street Journal*, there were 700 divorce lawyers practicing 10 years ago. Now there are 11,000.

What is the condition of marriages today? In the last decade marriages have been breaking up at the rate of nearly 1.2 million a year. Over time, that amounts to the dissolution of a high percentage of marriages and a lot of people going through divorce. Add to that the fact that many marriages legally intact are plagued with problems. Many marriages (Christian and non-Christian) that never

make it to the divorce court are falling far short of God's design for marriage and family life as presented in the Bible.

The truth is that no marriage (including mine and yours) fully approximates God's design. As I write this book, my wife and I have been married for thirty-four years. We have four biological children and two daughters-in-law who are all professing Christians. By God's grace, we have enjoyed good marriage and family relationships. This side of heaven, however, we will always see room for improvement.

I suggest that what is true of our family is also true of yours. Your family life can always be better. When we see pride, complacency, apathy, status-quoism in our families, it indicates that they are deteriorating or soon will be. When we think there's nothing more we can learn, there's no more progress we can make.

What this means is that building our families God's way should be a matter of great concern to us. All other ways are destined ultimately to fail. After all, marriage and family are God's idea. He originated these relationships. He planned them to be among the greatest blessings a person could have. He created the first man and woman, who became the first married couple and parents. He introduced them to each other. He gave them their premarital counseling and then performed the first wedding service. God, the originator, knows how a marriage and family should function. He fully understands the family's potential for delight or disaster. He is the ultimate marriage and family therapist.

This book is an attempt to explain God's principles for a better family. In it you will find Bible truths about good family relations explained, exercises for evaluating yourself and your family in the light of these truths, and practical guidelines for implementing the biblical principles. I encourage you to anticipate God's blessing on you and your family as you consider building your family *God's way*. God's promise is that those who hear and obey his Word will be blessed (Luke 11:28). So dig in and expect a blessing from God!

As you read this material and complete the assignments at the close of each chapter, open yourself to the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Ask him for honesty, openness, insight, desire, and power to receive and do whatever he asks. Keep in mind that true prosperity

and success in a biblical sense are promised to those who do what the Bible says (Josh. 1:8; Ps. 1:1-3). Don't forget that those who are united by faith to Jesus Christ are new creatures, having new power to put off unbiblical patterns and put on more biblical lifestyles (2 Cor. 5:17; Eph. 5:17-24; Phil. 2:12, 13).

If this book should make you aware of areas or ways in which God wants you to change, be assured that for a Christian this is exciting. Be confident that God will help you as you trust in him. You must work, but you must work in faith. Depend wholly on God to enable you to do what pleases him. Be aware that what pleases God will ultimately please you. God is able and willing to help you. You can count on that.

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PART ONE

THE GROUNDWORK FOR
GOD-HONORING
FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

First Things First— The Maximum Husband and Father

When most people looked at Greg (a pseudonym), they saw all the marks of success. He was a well-dressed, intelligent, articulate man with an attractive and accomplished wife and two gifted children. At forty he was already very wealthy. Besides that, he was an outstanding leader in his church. Greg seemed the model of a successful man.

Yet there he was—sitting with his wife across from me in my counseling office. Ostensibly they were there to seek counsel on how to deal with a troublesome relative, but it soon became evident that their real problem was with each other. Greg may have appeared a success in many areas of life, but in one vital dimension he was not doing well. He and his wife both agreed that he was seriously deficient as a husband and father.

His wife was hurting badly and felt estranged from him. “I admire him greatly,” she acknowledged, “but I don’t feel that he really cares for me or respects me. He doesn’t let me get close to him. I want us to share with each other more, especially about spiritual matters. But it just doesn’t happen.” By Greg’s own admission, their relationship was stagnating because of things he had done or failed to do. He confessed, “My wife is a very godly, caring, cooperative person. The fault is primarily mine.”

Greg and his wife were not sharpening one another or stimulating one another to love and good works (Prov. 27:17; Heb. 10:24, 25). In his relationship with his children there was little if any

emotional closeness. He was not deeply involved in bringing them up in the instruction (counsel) and discipline of the Lord. By default, that had become primarily his wife's responsibility. His influence in their lives was minimal. In fact, as the children moved into their teenage years, the distance between them seemed to widen.

Greg represents hundreds of men I know and thousands I have never met. Perhaps he represents you. You may or may not be as successful as he is in the business world, but you are like him in that you are a professing Christian who wants to be a better husband and father.

