

THE GODLY FAMILY

What God Expects of Families
(How to be a Fantastic Family)

THE GODLY HUSBAND

What God Expects of Husbands
How to be a Huggable Hubby

THE GODLY MAN

What God Expects of Men
How to be a Marvelous Man

THE GODLY WIFE

What God Expects of Wives
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What God Expects of Women
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THE GODLY HOME

What God Expects of Homes
How to have a Heavenly Home

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THE GODLY HUSBAND

What God Expects of Husbands
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C. T. Studd, one of the great English missionary pioneers of the nineteenth century, gave up fame and fortune as one of the top athletes of his day to go to the mission field. He went to England and for 17 years never saw his English homeland --or his wife! She remained in England to assist in the support of his mission organization. Eventually she came to Africa to visit various outposts of the mission's work. Her husband's station became part of the itinerary. C. T. met her boat and walked her to the front porch of his house. There they stayed for 30 minutes or so, visiting about the progress of winning the lost and then had a time of prayer. After that she returned to her boat and continued her tour.

Robertson McQuilkin did just the opposite. He recently resigned as president of Columbia Bible College and quit his writing and speaking engagements to stay home and take care of his wife, Muriel. She had Alzheimer's disease the point where she didn't recognize him as her husband but did respond better to his care of her than to anyone else's. "I don't HAVE to care for her," he says "I GET to! It's a high honor to care for so wonderful a person!"

One man totally gives up his wife to devote himself 100% to his ministry. Another man totally gives up his ministry to devote himself 100% to his wife. Who was right? Could they BOTH have been right? I'm sure you could get all kinds of advice and opinions about what to do in such a situation, but what does GOD expect of a husband in such a case?

UNREALISTIC EXPECTATIONS One of the leading causes of problems in marriage is a wife not knowing what she has a right to expect from her husband. Usually he doesn't know what she should legitimately expect, either. When too much is expected frustration and defeat result. My mother had entirely different expectations of my father than my wife does of me. What my neighbor expects of her husband is quite different than Nancy's expectations of me. Who is right?

When too little is expected self-centeredness grows. When the wrong things are expected the relationship won't grow. Knowing what GOD expects is very important to the health of a marriage. God

doesn't expect too much, too little,, or the wrong thing. What DOES God expect? Then wives and husbands will better know what to expect of themselves and each other.

	MAN	WOMAN
NEED	PROVIDE GUIDE	SECURITY LOVE
DUTY	SACRIFICIAL LOVE	SUBMIT, RESPECT

WHAT GOD EXPECTS What God expects of husbands is clearly stated in Ephesians 5:22-33. "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her (v. 25)" sums it up. A husband is to love his wife with unconditional agape love, the same as Hosea had for Gomer, the same as Jesus has for us. Women need to feel loved and secure, so men are to provide this by showing sacrificial,

unconditional love. Conditional love ("if...", or "because...") won't do. Also, the husband is to initiate this love. He is to take the first step, not waiting for the wife to do her part but act first, no matter how she responds. When she feels this security then she will respond with trust and submission. Just how is this done? There are six ways. Together they spell "SECURE," for that is the key word for husbands. What does God expect of husbands? To make their wives feel SECURE.

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| <p>Sacrificial Lover
 Efficient Provider
 Consistent Leader
 Unselfish Protector
 Realistic Teacher
 Earnest Pastor</p> |
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SACRIFICIAL LOVER Husbands are to love their wives just like Christ loves us (Eph 5:25). That is a sacrificial love, putting her first in all things. That means always treating her like you did before marriage! Keep courting and winning her. That doesn't come naturally, for we are naturally self-centered people, thinking about ourselves and our needs first. God says we need to love our wives that way (Eph 5:28, 33). Men are usually very production-oriented. Accomplish one task and then leave it and move on to the next challenge. We win a woman's complete love and trust, then move on to something else (career, home, etc.). That isn't right!

The most common reason men give for leaving their wives is that "she isn't meeting my needs." They have it all wrong. That isn't the issue. The focus is to be on her needs, not our needs. Following our example, Jesus, we are to be servants (Matthew 20:26-28). We are to wash their feet (John 13) instead of expecting them to wash ours.

Love means GIVING, not GETTING. Again, God is our example. "God so loved the world that He GAVE..." (John 3:16). We give things to our mates, but what they really want is ourselves. Because our male egos are sensitive and often insecure, men often avoid close intimacy. We give things, even time, but not always our inner selves. Women can tell the difference.

