

Christian Marriage and Family Life

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Pre-marital Counselling

Lesson 1

A. Introduction

The choice of a marriage partner is one of the most important choices we make in life, which will mean either heaven or hell on earth (or anything in-between), and since God's Word is very clear that this is a choice for life, it should be taken with the greatest care and understanding.

For less important choices in life, like our occupation, we seek counsel before we choose direction and we are even prepared to study for years. We will also carefully investigate all aspects before buying a camera or a car but when it comes to marriage, we often walk into it blindly and ill-informed, and this is usually why so many marriages end up in trouble.

Here are five reasons why pre-marital counselling is so important:

B. Why pre-marital counselling?

1. Because the choice of a marriage partner is the second most important choice in life – after choosing Christ as your personal Saviour.
2. Because God ordains marriage, we must learn to follow His manual – His Word – for it to work according to His plan.
3. Because more than 50% of all marriages end in divorce Billy Graham adds: “and another 40% are unhappy” that leaves only 10% that are happy and fulfilled.
4. Because it will powerfully affect future generations: “Great men and women come out of great homes, not in size and glamour, but in quality”.
5. Because there is a satanic attack on Biblical marriage and family life.

C. Who should counsel?

1. It should be a mature, well-trained man/woman of God, who has experience from a long intimate walk with God, together with his/her spouse.
2. Even better if it is a husband and wife with the above qualifications.
3. The couple to be married should choose a person/persons in whom they have complete confidence, who will never misuse or leak any information or confidence shared.
4. Preferably not close family, where personal feelings and “dreams” could cloud the issue.

5. It is important to create a free, informal and relaxed atmosphere so that the couple can talk freely about their plans, fears, dreams and expectations.
 - a) It should not be an office situation with a desk between the counsellor and the couple.
 - b) Rather, let it be a home situation, around a coffee table.

D. When should counselling be given?

1. When the choice of partner is to be made.

- a) Warn against dating many different people. It will only lead to hurt, confusion and unnecessary temptations.
- b) Rather have free and relaxed fellowship with many different people and pray for God's guidance. The Bible says: "God brought them together". Genesis 2:22.
- c) Warn against an unbiblical relationship: 2 Corinthians 6:14-18, "Do not be unequally yoked together with an unbeliever".

It is like joining:

Righteousness	to	lawlessness.
Light	to	darkness.
Christ	to	Belial = children of the wicked one = satan.
A believer	to	An unbeliever.
The temple of God	to	An idol's temple.

God's promise when it is the right union: verses 16 and 18.

"I will dwell with them".

"I will walk with them".

"I will be their God".

"I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters".

- d) A good example from the Old Testament is found in Genesis 24:1-24. Finding a bride for Isaac:
 - i) Where not to seek, verse 3. – amongst the heathen.
 - ii) Where to seek, verse 4. – amongst the people of God.
 - iii) How to seek, verses 7-21.
Pray and expect God's guidance, verses 7, 12.
Ask God for a sign, verses 13-14.
Don't be too quick – wait upon the Lord, verse 21.
 - iv) The wonderful result.
A beautiful girl, verse 16.
A clean-living girl, verse 16.

A kind girl, verse 25.
A good and diligent girl, verses 18-20.
A happy marriage, verse 67.

2. Counselling before marriage.

- a) Educate about the different roles in married life.
 - i) Educate about the role of Husband/Wife. (See pages 14-16 and 25-26.)
 - ii) Educate about the sexual relationship. (See pages 26-28.)
 - iii) Educate about the role of parenthood: how to raise children. (See pages 19-21.)
 - iv) Give them good books as compulsory reading.
- b) Deal with problems that can arise.
 - i) If jealousy and misunderstandings arise.
 - ii) If customs or different cultures create problems.
 - iii) Help them to stay sexually pure until marriage.
 - iv) Teach them to understand that marriage is not a “reform school”, that the wedding itself will do nothing to change former habits; they will only change by a long, gentle, loving process.
 - v) Teach them to accept and adapt to one another.

E. Important points to cover

1. Health issues.

- a) It is important not to cover up any health problems, sexual diseases or any other ailments; such as heart problems, occasional asthma or fits of depression, etc. These things should not be discovered after marriage.
- b) Emotional problems, resulting from abuse or neglect in childhood, should be shared and hopefully healed through mature counselling.
- c) Any desire from either of the partners to enforce a special form of healthy eating or exercising should be discussed before marriage.

2. Future plans and dreams.

- a) How they feel about both of them working and being away from home, even when there are children, should be discussed and worked through.

- b) Any dream of any future extended education should be shared.
- c) Any dream or call into ministry must be discussed; it could even be a call to another part of the world.

3. The place of family and friends in the forthcoming marriage.

- a) After the wedding will they move into a home of their own, or will they have to live with somebody else?
- b) They should be in agreement as to whether or not they will accept interference from family on either side.
- c) Continuing relationships with former friends and former activity involvement should be discussed and agreed upon before the new marriage begins.

4. Discussion about children in the forthcoming marriage.

- a) Can they agree on how many children they will have?
- b) Do they know about, and agree upon, the use of birth control?
- c) They must reveal if there are any “hidden” children from a former relationship and then they must agree on how they will deal with their relationship to such children.
- d) Do they agree upon how to raise their future children? This is especially relevant if they are from different cultures and social backgrounds or from different church backgrounds.

5. A good start.

A bad start to a race will affect everything! That is why we must give any new marriage the best start that we can, with good sound counselling and training for this life-long journey.

God's Plan for Marriage

Lesson 2

A. Introduction

The world is full of good counselling books on marriage but, since marriage is altogether God's idea, one book supersedes them all; "the Bible". The Creator knows us inside out and a marriage can only really function well if we carefully follow His manual. It is no wonder therefore that it does not work when we choose not to follow His guidance.

Illustration: My car manual tells me where to put oil in and where to put water in. If I do it the opposite way the car will not go very far before it breaks down. Even if I don't treat it that badly, but I simply just neglect it well it can limp along for some years but it will eventually stop working completely. So it is with a marriage!

One Key Sentence

What does God say about the marriage relationship? There is one key sentence, which is mentioned three times in Scripture:

God said it: Genesis 2:18-24.

Jesus said it: Matthew 19:4-6.

The Spirit said it, through Paul: Ephesians 5:31.

Some definite basic rules for marriage are found in these scriptures.

"And the Lord God said: it is not good that man should be alone, I will make him a helper comparable to him" "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh".