The Key

In this chapter, I want to share with you God's perspective on the most important factor in becoming a maximum husband and father. God sees this factor as the key to making a man a powerful blessing to his family. It was this element that was missing in Greg's life.

What is this key factor? Psalm 128:1-4 describes it for us: "How blessed is everyone who fears the Lord, who walks in His ways. When you shall eat of the fruit [labor] of your hands, you will be happy and it will be well with you. Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine, within your house, your children like olive plants around your table. Behold, for thus shall the man be blessed who fears the Lord."

Here we have a picture of the various members in God's kind of family: what they are like, how they function, how they relate to one another, and what empowers and motivates them to be the family they are. In this chapter we will consider what the psalm teaches about the husband and father. In the next two chapters we will focus on its description of the wife and mother and the children.

The Benefits of Fearing God

This psalm indicates that to be God's kind of husband and father, you must be a man who fears God (vv. 1, 4). An appropriate fear of God will make you an unusual blessing to your wife and

children. It will make you attractive to your family. You will become an effective husband and father. The fear of God will be the soil out of which your positive influence will grow and the basic reason your family will arise and call you blessed. I encourage you to meditate on what the Bible says will happen to you as a God-fearing man.

God says that God-fearing people:

1. Receive divine instruction concerning the choices they should make (Ps. 25:12).
2. Are prosperous in the most important ways (Pss. 25:13; 112:3).
3. Experience God's goodness (Ps. 31:19).
4. Are special objects of God's protection (Ps. 31:20).
5. Have children to whom God shows compassion (Ps. 103:11-18).
6. Have descendants who will be great on the earth in the most important ways (Ps. 112:2).
7. Are motivated to be gracious and generous (Ps. 112:4, 5).
8. Will be confident, courageous people (Ps. 112:6-8; Prov. 14:26).
9. Will experience contentment (Ps. 112:5, 6, 9; Prov. 19:23).
10. Will be praying people whose prayers will be heard (Ps. 145:19).
11. Are blessed with wisdom (Prov. 1:7; 9:10).
12. Are teachable and peaceful (Prov. 8:13; 14:26; 15:33; Acts 9:31).
13. Are characterized by integrity and faithfulness (Job 2:3).
14. Are considerate and kind (Ps. 112:4, 5).
15. Are noted for constructive speech (Mal. 3:16).
16. Are patient, hopeful, and genuine (Ps. 147:11).
17. Persevere in doing what is right (Ps. 112:3, 5; 2 Cor. 7:1).
18. Work hard, but are not so committed to work that they do not have time for enjoyment (Ps. 128:3).
19. Accept responsibility for their own families and yet are not overly responsible (Ps. 128:3).
20. Are devoted to their families and find them to be a source of great satisfaction (Ps. 128:1-4).
21. Delight in worshipping God (Rev. 14:7).
22. Love the Scripture and order their lives according to God's commands (Ps. 112:1; Eccl. 12:13).

How does all this apply to my friend Greg and his family problems? Certainly, he needed specific instructions on the issues involved in husbanding and fathering. In the course of counseling we discussed such issues in great detail. But Greg needed more than that. He needed a healthy, wholesome fear of God in his life.

What It Means to Fear God

What does it mean to be a God-fearing man? Unclear answers to this question will hinder you in building a better family God's way. Some people have a fear of God that is heavy, even oppressive. To them the thought of God brings anxiety, dread, or terror. Their fear of God is debilitating, a curse rather than a blessing. They think that God is out to get them, that he is petulant, vindictive, and hard to get along with.

An example of this kind of fear is found in the story Jesus told about the three men who had been given talents. Two men actively invested their talents and produced an increase. The third man did nothing with his talent. When called to give an account, he explained his inaction by saying, "I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you scattered no seed. And *I was afraid*, and went away and hid your talent" (Matt. 25:24, 25, emphasis added).

This man's fear rendered him powerless to act. He thought of his master as a vindictive despot who delighted in putting people on the spot and wreaking vengeance on them. Such a defeatist attitude reflects the outlook of many people today. They live in fear of other people, circumstances, or what may happen. They even view God in the way the man in our Lord's story viewed his master.

But the fear of Matthew 25:25 is not the fear of God described in Psalm 128. The one will impoverish you and your family; the other will enrich your life. Matthew 25:25 fear will cause you to be insecure, discontented, unforgiving, unloving, authoritarian, or spineless. But Psalm 128 fear produces the opposite effects. It is constructive, not destructive. It will draw you toward God, not drive you away from him. It will stimulate responsible action, not

breed idleness. It will cause you to reach out, not pull in. It will help you serve others and diminish selfishness. And it will demolish other fears, which inhibit confident, joyful, fruitful living.

Scripture asserts that if you are in union with Christ Jesus, you have no reason to be held captive to a fear that involves the dread of God. If you have never experienced the forgiveness of God through Christ's redemption, you have every reason to be terrified of God because you have never made peace with him. But if you have trusted in Christ alone for salvation and forgiveness of sins, confessing him as Lord, the Bible says that you have no cause to be in bondage to this kind of fear. God has granted you the spirit of sonship and the right to call him your Father (Rom. 8:15). As a child of your loving, compassionate heavenly Father, you are an heir of God and a co-heir with Christ. You are destined to share Christ's glory (Rom. 8:17), having been declared righteous through his death, reconciled to God, and saved from God's wrath through him (Rom. 5:9, 10). Because of your relationship with Jesus, you don't have to be distraught by the thought of God. In fact, you now have every reason to rejoice in God, fearing him in the positive sense described in Psalm 128. And that leads us to ask exactly what it means for you to fear God.

Simply put, the fear of God is the inevitable response to a growing, biblical understanding of and relationship with the true and living God who has revealed himself in Jesus Christ.

The essence of the fear of God is vividly illustrated in the life of Moses in Exodus 15:1-18. Prior to this passage Moses had an experience that greatly enlarged his concept of God. The Lord had just miraculously and powerfully delivered his people from certain destruction at the hands of the Egyptians. God had opened the waters of the Red Sea and allowed the relatively helpless and defenseless Israelites to pass to the other side in safety. He had dramatically thwarted the murderous intentions of the powerful Egyptians. God had clearly shown his might, power, and loving-kindness to his people. As a result, Moses was gripped by the excellency of who God is. Moses had encountered God as one who is highly exalted, majestic in power, glorious in holiness, fearful (awesome) in praises, unfailing in faithfulness, completely trustworthy,

abundant in mercy, committed to his people, absolutely and eternally sovereign, and unrivalled in excellence.

His reflex response to this pervasive awareness was adoration, love, and obedience. Every area of his being was now controlled by a big concept of God. He experienced what Psalm 128 calls “the fear of God.”

Abraham’s life provides us with another powerful illustration of what it means to be a God-fearing man. The Bible calls Abraham God’s friend. He undoubtedly had a close relationship with God. Moreover Abraham had an exalted concept of God that influenced his personal and family life in very practical ways. His relationship to God was the most significant factor in his life.

Abraham’s life cannot be understood apart from his big concept of God. On occasion, the Bible indicates, that concept receded, but the overall picture is that of a man whose fear of God was pre-eminent, pervasive, and powerful. Because he feared God, he was willing to leave his homeland and move to an entirely new area. Because he feared God, he was a magnanimous man, willing to give the best land to his nephew Lot. Because he feared God, he was content with what he had, unwilling to take advantage of others, concerned about justice (the rights of others), and willing to risk his own life and expend time, effort, and finances for the sake of his family. He chose to put God’s will before everything else, including his own feelings and desires. Abraham’s big concept of God made him the godly man that he was.

The Motivating Power of the Fear of God

A healthy, wholesome fear of God will do the same for you and me. An all-encompassing sense (1) of the presence of God, (2) of the unrivalled majesty of God, (3) of the abundant mercy and grace of God, (4) of the faithfulness of God, (5) of your dependence on and responsibility to God, (6) of your relationship with God and the priority of that relationship, (7) of the supreme perfection of God will redirect every aspect of life. It will call forth a loving and unreserved commitment to God. It will propel you to structure your life, order your affairs and relationships, and make decisions ac-

ording to God's will. You will be a man who walks with God in close fellowship. Your life will revolve around him so that you can say with Paul, "For to me to live is Christ." You will be stimulated and empowered to relate to your wife and family in a God-ordained way. You will become the blessed (happy) man of Psalm 128, who in turn becomes a blessing to his wife and children. Building a family God's way will not remain "the impossible dream." It will become a reality.

Acquiring and Maintaining the Fear of God

This leads us very naturally to the question, How can a healthy fear of God be acquired and maintained? Ultimately, it is possible only if you have been born again in Jesus Christ. Left to yourself, you may fear God in the stifling, destructive way previously described. It takes no special work of God in your life for you to be terrified of God. But to fear God in the proper way is a different matter. This requires a gracious work of God in your life. The Holy Spirit must enable you to be spiritually reborn and redeemed from sin through the work of Jesus Christ.