B. "It is not good that man should be alone", Genesis 2:18

1. After Adam had named all the animals and they walked away in pairs, it says in verse 20, "*but for Adam there was not found a helper comparable to him*". Why?
2. Because God wanted to be man's partner and have a deep, intimate fellowship with him. But, God is Spirit and so much greater than man, that there is no comparison between the two. Therefore, although Adam had a wonderful spiritual relationship with God, he needed someone comparable to himself to share everything with, even the intimate fellowship with God.
3. Because of this aspect Adam was lonely, and loneliness is a terrible condition to be in, with nobody on your own level to share things with and so, when God saw this, He said: "*It is not good that man should be alone*".
4. God, who is all knowing, was not surprised by this. Eve was not an after-thought, but God wanted to give her to Adam as a precious gift that he could love and appreciate and share everything with.
So, marriage is designed for loving friendship and companionship, and should be kept like that right throughout.

Basic rule No. 1: “Share everything”.

Not just the bed, but thoughts, feelings, ideas, vision, life experiences – share it all with one another.

The first step on the road to divorce is a lack of communication.

C. “I will make him a helper comparable to him”, Genesis 2:18

1. No – Eve was not an after-thought! God took a substantial part out of Adam and made Eve. (The Hebrew word for “made” is “panah” = build, skilfully formed.) God wonderfully perfected the crown of His creation – man.
2. And here stood Eve; perfect, beautiful, completely compatible and fitting for Adam in every way; body, soul and spirit. (The root meaning of the Hebrew word for “helper” means “to support, surround”.)
3. “And God brought her to the man”. Verse 22. When God brings people together in marriage, they are compatible and fit with each other, and will cover each other’s weak points.

Illustration: Cut a man out of a piece of paper and then cut some holes in him, here and there. Then cut a woman out of another piece of paper and make holes in her, but not in the same places as the man. Now place them together and all the holes disappear, they will cover each other’s weak points.

4. When love is present, we do not see one another’s weak points, we cover them.
1 Corinthians 13: “Love is patient and kind”.
“Love always protects”.
“Love keeps no record of wrongs”.

Only if love wears off, will you start to focus on the weaknesses of your spouse. You can become so blinded that you forget the good qualities you need from him/her, and which actually drew you together in the first place, and you will instead require from him/her all the qualities you already have yourself.

Illustration: Someone painted a picture in just black and white and, when you first look at it, you just see all the black areas and it looks like one big confused mess. But then you are told to concentrate on the white in between, and suddenly you discover that it is actually a picture of Jesus.

In a marriage relationship, please concentrate on the white colour and you will see a beautiful wife or a handsome husband.

Basic rule No. 2: “Keep your eyes on the positive elements of your spouse”.

D. Woman is another creation

1. “I will make him a helper **comparable** to him” – But not the **same** as man! Not inferior, but wonderfully different:

- a) She was created at a different time. It could have been months or years after Adam was created, as he had already named all the animals before Eve appeared.
 - b) She was created in a different way, actually taken out of Adam, and skilfully formed by God. Verses 21-22.
 - c) It was a great mistake when the Women's Liberation Movement tried to force men and women into the same roles and positions, as it caused stress and unhappiness.
2. They are physically different:
- a) Woman is probably physically superior, with her ability to bear children.
 - b) Man is physically stronger.
3. They are psychologically different:
- a) Woman is generally more sensitive and emotional than man.
 - b) Man is an initiator; woman is a responder.
 - c) Man is a leader; woman is a follower.
 - d) Man is a protector; woman is a companion.
(Look at the statistics in the world, don't look blindly at the exceptions.)
4. They are perhaps also spiritually different:
- a) Because of their different psyche, women respond more easily to the spiritual but they also have a greater chance of being deceived. 1 Timothy 2:13-14.
 - b) Men go more according to facts, are more critical and are not so easily moved by emotion.
5. It is easy to see that man and woman have great need of each other. 1 Corinthians 11:11.
- a) What God said in the beginning is so evident: "I will make him one comparable to him", "Fit for him".
(The old saying: "My better half" is true for both sides.)
 - b) Across the world there are as many girls as boys born. It is even a fact that after a war, when many men are killed, the next generation has a "bumper crop" of male babies and so in one generation the balance is back to normal! Who can explain that Except that it is God keeping His promise: "I will make one fit for him/her".

Basic rule No. 3: "Woman is another wonderful creation, different from man, but they are fit for each other".

E. “Therefore ... a man should leave his father and mother”

1. Therefore, because he has found the one out there who wonderfully fits his character; the one comparable to him.
2. “Leave your father and mother”.
There is no room for a third party to interfere in this new marriage, not even the closest family; they can only play the part they are invited to play.
Except God! Eve was created much later than Adam, perhaps because God wanted to be Adam’s partner but, as we saw, they were not comparable in **every** way. Therefore God took Eve out of Adam and gave her a beautiful body so that they, together, could enjoy a deep love relationship with God.

Basic rule No. 4: “No interference, not even from the closest family”.

3. We all know how many young marriages suffer from an interfering mother-in-law.
4. In many places old tribal customs put great demands on a young married couple. Therefore the rule must be that if these customs are not in line with the Word of God, they should be wisely rejected.
5. “**Leave**” – also means: “let your marriage have the highest priority”. If anything from your past negatively impacts on your marriage relationship then you must leave it. It could be:
 - a) Former friends instead rather find some mutual friends.
 - b) A job which keeps you apart find a better job.
 - c) It could be sport find some exercise that you can enjoy together.
 - d) Not even your children (which will soon arrive) A husband should embrace and greet his wife first when returning home from a trip, not the children, not friends!

Basic rule No. 5: “Let marriage have the highest priority, let nothing come in-between”.

6. “Leave your father and mother”. This means that one season of your life is over and a wonderful new season begins; let it have all your attention.
7. Step into this new role as Husband/Wife, and fill it the very best way that you can.

Illustration: When my daughter Susanne married, she went through a wonderful change and said: “*I am not a little girl any more, I am Mrs. Sivewright*” – a new life, a new authority, a new beautiful role to fill.

Basic rule No. 6: “Step fully into your role”.

F. “Be joined to his wife”, Genesis 2:24

1. The Hebrew word for “joined” or “cleave” means to “adhere” – “glue”.

Illustration: Cut two hearts out of paper. Write husband on the one and wife on the other. Now glue them together and, during your teaching, try to separate them – as you do so, both of them will get spoiled.

2. **Malachi 2:14-16**, “*Because the Lord has been a witness between you and the wife of your youth for the Lord God of Israel says, that He hates divorce*”.

Basic rule No. 7: “Divorce is not an option”.

3. It should be agreed upon right from the beginning that this is a life-long commitment where divorce is not an option but that, should any big problem occur, counselling would solve it.
4. The “glue” which should bind this relationship together is **Love**, God’s Agape Love, Colossians 3:14. “*Love is the bond of perfection*”. Not this “wishy-washy” emotional thing that the world calls love, although love is also a wonderful emotion, but it is also much more it is also a command – Ephesians 5:25.

Basic rule No. 8: “Let LOVE live right throughout the marriage”.