Speaking to this issue, Peter challenges us to live our lives in reverent fear, because we know that we have been redeemed through the precious blood of Christ (1 Pet. 1:17-19). Peter seems to be saying that our redemption in Christ provides a twofold reason to fear God: (1) It should inspire a big concept of God because of the means by which he has saved us. We have been loosed from the penalty and power of our sin by nothing less than the death of God's own Son, Jesus Christ. (2) Peter asserts that Christ's redemption includes a deliverance from our old way of life, in which a reverent fear of God was lacking (Rom. 3:18).

By now you may be thinking, "I'm a Christian, but the fear of God is not very powerful in my life." That was Greg's problem. He had confessed Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior. He wanted to please God. But his fear of God was minimal, and his relationship with him was superficial. In such a case, what else do you need in order to develop a more vital awareness of the true and living God in your life?

God's word to us through Jeremiah provides important insight into this matter: "They will be my people, and I will be their God. I will give them singleness of heart and action, so that they will always fear me for their own good and the good of their children after them. . . . I will never stop doing good to them, and I will inspire them to fear me . . ." (Jer. 32:38-40, NIV).

Note carefully what this passage says about the fear of God. God's people—those who belong to him—are without exception God-fearing people. They fear him because God inspires them to do so and not because of any natural inclination. *He* gives them singleness of heart and action. Paul recognized this and wrote that "God, who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ" (2 Cor. 4:6, NIV). Paul is saying that we will never comprehend God's majesty and glory unless God turns on the light in the darkness of our hearts. He must provide illumination in our inner man if we are to understand his splendor.

The Prayer Factor

Because of this conviction, Paul frequently petitions God to reveal himself. In Ephesians, he writes, "I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better" (Eph. 1:17, NIV). Later in the same epistle he says, "I pray that you . . . may have the power . . . to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fulness of God" (Eph. 3:17-19, NIV).

Several important facts should be observed in these passages. These are prayer petitions addressed to God, though shared with the readers of the epistle. Paul is not directly exhorting or admonishing his readers. He is praying. He is asking God to do something in their lives. Certainly, this implies that without God's help, we cannot experience whatever he is describing. In addition, I am struck by the fact that this particular prayer request was one that he

frequently and continuously brought to God. He says, "I keep asking God . . ." (Eph. 1:17); "I pray . . ." (present tense), not "I prayed" (past tense) (Eph. 3:16).

When you study Paul's Ephesian prayers, you realize that they can be boiled down to only one thing. The focus of Paul's prayer was that God might give us wisdom and revelation so that we may know him better. To Paul, the fulfillment of this entreaty was the fountainhead that opened up a world of blessing. If you are a God-fearing man, you will pray because you fear God. And, as you pray aright, your wholesome fear of God will be nurtured and increased *because* you pray. This will be the dynamic that will enable you to build your family God's way.

Remember Greg? He wanted to be a good husband and father. He worked hard to give his family the very best. He really cared for them. Still, he had become aware that something was amiss in his relationships with his family and with God. Greg was so gifted and successful in most of what he did that he had become too self-sufficient. He was so busy that he neglected his prayer life. The telltale signs of this neglect were a distant relationship with God and a limited impact on his family. You can't develop a healthy, wholesome God-consciousness or build a family God's way without a meaningful prayer life. However, as important as prayer is in this connection, it is but one piece of the puzzle.

"Be Still and Know"

According to Psalm 46, to nurture a controlling and pervasive awareness of God you must "be still and know" that he is God (Ps. 46:10). That means regularly taking time out from your hurried pace of life to reflect on who and what God is. Psalm 46 depicts a man who is hopeful, secure, and courageous in the midst of unusually difficult circumstances. That is not his natural temperament. He has become that kind of man because he has taken time to "be still and know that [he] is God." I urge you to make it a regular priority to be still and meditate on God as he is revealed in Jesus Christ. Scripture declares that the glory of God is disclosed in

the face of Jesus (2 Cor. 4:6). Christ “is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being” (Heb. 1:3, NIV). Spend time regularly reflecting on the person and work of Jesus Christ—who he is and what he did, what he is doing and will do. Seek to know him personally. Talk to him about whatever is on your mind.

Place yourself as an observer in the scenes described in the New Testament and try to picture what is happening. Consider how he lived and related to people, as well as what he did and said. Try to understand why he spoke and acted as he did. Imagine what he may have been thinking or feeling. Note how people responded to him.

See his majesty, his graciousness, his wisdom, his compassion, his righteousness and justice, his power. Go often to the cross on which he died for your sins. Proceed to the empty tomb from which he arose and was powerfully declared to be the Son of God. Spend time on the Mount of Olives from which he ascended to the presence of God the Father. Contemplate the throne room of God, where he sits possessing all authority over heaven and earth, making intercession for you and ruling over all things for the sake of the church. Consider what all this means for his relationship to the world, to people, to history—and to you.

Seek with Paul to know Christ more fully than you’ve ever known him to this point (Phil. 3:10). Don’t be satisfied with a secondhand knowledge of Christ. I have encouraged people who have wanted to enhance their personal relationship with Jesus to have an hourly fellowship break. One man set his wrist watch alarm to sound off every hour. It reminded him to focus on Christ, talk to Him, and reflect on God’s Word. This break became “the pause that refreshes” and helped him to develop a more God-conscious, Christ-centered life.

The Bible, God’s Letter

Keep in mind that since the Bible is primarily a revelation of who and what God is, your relationship with God will be nourished by faithful meditation on God’s Word. “The Scriptures . . . testify

about me,” Jesus said in John 5:39. David tells us that “the statutes of the Lord are trustworthy, making wise the simple. . . . The commands of the Lord are radiant, giving light to the eyes. The fear of the Lord is pure, enduring forever” (Ps. 19:7-9, NIV). Note that this passage closely connects God’s Word with “the fear of the Lord.” David does this because he knows that the inevitable response to a proper study of God’s Word is an increased veneration of God. He realizes that those who consistently and submissively come to the Bible to meet God will not be disappointed. For the Bible is God’s book (2 Tim. 3:16-17). In it God has revealed his attributes, his works, his concerns, his will, his intentions, his plans, his desires for his people, and his designs for the world that rejects him.

Develop the attitude that God is speaking to you as you read the Scriptures. Read them as you would a letter from your dearest friend. The two of you are making contact. You are coming to know your friend better. Receive what the Bible says as coming from your heavenly Father, your personal Savior and Lord, the great and awesome God of creation and redemption. Don’t regard its teachings as abstract rules about life—mere duties to fulfill. Respond to God’s Word as one who by grace has been brought into the family of the most wonderful person in all the universe. See everything in the Scripture as an invitation to enter into a deeper relationship with your majestic, infinite Father and Redeemer.

Christian counselors sometimes give people who are experiencing marital or family problems an assignment to make one graph depicting the high and low points of their relationship with God and another graph depicting the high and low points in their family relationships. Interestingly, when these two graphs are compared, the high and low points often coincide. Often when people sensed that their relationship with God was vital and deep, they also experienced a vital relationship with other family members.

Greg has been learning this basic lesson. Have you? If so, you’re on track for building your family God’s way. If not, I encourage you to repent, and by God’s grace reorient your life to put first things first. It will do a world of good for you *and* your family.¹

Study and Application Assignments

Do the assignments individually and then discuss your answers with your mate or your study group.

1. Reflect on (or if necessary, review) this chapter and answer the following questions:
 - a. Describe in your own words the problem in Greg's life and how it was affecting his family.
 - b. How does Psalm 128 describe the husband and father in God's kind of family? What is the one outstanding feature of this man's life as found in this Psalm?
 - c. According to the Bible, why is a man's relationship with God so important for himself and his family? What benefits does God promise to the person (and his family) who makes his relationship with God a priority?
 - d. What two types of "fear of God" were mentioned in the chapter? Describe the kind of fear of God that is destructive. What Bible example(s) illustrate this kind of fear? Can you think of some historical or contemporary examples of people who have had a destructive fear of God? How has this kind of fear affected their lives and families? Why have these people feared God in this way? Is such fear realistic for them? Is it warranted?
 - e. Describe the kind of fear of God that is wholesome and constructive. How would you explain it to someone who doesn't have a biblical concept of the fear of God? What are its features? What Bible examples illustrate this fear of God? What effect do you think it had on their lives and families?
 - f. Can you think of some historical or contemporary examples of people who have feared God in this constructive way? What effect has it had on their lives and families?
 - g. What directives were given in this chapter about developing this healthy fear of God? Do you have any other suggestions about how a vital fear of God, i.e., relationship with him, may be maintained?
 - h. Do you agree with the primary thesis of this chapter that a healthy relationship with God is the main factor in being God's kind of husband and father? Why or why not?