5. Love can be likened to what the blood stream is for the body: it must be everywhere and cover everything; otherwise the marriage will wither and die.

G. “And these two shall become one flesh”, Genesis 2:24

1. According to the apostle Paul this speaks about the sexual relationship, 1 Corinthians 6:9-10. The Bible is very clear that the sexual relationship only belongs inside marriage; all other forms are sin.
2. The Bible also speaks about the sexual relationship as a beautiful and very important part of the marriage relationship, and it is not only for producing children, but also for enjoyment. 1 Corinthians 7:3-5; Proverbs 5:18-19.
3. However, so often this relationship is filled with problems because so little teaching is given about this important matter, especially in Christian circles. For many, the only information they get is from films and magazines, which is mostly twisted, incorrect information and people get confused and become tired of the whole thing.
4. Read good Christian books on this important subject. More information on this matter is found in this manual on pages 26-28.

Basic rule No. 9: “Sex in marriage is wonderful, get it to work”.

H. “And God said – it is not good for man to be alone”

1. Marriage is all God’s idea, and will only work properly when He is deeply involved. **Ecclesiastes 4:12**, “*A threefold cord is not quickly broken*”.
2. **John 2:1**. *The wedding in Cana.*

The first miracle Jesus performed was for a young newly married couple. A marriage doesn't need to be established for many years before it starts facing problems! But Jesus was invited in, and soon they learned their first very important lesson. They were told: "*whatever He tells you to do, do it*".

3. We would all do well to follow this advice. He knows all about us and He has a lot to say about marriage and family life let us do it and then our marriage and families can be a miracle.

Basic rule No. 10: "Let Christ be in the centre of your union"

4. Let Jesus – His love – His life – bind you together. Let His Word be the guideline for your marriage and your family life.

Family dynamic

Lesson 3

A. Introduction

Dynamic means “force which creates action”.

The dynamic in a sports team can be a powerful positive force when each player understands his position and uses his gifts and skills for the common goal. But in many families today the dynamic is confused and each member, not sure of what role to play, uses his/her gifts and skills in an egotistic way, and they end up working against each other.

But the Word of God gives us clear guidelines as to how a Christian family should function, and what role each one should play.

In the following lessons we will deal with the role of the man and woman as they come together in marriage to form a powerful team who will affect generations to come.

B. The role of the man in his family

1. The man plays a threefold role in the family.

The head The husband The father

2. This is a vital role. All the other roles in the family are highly dependant on him functioning well in his threefold role, as this will positively affect the others.

Illustration: It is like the conductor of an orchestra – all the musicians can be very gifted, but he is the one who makes a beautiful symphony out of it. Without him there would be confusion and disharmony.

C. The head of the family

1. This is often misunderstood as a license to be a bull-headed, dictator-type husband/father, who rules his home with an iron rod. Husband/Father, realise that headship does not start with you.
 - a) 1 Corinthians 11:3, “*I want you to know, the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God*”.
 - b) Husband/Father – your relationship with God and Christ must be in order. You must be fully submitted to Him as only then are you really fit to be the head of your wife and family
 - c) Look and learn from the wonderful relationship there is in the Trinity. Learn from the way Christ treats us; this is true and perfect headship.
2. “The head”, an illustration so close to us we all have one!
 - a) If there are any needs or problems or any form of imbalance anywhere in our body, the head will make a plan to bring everything back into harmony.

- b) Husband/Father – you are the head of the family, don't be the problem, but be the problem solver.
- c) Some wives will fight to get the leadership in the family. Once they get it they are unhappy and will despise the man. "A body cannot have two heads".
- d) Ladies give up fighting and fulfil the wonderful role God has given you!

3. There are three functions for the head of the home:

a) **To be the "referee" in your family.**

Any football match with an inferior referee will result in arguments and fights.

- i) "Teach them the rule book". Make good clear rules for your family. Let the Word of God be the guideline for everything. *Deuteronomy 11:18-21*, "Therefore you shall lay up these words of Mine in your heart and in your soul you shall teach them to your children, speak of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up, write them on the doorposts of your house ...".
- ii) "Mark the field properly". For the protection of the family, the husband and wife must be in full agreement as to where the boundaries are for their family.
- iii) "As a referee you must blow the whistle and get the yellow and red cards out" when somebody steps over the line or acts in rebellion.
- iv) As a "referee" you must help and encourage each member in the family to function the best in his/her position.

b) **Control the atmosphere in the home.**

- i) Don't allow a "storm" to rise. Small things often cause it: "*Don't press the toothpaste in the middle*" or "*why do you always leave the door open?*" and soon a heated argument is on the go. With wisdom and gentle words, restore harmony.
- ii) Don't allow an icy atmosphere to creep into your home, where people walk around in silence or snap at each other. Husband/Father, do something about it! There are many words in the English language that you can use – like: "*I am sorry*", "*please forgive me*", "*I love you*", "*you look so pretty*", etc. Just remember that the florists are not there just for funerals!
- iii) **A bad example: Genesis 25:28.** Here one sees how Isaac and Rebecca created strife in their home through favouritism with their children: "*Isaac loved Esau but Rebecca loved Jacob*". Look at the result of this in the next generation; the two boys could not stand each other.

- iv) Create a warm, accepting atmosphere; cold criticism only breaks down, there is nothing positive in it at all. Love and encouragement can do wonders for a young teenager or a tired wife.

Illustration: We bought a plant from a nursery and attached to it was a description of the perfect environment that this plant needed in order to develop beautifully. Well, this is not just true for plants; children also need a good environment in which to develop beautifully.

c) **The priest in your home.**

- i) The “priest” in your home is not Pastor so and so. No! It is you, husband/father! This important task cannot be entrusted to anyone else, not even to your wife. **Your family’s eternal welfare is your responsibility.**
- ii) The Bible clearly shows us that it is the man (the father) who is responsible for the family’s well being in every aspect.

It was the father who had to gather his family and paint the blood on the doorpost of his house, to save them from destruction. Exodus 12:3-13.

It was a father who came to Jesus with his son who was troubled by demonic powers that threw him into both water and fire. Today many young men are troubled by the devil, and drawn into many evil things, but what are the fathers doing? Matthew 17:14-19.

It was the father who pleaded with Jesus for his dying child. Luke 8:41-42.

It was the father who went out daily looking for his lost son. Luke 15:11-24.

It will be a great day for you if you can stand before God’s throne with your whole family, and say: *“here am I with all the people You entrusted to me”*.

- iii) Gather your family around the Word of God at least once a day and also have some time for conversation/discussion and prayer. A good time is around the breakfast table in the morning – it is a wonderful way to start the day. Let this time be relaxed and joyful and, if at all possible, let each member of the family take a turn.
- iv) Let church involvement be a natural part of life for every member of your household and it is your responsibility to find a fellowship that preaches truth and is fresh and lively and caters for all the members of your family.
- v) Most of all be an example in all aspects of life; the way you walk with God and trust Him in everything.