- i. Evaluate your relationship with God at this time. (Excellent___, Good___, Fair___, Poor___, Nonexistent___.) Explain why you gave the rating you did. (If you have difficulty answering this and the next two questions, question 2 listed below should give you some help.)
 - j. Are you in practice, not just in theory, putting first things first? (Regularly___, Often___, Sometimes___, Seldom___, Never___.) Give reasons for rating yourself as you did.
 - k. Are there ways in which you should improve your relationship with God? (Yes___, No___, Maybe___.) If so, how?
2. Meditate on the twenty-two benefits listed in this chapter that are promised to the person who fears God. Consider what each of them means in practical, behavioral terms. Take each statement and ask yourself, Is this true in my life regularly (= 4), often (= 3), occasionally (= 2), seldom (= 1), never (= 0)? According to these statements, the fear of God will affect a man's life in certain ways. So, to some extent, you may use these benefits as a means of realistically evaluating the depth and condition of your relationship with God. After you have rated yourself on each of the twenty-two statements, make a list of all the items that you scored 0 or 1 or 2. Plan how you can improve your relationship with God. Perhaps you will want to write out a statement of commitment and sign your name to what you are going to do. Pray daily for God's help in making the desired improvements. Refer back to your list regularly as a means of continuous evaluation and motivation.
3. What do the following Bible verses reveal about Abraham's relationship with God, particularly his fear of God? Are there any indications about how Abraham's fear of God was developed and sustained? What impact did it have on his life and family? Try to gain specific insights about what you are doing or should do to develop your relationship with God and build your family God's way. As you look at each passage, ask yourself: What is God saying to me about my relationship with him? How should what I see here be applied to my life and family? How well am I doing in implementing the teaching(s) of this passage?
- a. 2 Chronicles 20:7
 - b. Isaiah 41:8
 - c. James 2:23
 - d. Genesis 12:1-8

- e. Genesis 13:8, 9
 - f. Genesis 14:14
 - g. Genesis 14:22, 23
 - h. Genesis 14:24
 - i. Genesis 21:10, 11
 - j. Genesis 22:11, 12
 - k. Romans 4:19-21
4. Study the following verses and note what each of them teaches or implies about: (1) the excellence of God; (2) the fear of God; (3) what our relationship with God should be like; (4) what place God should have in our lives; (5) how to develop the fear of God; and (6) what happens to the person who fears God.
- a. Genesis 5:22
 - b. Exodus 15:11
 - c. Exodus 34:6, 7
 - d. Deuteronomy 6:13; 10:12
 - e. 2 Chronicles 20:6-19
 - f. Psalm 19:7-11
 - g. Psalm 34:7, 11
 - h. Psalm 128:1
 - i. Psalm 130:4
 - j. Psalm 139:1-6
 - k. Psalm 139:7-10
 - l. Psalm 139:13-16
 - m. Psalm 139:23, 24
 - n. Psalm 147:11
 - o. Proverbs 1:7
 - p. Proverbs 8:13
 - q. Proverbs 14:26, 27
 - r. Proverbs 19:23
 - s. Proverbs 28:14
 - t. Isaiah 40:10-31

- u. Matthew 10:28
 - v. Romans 8:26-39
 - w. Romans 11:36
 - x. Revelation 4:8-11
 - y. Revelation 5:9-14
 - z. Revelation 15:3, 4
5. Reflect on what you have just studied and write out your response to this question: What difference should all this make in my own life and family relationships?²

Notes

¹For further study on the subjects of effective prayer, how to profit from your Bible, and developing your relationship with God, I recommend the following resources: *Knowing God*, J. I. Packer; *Trusting God*, Jerry Bridges; *Between Walden and the Whirlwind*, Jean Fleming; *Pray With Your Eyes Open*, Richard Pratt; *How to Pray Effectively*, Wayne Mack (tape); *The Practical and Profitable Use of the Bible* (tape), Wayne Mack; *Scriptural Meditation* (2 tapes), Wayne Mack. The books may be purchased from a Christian bookstore; books and tapes may be purchased from Biblical Counseling and Living Supplies, 2299 Brodhead Road, Bethlehem, Pa. 18017.

²Additional information with specific guidelines for husbands is found in three books by Wayne A. Mack: *Strengthening Your Marriage, A Homework Manual for Biblical Living*, vol. 2 (Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1977 and 1980), and *Preparing for Marriage God's Way* (Tulsa, Okla.: Hensley, 1986). Cassette tapes by Wayne Mack dealing with husband and wife relationships, sex relations, and finances are available. These study materials may be secured from Biblical Counseling and Living Supplies, 2299 Brodhead Road, Bethlehem, Pa. 18017.