4. The role that the man plays in his family has a powerful effect in every aspect, even in generations to come.

God warns the father in Exodus 34:7: *“Yet He (God) will by no means leave the guilty unpunished, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and on the grandchildren to the third and fourth generation”.*

But in the same verse God tells us that He will bless for thousands of generations those who walk uprightly before Him.

Illustration: Look at the impact that Jonathan Edward, a wonderful man of God, had on generations after him: His fatherhood left a legacy of 300 clergymen, missionaries, theology professors, 120 college professors, 110 lawyers, 30 judges, 60 authors of books, 14 university presidents, 3 United States Congressmen and one Vice President of the United States. The legacy this one man left gives us a perspective of the significance of the promise God gave in Exodus 34:7.

On the other hand, great destruction can come down through the generations through the negative influence of a father. Max Jukes, a con-man (*from whose name the term “joke” was coined, which means to fake or deceive*) that lived in New York City left the following negative legacy:

Among his known descendants 1200 were researched and the following was discovered – 310 were vagrants, 440 had their lives physically wrecked by debauchery and uncleanness, 130 were sent to prison for an average of 13 years each, 7 were murderers, 100 were alcoholics, 60 were habitual thieves, and there were 190 prostitutes. They collectively cost the state of New York over 1.2 Million US\$ during the 1700s and 1800s.

These are two extreme examples, but every man has a powerful influence on his family, both positively and negatively, which will have a ripple effect many years after he has died.

The role of the man – The Husband

Lesson 4

The Husband

1. A binding promise: a covenant.

Illustration: If you as a man gave a promise to the board of directors, you would do anything to keep it, wouldn't you? If you gave your best friend a vow, you would not dream of breaking it.

What about the vow you solemnly gave to the most important person in your life? God calls it a covenant and He even says that He was a witness to it, Malachi 2:14.

2. Take note of the words in the old marriage vow; from which all others should be taken:

"I take you to be my wife, to have and to hold, from this day forward, for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, until we are parted by death, as God is my witness, I give you my promise".

This is a most powerful promise!

"Cherish" according to the Oxford Dictionary = "to care for tenderly, to keep alive hope, ambitions, feelings" – right to the end.

If this promise were kept, there would be no unhappy marriages.

3. God's repeated command to the Husband.

Ephesians 5:25, "*Husbands love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her*". Also, Colossians 3:19.

- a) This is the highest standard you can ever be given: "*As Christ loved*".
- b) This is a sacrificial love. A love that will cost you something but which will also bring a great reward.
- c) **"Love your wife as Christ loved ..."** How does He love?
 - i) With boundless, unconditional love.
 - ii) He loves through deep fellowship.
 - iii) He leads and guides her.
 - iv) He provides for all her needs.
 - v) He will give her gifts.
 - vi) He will protect and defend her.
 - vii) He will lay down His life for her.

4. That kind of love can do miracles.

- a) Some will complain and say: “*My wife is not what she used to be. She has become dull, is difficult and no fun to be with, she is not the lively beauty I married*”.
But husband you made her like that!
That is what will happen to anyone who is not loved the proper way.
- b) **Illustration:** People from the north get this lesson every year! When the sun and warmth disappears and winter creeps in, everything becomes grey and dull. The beautiful roses in the garden look dead and stiff and all you see are the thorns – but just wait till spring arrives, then all the beauty and colours return and often even better than before.
- c) In the same way a dead, colourless marriage can be renewed, given the right conditions of love and warmth.
- d) “*But tell me*”, some men will say, “*Is my wife not supposed to love me?*” “*Why doesn’t the Bible emphasise that?*” The answer to that question is that women are responders and God knew that if a wife were loved properly, she would love her husband back in great measure.

That is why the Word says in **Ephesians 5:28**, “*he who loves his wife, loves himself*”. Because her response will come back to him like a river of love!

5. The power of true love – as someone has said:

There is no mountain high enough that love cannot climb.
There is no anger strong enough that love cannot calm.
There is no ice hard enough that love cannot melt.
There is no problem big enough that love cannot solve.

1 Corinthians 13:8 “Love never fails!”

6. Let it be true love.

(Not the misunderstood concept the world calls love.)

In the Greek (the language in which the Bible was originally written) there are three words for love:

Agape = Spiritual, Divine love.
Phileo = Soulful love.
Eros = Physical, sexual love.

All three of these aspects of love must be found in marriage, in equal measure, and in this order:

- a) “**Agape**”: they should support each other spiritually; they should walk together before the face of God.
- b) “**Phileo**”: love with the soul, i.e. the mind, will and emotions. There must be communication and a sharing of everything – thoughts, dreams, feelings, etc.

- c) **“Eros”**: a satisfying and fulfilling sexual relationship should grow out of the above two aspects.

William S. Deal writes: *“Mr. Husband, above all things, do not commit the unforgivable blunder of waiting until you go to bed to make love to your wife! When a husband never has time to take his wife into a loving embrace, to kiss and caress her, except when he wishes to satisfy his sexual urge, she naturally gets the idea that this is his main interest. Can she be blamed for drawing this conclusion? This is one of the things which makes the sexual act distasteful for some wives”.*

7. **“Put on Love”** is the appeal to us in **Colossians 3:14** – **“Above all things, put on love”**. This proves to us that love is not just an emotion, but an act of the will. The same Greek word is used when you would **put** on a jacket.

Notice **“above all things”**.

- a) **Hebrews 10:24.** **“Let us consider one another in order to stir up love”**.

“Consider” = think about how you can stir up love.

When you were still courting your wife you thought of many ways to please this beautiful girl! Don’t let being married put a stop to that:

The small, cosy restaurants.

The chocolate bar hidden in her handbag.

The flowers the gifts.

The little notes; the words and actions of love.

- b) **A common attitude:** *“Well, honey, I told you that I loved you when I married you. I provide for your needs, I am taking you around, I am working hard to make a good living for you, isn’t that enough?”* No, Mr. Husband, that is not enough! – her brother could do as much. She needs your time, attention and affectionate expressions of love.

- c) **Proverbs 5:18-19.** *“Rejoice with the wife of your youth, let her be as the loving hind, a graceful deer”*. **“Let her be – lovely and graceful”** – only true love can accomplish that in a marriage of longstanding.

Illustration: Marriage is like a garden, the more you put into it, the more beautiful and colourful it will be. Neglect it, and soon it will be overgrown with weeds, thorns and thistles.

An older garden can be even more beautiful and peaceful than a newer one, provided it is well looked after through the years.

The role of the man – The Father

Lesson 5

The Father

1. Great possibilities – great responsibility.

- a) The first time you were handed that little living bundle – your first baby – you were a bit clumsy and you were nervous that you would damage the little thing. You were not much more than a young lad yourself and it is most likely that you did not realise what a great possibility, as well as what a great responsibility, was now placed in your hands!
- b) Children are like living clay out of which you can form anything from a great personality to a crooked criminal!
- c) **Fathers – (mothers) – you make a lasting impression on your children:** Make the right kind, and do it quickly and early – remember “clay” turns hard, and you can no longer shape it and so it is with children.
- d) **Proverbs 22:6.** *“Train the child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it”.*
If you don’t reach their hearts today, they will break yours tomorrow!
- e) Even Adolf Hitler was a cute little baby in his mother’s arms, but things went wrong in his upbringing.

Illustration: An investigation in an institution for young criminal men showed that out of the 300, every one came out of a broken home.

2. A challenge to the father.

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

- a) This responsibility is on the father, not on the mother, although she must help and support him in this important task. But notice it says: **“You fathers”**. Three things are mentioned that the father must do; two positive and one negative.
- b) **“Fathers, don’t provoke your children”**. It is a sad fact that fathers all over the world provoke their children to anger, for different reasons:
 - i) Physical and mental abuse.
 - ii) Unfaithfulness: leaving the family, as in the case of divorce.
 - iii) Absence: burying themselves in their work.
 - iv) Passivity: providing no family leadership, no role model.
- c) **D. Simmons writes:** *“Bad fatherhood creeps across the land and pollutes the ‘seed corn’ of the next generation”.* An American survey, over several years of fatherhood, gave the following result:

- i) **Excellent Fathers, 10%.**
These fathers are mature men of good character with high ethical standards. They are congruent and focus on the needs of others. They know their position well and enjoy strong gender security. They spend time with their children and perform their fatherhood functions with excellence.
- ii) **Satisfactory fathers, 15%.**
These fathers get the job done in a bland sort of way. They manage to get by because of raw ability more than from serious commitment and dedication. They come from satisfactory homes and are content to coast along in fatherhood. They are not willing to throw their heart into their children.
- iii) **Overcoming fathers, 20%.**
These fathers come from dysfunctional homes and have suffered the difficulties thereof, but they are determined to break the cycle. They demonstrate commitment to overcome their own personal deficiencies and manage the skills of fatherhood.
- iv) **Deteriorating fathers, 15%.**
These fathers come from adequate homes but have chosen not to make fatherhood a priority. They are sliding downward. They have mild personality disorders and do not perform in their fatherhood functions. They squeeze other family members into compensating roles, thereby causing a dysfunctional family.
- v) **Inadequate fathers, 25%.**
These dysfunctional fathers are noticeable by their absence. They are passive, neglectful, uninvolved, inconsistent fathers. They have notable personality disorders. They do not know their responsibilities, or refuse to carry them out. They cause much damage by what they withhold. They may be passive/aggressive or covertly abusive.
- vi) **Abusive fathers, 15%.**
These dysfunctional fathers cause severe emotional and psychological damage to their children by physical, verbal, or sexual abuse. They suffer serious personality disorders. They almost always come from a home where they suffered under an abusive or inadequate father. They force family members to play dangerously distorted roles.

This survey, which classifies **55%** of American fathers in a dysfunctional mode, is more than 15 years old, and since then things have deteriorated even further. Just imagine the negative impact on the next generation, etc!

- d) **So we had better heed God's warning to us: "Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger", and fear, complexes and deep hurts, "but bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord".**

3. The greatest impression you will make on your children is your own example.

(Both positive and negative.)

- a) **Don't be a hypocrite:**
Saying: "don't do as I do, do as I say".

Illustration: “On his way home from work a father used to sneak into the beer hall. One evening it had just snowed a little and, as he took his usual detour to the beer hall, he heard a noise behind him and turning to look he saw his little son taking big steps in the snow and heard him cry out “*just continue Dad, I will follow in your footsteps*”. The father, realizing his responsibility, made an immediate decision to turn away from his bad habit”.

b) **A serious poem:**

*There was a crooked man, who had a crooked smile
who made a crooked fortune in a very crooked style.
He lived a crooked life as crooked people do,
and now he wondered why it turned out that his son was crooked too.*

It could also have been: **a greedy, a selfish, an unkind man**, and the result would have been the same. So what about: there was **a loving, an honest, a generous man?**

c) **Psalm 127:4-5**, “*Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, so are children in one’s youth, happy the man who has his quiver full of them*”.

The straighter and better shaped they are, the surer they are to hit their target and it will bless you, themselves and others. You will be blessed to see your “arrows” leave your home like that.

But many have shaped their “arrows” so badly that when they are released they turn around and pierce the heart of the parents. Then the father cries out: “*Why should this happen to us?*” Well, possibly, because you made them like that.

d) **Your own dedication to the Lord will make a strong impression on your children.**

A survey that was done proves the importance of the parents’ commitment: If both parents are **fully committed, 93%** of their children will also be committed. **If only one parent is committed, 73%**. If there is just a **little, but still reasonable commitment, 53%**. **No real commitment, 6%** of the children will follow the Lord.

Illustration: A father took his little three-year-old son to a church service. The little boy sat happily next to him in the meeting and when the father lifted his hands in dedication to the Lord, the little baby son looked at his father and then stood with both his small arms raised.

e) **How you react in tough situations – where your true nature shows.**

In these situations, your reaction will teach them lessons they will never forget and you can only do that if you completely trust the Lord.

Illustration: A great man of God said; “*The greatest sermon I ever heard was when I was a little boy, back at my parents farm. We had a beautiful crop waiting for us in the field, but just a few days before harvest a powerful hailstorm smashed*

everything. In the morning I walked with my father, with a very heavy heart, to inspect the destroyed fields. Suddenly I heard him quietly sing: “Rock of ages cleft for me let me hide myself in Thee”.

4. **Teach them to pray and trust in the Lord.**

- a) It is much easier to teach a little child to pray in faith. Teach them to talk to their Heavenly Father as a friend and to trust Him: both for a “yes”, a “no”, or a “later”.
- b) Their childish, uncomplicated faith can even put yours to the test.

Illustration: Once I was travelling with my four small boys, on our way to a new home we had bought. We had a brand new carpet on the roof-carrier of the car and a rainstorm was ahead of us – all the signs were there that it would reach us at any moment. The sky was black and cars were coming towards us with their windscreen wipers working. I said to the boys: “*what can we do, there is no shelter here?*” and the boys said: “*but dad, can’t we pray that God will keep the rain away?*” I felt cornered as I didn’t like to spoil their childish faith ... so we prayed ... and sure enough, we travelled several kilometres under those conditions, and only once we had our carpet safely in the house, did the storm break over us, and the boys stood with their noses against the window and said: “*God heard our prayers*”.

- c) It has been said: “**The family that prays together, stays together**”. Father, as the priest in your home, you have the responsibility to gather your family before God and His Word.
Some have added: “**The family that plays together, stays together**”. This is another important activity you as a father must initiate.

Illustration: It has been said: “*The sand-castles you build with your child will be washed away by the next big wave, but they are printed in the memory of your child for all time*”.

5. **Ephesians 6:4, “But bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord”.**

- a) **Oxford dictionary:** “**Training**” = to give teaching and practice in order to bring forth a desired behaviour.
- b) “*...in the training of the Lord*”. Bring them up in what He taught and how He did it. How did Jesus teach and train His disciples?
 - i) He taught them life skills and behaviour, using illustrations and simple stories.
 - ii) He walked with them, and showed them in practice how to live and act.
 - iii) He trusted them and released them to live and practice what they had learnt.
- c) If we train our children like that we would do well. Both the Father and the Mother must be deeply involved in this important task.

- d) **“Admonishing them”** – Oxford dictionary = Give a warning or show disapproval.
- e) The Bible is very clear that it is important to discipline our children, but we should never discipline a child for a mistake or failure from lack of understanding. In a case like that we should just explain to them where they are going wrong. We discipline for only three reasons:
 - i) Rebellion.
 - ii) Disobedience.
 - iii) Evilness in actions or words.
- f) **Hebrews 12:6**, *“For whom the Lord loves, He disciplines”*. Discipline should never be given in anger, where we lose our temper, but in love and with a firm explanation.
- g) **Proverbs 13:24**, *“He who spares his rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him promptly”*. As we see in this Scripture, **“rod”** does not just mean an instrument to beat with, but **“discipline”**, which can take many different forms.
- h) Discipline must bring a change of heart concerning the matter for which the discipline is applied. If not, it is the wrong form of discipline chosen.

6. But even if you have made mistakes and things have gone wrong, it is still not too late. He can do miracles in your home.

Mark 5:22-24 + 40b-43. This passage tells the story of how parents were about to lose their daughter. (There are many ways to lose a daughter or a son: to wrong “friends” – to a wild, sinful life – to drugs, etc.)

The father did the only right thing. He was not concerned about humiliating himself in front of everyone as he fell at the feet of Jesus and called Him right into the centre of his family – and Jesus restored their daughter back to them.

7. Even if Satan has smashed the home to pieces.

Mark 5:2-6 + 18-19. The situation could not have been more hopeless. The father had gone wild, had left his home and was now bound in terrible chains – but he met Jesus who set him free and sent him back to his family.

8. Father, give yourself over to this beautiful task with 100% commitment: to be the head, the husband and the father of your family.

It is your greatest challenge in life, but in order to really succeed, you need Christ Jesus as your head and King and you need His love, His wisdom and His miracle working power to operate in your life.

The role of the woman in the family

Lesson 6

A. Introduction

The role of the woman in the family is also three-fold. Her roles are not the same as those of the man as she is a different creation, as we have seen. She is not inferior to man, but different, created to complement and to fit man in every way, so that together they would form a perfect team to serve God's purposes. Then sin came in and brought disharmony, but in Christ we can be restored back to God's perfect plan.

B. The three roles a woman has in the family

The Queen	complementing	The Head
The Wife	complementing	The Husband
The Mother	complementing	The Father

1. A half complements the other half and makes it complete, harmonious and functional. The better you fulfil your half, the better the opposite half will function.
2. Don't try to grab the role that belongs to the other half; you will only create disharmony and unhappiness in the home:
 - a) Don't be a bossy wife who pushes her husband around like a servant.
 - b) Don't be a fussy husband, with an apron on and a duster in hand, trying to redo your wife's work.
3. That does not mean that we cannot help each other, but if we forcefully grab the other person's role, we create disharmony and a feeling of rejection.

C. The Queen of the Family

1. This is a leading role, which carries great responsibility for the home and the children. She should create a warm, loving and homely atmosphere. She should be the manager of her own home, but it should be exercised in full cooperation and submission to the head of the family. Proverbs 31:10-31.
2. **1 Corinthians 11:3:** A wife should submit to her own husband. This will not be a difficult requirement for her if the husband will fully submit to Christ, as the Word requires.
3. **Ephesians 5:22-25:** The wife's submission should never be forced, but should be a response to the husband's love for her, and he is told to love her **as Christ loved the church**. If he does that, it will be very easy for the wife to submit.
4. The wife should **submit as the church submits to Christ** – How is that done?

- a) The church will praise Him.
Wife, you will never know what it does for your husband when he comes home from work, tired and a bit battered, and you praise him for some good qualities he has.
- b) The church will serve Him in love.
A wife can change even a humble home into a place of love and warmth and can create a happy atmosphere. A beautiful place to return to after a long day at work.
- c) The church will follow the Lord and trust His leadership.
Wife, do the same to the man God has given you, and he will live up to his calling as the head of the family.

5. 1 Peter 3:1-6: Submit, with a gentle and quiet spirit.

Wife, this is a powerful tool, which could win your unsaved husband over to Christ.

6. Nagging and arguing are useless.

Anyone who understands how a man functions will know that nagging only leads to the opposite of what he is being nagged for.

- a) Proverbs 27:15: *“A continual dripping on a very rainy day, and a contentious woman are alike”.*
- b) Proverbs 21:9: *“Better to dwell in a corner of a housetop, than in a house shared with a contentious woman”.* Nagging will drive a husband and young teenagers out of the home.

7. Sarah is a good example.

Even when Abraham made some serious mistakes concerning her, Sarah did not perform or make a big argument out of it, but she went along with his suggestion and trusted God for His intervention, which did come. Genesis 20:1-5.

1 Peter 3:1-4: *“A gentle and quiet spirit is very precious in the sight of God”.*

- a) It beautifies the woman.
The Word does not speak against women beautifying themselves with jewellery, plaiting of hair and wearing beautiful dresses – it warns though that this can end up being just an empty shell. It says that the real beauty of a woman should be the inner one of a gentle and quiet spirit, and then the outer beauty will enhance that.
- b) It is a gentle but powerful force for positive change.
Verses 1+2: Even a husband, who does not obey the Word, will be moved by his wife’s gentle and chaste conduct. (*Oxford: “chaste” = virtuous in word, thoughts and deeds.*)

- c) **It protects the wife.**
 The word to the wife in **Ephesians 5:22** is “*submit yourself to your own husband*”, and to the husband in **verse 25**, “*love your wife as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her*”.
- i) **He will protect her physically,** even to the point of laying down his life for her.
- ii) **He will protect her spiritually.** She is under his covering.
1 Corinthians 14:35. If there is something in the church service she doesn't understand, she should ask her husband when they get home, rather than speak to her neighbour or ask someone else.
- d) **It will open the door for ministry for her.**
1 Corinthians 11:1-10. For a woman to operate in the spiritual gifts and in various kinds of ministry, she needs to be under a covering.
- The head covering, mentioned here, is just a token to show that she is under the proper covering of her husband. If she is not married then she should be under the covering of the spiritual leadership of the church.
- e) **But the woman's first priority should be to her home and her family.**
 She should never allow her home to be a cold, empty shell. Her first responsibility is to be a good manager of her own home and family, especially when there are still children in the home.
- f) **Proverbs 31:10-31.** Here God gives great praise to the woman who manages her household well. You really get the feeling that you are dealing with a “Queen” here – someone who wonderfully fulfils the three roles of a woman: “*Her children rise up and call her blessed, her husband also, and he praises her*”.

The role of the woman – The Wife

Lesson 7

The Wife

A. Work on your marriage

A happy, well functioning marriage is not something that just happens. It takes some work and clever planning, and here the wife plays a very important role.

1. Keep in mind the vision and dreams you had for your marriage and work hard and positively towards them.
2. Never allow your marriage to get dull; keep the relationship exciting.
 - a) Suggest doing the things you really like and enjoy and don't waste precious days and years living in misery.
 - b) Think about when you first fell in love and what it was that you enjoyed about each other.
3. Cultivate what is important to both of you. Don't grow apart so that all you have in common is your interest in the children.
 - a) Have a good, positive circle of friends. Invite them to your home and don't just sit and wait for them to do something.
 - b) Share spiritual activities, both at home and in fellowship with others.
 - c) Develop common interests, which could be sport, sailing, nature walks, music, reading and sharing, etc.
 - d) Communicate about everything and learn to do it without arguing. Don't keep secrets from one another.

B. Work on yourself: body – soul – spirit

1. Body.

Look your best; morning, noon and night. It will make you feel good about yourself as well as happy. Let your husband be "proud" of you.

This has nothing to do with being wealthy! It does not take much more than some water, soap and a comb and watching your diet for you to look good.

It has nothing to do with growing old; you can look your best at any time in life.

2. Soul.

Keep on learning. Read good books; follow what is going on in the world. If you

are a homemaker and not part of the business environment then don't let your circle get smaller and smaller to the point where you have nothing to talk about.

3. Spirit.

Develop your personal relationship with God: pray, study the Word, read good spiritual books, serve in the church and community.

Do not take the spiritual leadership in the home – be a support and encouragement to your husband in this role.

C. Work with your husband

1. Talk about, and plan, the goals for your life and ministry together.
2. Discuss how to bring up your children, and work together in this important task.
 - a) Help your husband to change where he needs to so that he can fulfil his role in the family properly.
 - b) Remember that by criticizing, nagging or scheming you will not accomplish anything. Men will never change by any of those methods and you will only succeed in pushing him away.
 - c) However, through encouragement, wisdom, love and prayer, miracles can occur in your relationship.
3. Respect God's order and work "with" not against your husband. When something has been discussed you should go along with your husband's final decision, even if you are not completely happy about it.

Think of Mrs. Abraham's reaction to: "*Break up your comfortable home and go to a place you don't know*".

Mrs. Noah: "*She trusted him even if it looked crazy*".

Mrs. Moses: "*Go up and face Pharaoh, who wanted to kill you?*" Etc.

D. Work towards a good sexual relationship

1. What is the purpose of sex?

- a) **Genesis 1:28.** To multiply – have children. Some religious people have the point of view that "sex is only for reproduction". However, that is not a true Biblical understanding.
- b) **1 Corinthians 7:3-5.** Sex is also for satisfying a God-given desire. Therefore, in marriage, sex must play a prominent role. If one of the partners withholds from the other, it could cause the other to fall into temptation and into sin. Verse 5.
- c) **Proverbs 5:18-20.** Sex is for enjoyment. The words used in this Scripture concerning sex are: Rejoice – be enraptured – be satisfied.

2. **Wrong concepts about sex.**

- a) You cannot plan how many children you want to have as you just have to accept whatever is meant to be and hopefully it won't be too many!
When God gave man the possibility to multiply, He also gave him the responsibility to administrate this wonderful ability, under His guidance. Genesis 1:28.
- b) Another false belief: "It is possible, every time and any time you have sex, to reach the highest point of satisfaction".
- c) Do not let magazines and movies be your guide in sexual matters. Read good Christian counselling books and educate yourself with regard to this important matter.

3. **Be involved in the planning.**

- a) The monthly cycle of a woman affects her emotions and her desire for a sexual relationship – there are "highs and lows".
- b) That doesn't mean that she cannot enjoy a sexual union with her husband during the "low" time; it is just on a different level. Love is not all just about emotions; it is also a state of mind.
- c) **Illustration**: *"You can enjoy food, even when you are not very hungry, especially if it is well prepared"*.
- d) Take advantage of the "high" times – you know the timing better than your husband does.

4. **The right setting and environment is very important.**

- a) There should be no possible disturbance from children or other family members. Take the telephone off the hook and lock the bedroom door.
- b) Put a bit of romance and creativity back into the marriage: candlelight, music, etc.
- c) Go away to beautiful places where you can have a good, relaxed time together. Work it into your budget and monthly plan.
- d) Be an active partner in the preparation and the sexual act.
- e) **Proverbs 5:18**. *"Rejoice in the wife of your youth"*. Be creative!
That doesn't just mean a young wife, but the wife you married in your youth. Rejoice together with her right throughout life – this scripture also refers to the sexual relationship.
Therefore wife – be a happy, joyful partner!

5. **Don't let the joy go out of your marriage.**

- a) One of the main reasons for a dull marriage is a broken-down sexual relationship, which could then lead to a divorce.
- b) Therefore, please pay great attention to this important area of your marriage and enjoy it. Even if you don't always reach a high emotional level, remember it is also an attitude of love; a state of mind.

6. **Let us be reminded once again what true love is:**

(Not the misunderstood concept the world calls love.)

The Greek language in which the Bible is written has 3 words for love:

Agape = Spiritual, Divine love.
Phileo = Soulful love.
Eros = Physical, sexual love.

All three of these aspects of love must be found in marriage, in equal measure, and in this order:

- a) **“Agape”**: You should support each other spiritually – you should walk together before the face of God.
- b) **“Phileo”** (love with the soul) = **mind, will and emotions**. Communicate and share everything: thoughts, dreams, feelings, etc. If you choose to use your intelligence and your will to give of yourself fully to the relationship then most assuredly the emotions will follow wonderfully. *However, remember that the marriage relationship should not only be built on emotions and that includes the sexual side too.*
- c) **“Eros”**: Sexual love will grow out of the other two aspects, and be really fulfilling.

The role of the woman – The Mother

Lesson 8

The Mother

A. The miracle of Motherhood

Psalm 139:13-16

1. From a microscopic cell to a beautiful perfect baby in just nine months – a true miracle; the God-given power of creation.
2. God is deeply involved in each child's creation: *"You formed my inward parts, You put me together in my mother's womb"*.
3. To have this miracle happen inside you is one of the greatest experiences in life. This is a miracle that a man can just imagine and look upon in wonder.
4. **Illustration:** After the world-renowned opera singer Amelita Galli-Curci had won fame, she lamented one day to a young aspirant: *"How gladly I would have given it all up to hear a baby call me mother"*.

B. Motherhood is a wonderful high calling

1. To raise children to be good, balanced, harmonious human beings with the right value system is one of the greatest works anyone can be occupied with.
2. **Illustration:** A top businessman pitied his wife because she had the tiresome, boring job of being at home with the kids, while he was occupied with big and interesting business ventures until it was pointed out to him that his company just made paper boxes, while his wife was working with living beautiful children.
3. A little child is like clay in your hand, out of which you can form an "angel" or a "monster" or anything in-between!
4. Don't ever think that you are wasting your time and your education by staying at home with your small children. You are the best person for this job and later in life you will rejoice because you did.

C. There must be close co-operation between the Father and Mother

Proverbs 1:8 and 6:20: *"My son, listen to your father's instruction, and do not forsake your mother's teaching. They will be a garland to grace your head and a chain to adorn your neck"*.

1. According to the Oxford dictionary: **"Instruction"** = to give direction and orders. The head of the family (the father) should give direction and the mother, who is with the children much more, should gently teach according to that direction.

2. There must never be disharmony and different signals from the parents when dealing with the children otherwise they will be confused and will even learn to play the parents up against each other.
3. The previous teachings on the role of a man as a Father all apply here in co-operation with the Mother.
4. If applied correctly the child will grow up to be victorious and successful in life (the garland on the head, “*victors crown*”, and a chain to adorn his neck).

D. Mothers must teach the children

Proverbs 31:1 and 10-31: “*The sayings of King Lemuel – an oracle his mother taught him*”.

1. He was the king who gave his mother the highest praise for her wonderful achievements in life. Verses 10-31.
2. Proverbs 22:6, “*Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it*”. **Train** – means teach and show in practice what you teach and then let them practice it in their own lives.
3. **Teach them the Word.** The Bible is full of wonderful, even dramatic, stories that will capture the child’s imagination and which are so easy for a child to understand: “*The lost sheep*”, “*The prodigal son*”, “*David and Goliath*”, etc.
4. See Mrs. Eunice’s success story in teaching Timothy: 2 Timothy 3:15, “*How from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures*”.
5. Even the grandmother was involved in raising the boy in the knowledge of God as seen in 2 Timothy 1:5. It is so important to let the grandparents play a big role in the lives of your children.
6. **Teach them to pray:** Mother – get up early so that the breakfast table is set for the whole family to gather around to read and talk about the Word and to pray, and not just to eat breakfast before scattering for the day.
7. Pray with your children for specific situations, for their problems, for friends and family, for school and mission activities.
8. Pray with them at the close of the day in their bedroom before they go to sleep.
9. **Teach them life skills:** First in their playtime with their dolls and building toys, then in performing different tasks around the house.
10. **Teach them social skills:** In their interaction with each other and with their friends and teach them good manners.

E. How to teach them?

Deuteronomy 6:7-8. You can teach them all the time as you talk to them and show them in practice – make it visible in your home by your lifestyle.

F. When should you start?

Remember Timothy: 2 Timothy 3:15, **“From infancy”** – some believe it is even possible to start when they are still in the womb, with soft music and gentle talking. It is a well-known fact that noise and bad vibes affect the unborn child, so what about the opposite?

1. **Illustration:** A mother asked a child psychologist: *“My child is two, when should I start to discipline him?”* His reply *“hurry home, you are already two years late!”*

That applies to all areas of influence on the child; the earlier you begin, the better and easier it will be.

2. **The Communists used to say:** *“Give us a child until he is five, and we will have him for life”.*

God says: *“Train up the child (even an infant) in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it”.* Proverbs 22:6.

G. Bring them to Jesus; to salvation

Matthew 19:14, *“Jesus said, let the little children come to Me, and do not hinder them, for the Kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these”.*

1. Notice Jesus said: “Little children” – the mothers brought them, which means that they were small children. Children, from around six years of age (perhaps even earlier, depending on the child) can have a conscious acceptance of salvation.
2. Statistics show that the time in life where most people accept Jesus as their personal Saviour is in their childhood, and up through the teens. After twenty the curve keeps on falling drastically, ending with very few in later life doing so.
3. So mothers: *“bring them to Jesus”* and *“harvest them for salvation when they are ripe”.*
4. **“Do not hinder them”** – this simply means that you must not do anything that will keep them from coming to Jesus but do everything in your power to bring them to a place of accepting Him as Saviour – this is one of your chief tasks as a mother.

H. Give them the best care

1. A mother must bring warmth, love, a feeling of security, order and cosiness into the home. Remember, she is the manager of the home. Proverbs 31:10-31.
2. Train them to eat healthy, nourishing food. Keep junk food and too many sweets away from them. Encourage and arrange good physical activities for them. If a child is allowed to become fat and lazy, it could follow him/her right through life.
3. **Protect them:** from mixing with the wrong friends, from toys and games that have evil connotations, from possible accidents, from certain bad TV programmes, from the internet, from exposure to sex as the world presents it, etc.

4. Be generous with your praise and encouragement when your child is doing his/her best and is being helpful to others; only discipline them for bad behaviour.

I. Two Warnings:

1. Don't try to project your own dreams and ambitions onto your children.

- a) You may try to **push** them in a certain direction – it could be education, sport, music, etc.
Psalm 139:15-16, *“When I was woven together in secret, Your (God’s) eyes saw my unformed body, all the days ordained for me were written in Your book before one of them came to be”*.
- b) God has a specific plan for each child and it is up to us to gently guide him/her in that direction.
To Jeremiah God said: *“before you were formed in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nation”*.
- c) Always remember that each child is unique and has its own gifts and abilities and should never be compared to another child, not even a brother or sister.

2. Don't hang on to your children.

- a) When the time comes, release them. If you did a good job during the 18 to 20 years that you had them at home, then they will love you and honour you for the rest of their lives.
- b) Don't be an interfering **“Mother-in-law”**. Only be involved on their terms and invitation, but you should be deeply involved in prayer before God for them and your grandchildren.
- c) **God's command: Genesis 2:24**, *“Therefore a man should leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh”*.
And Jesus added: *“Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate”*.

May God give us the grace to grow gracefully through the different stages of life and not try to hang on to a stage that has passed – you cannot bluff yourself and others anyway.

But at any stage in life, try to fulfil your role to perfection.