At least once every day a man must reach out to his wife in love. By sincere words and a gentle touch he must declare his love and need of her. This is life breath to women. A secure wife will do anything for her husband. An insecure one will feel she has to take care of her own needs because her husband isn't doing that. That's why Sarah changed from a submissive, obedient wife to a withdrawn, nagging, looking-out-for-herself wife after Abraham but his own safety before hers and told her to say she was his sister (to protect his life when she was taken into the king's harem) (Genesis 12:11-19). Conversely, Mary was willing to pack up and leave her home in the middle of the night on Joseph's say-so because she knew he was putting her first. He proved it by choosing to take the blame and loss himself to protect her when she turned up pregnant before marriage (Matthew 1:19).

Men, who are you more like: Abraham or Joseph? That will explain why your wife is more like Sarah than Mary. Your wife is a mirror of how you treat her. She returns what you give her. Is she more Christ-like because of you, or in spite of you?

EFFICIENT PROVIDER If a husband doesn't provide for his family, God says he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever (I Tim. 5:8). This doesn't just refer to financial provision. It is my experience that money and possessions is more important to men than women. A man's self-worth gets too wrapped up in his career and financial provision. Women would be happier with more husband and less income. Men often have wrong expectations of themselves here.

More than financial provision, though, this refers to emotional provision. It is up to a husband to meet his wife's emotional needs. If he doesn't she find a substitute somewhere: children, career, home, clothes/jewelry, helping others, fantasy escapes (soap operas or romance novels,), gossip, etc. Lot's wife couldn't leave Sodom because her needs were met there, not by her husband Lot. If he had met her needs she would have been able to leave Sodom, for she was going with him. Women need to regularly and sincerely be complimented and encouraged, in private and public. Stand up for her when others question or criticize her, even (especially!) her family and yours.

In the Old Testament, God made provision for a woman's needs to be met by her husband. If he had more than one wife and didn't meet the needs of one of them she was free to leave (Exodus 21:7-11)! Suppose that would be true today? Would your wife leave? If not, what would keep her from leaving (why does she stay with you)?

CONSISTENT LEADER The Bible makes it clear that the husband is to be the leader (Gen. 3:16; I Cor. 11:3-5; Eph. 5:23). This is important. One of the greatest causes of insecurity among wives today is a

husband who doesn't lead. Few husbands have had a good example of a godly male leading his family. Usually it is the woman who leads (often by default) and so we assume our wives will do the same. That isn't God's way, though.

Headship doesn't mean dictatorship. It doesn't mean a man is a superior human being. It is just God's way of leading. Since Eve was duped by Satan (I Timothy 2:12-14), man is responsible for family decisions. That doesn't mean a man does everything, he just oversees it all, giving oversight. God uses the word "manage" to describe a husband's role (I Tim. 3:4-5). A manager has the big picture and keeps things moving in the right direction, like a pastor or principal or president. Responsibility can be delegated, but the husband must know "the buck stops here."

I like to think of this role as similar to the scout on a wagon train heading west. He is the 'eyes' of the wagon train, knowing where they are, where they are going, and scouting out the best way to get there. He keeps in mind their resources and the obstacles ahead and makes decisions based on what is best for them reaching their ultimate destination. That is the way a husband must be with his family. Where is your family going? What are your goals for the individuals as well as the family as a whole? How will it reach those goals? What needs to happen today to move in that direction? When the scout isn't doing his job everyone is in danger. Now a wife can have wonderful vision, but not distance-vision like a man. She is uniquely equipped to see things close up and can tell things about people and situations that a man won't notice ("woman's intuition"). However she doesn't have the over-all picture a man must have. Together there is perfect balance and tremendous strength. Children, by the way, have none of these. They just play around enjoying the trip. Thus the man has to be the leader. How will you educate your children? What church will you go to? How involved will you get? What needs to be done to move our marriage ahead? Are we saving enough money for college and retirement? Do we have a balance of work and fun in our family? These are the things a scout must know.

Moses didn't lead in his family, and when God told him to take over or die it was too late. His wife took their sons and left (Exodus 4:18-26). Achan led his family, but into disaster (Joshua 7). So did Ananias (Acts 5). They put their greed before what was good for the family.

It doesn't matter if your family willingly follows or makes it hard for you to lead, a man is held responsible to God to lead. God gives the directions to the man and he must pass them on. Giving in to keep the peace and prevent strife is like letting a wagon train wander in any direction so the travel is easier, no matter if they are going in the right or wrong direction!

UNSELFISH PROTECTOR Matthew Henry said, "Eve was not taken out of Adam's head to top him, neither out of his feet to be trampled on by him, but out of his side to be equal with him, under his arm to be protected by him, and near his heart to be loved by him." God Himself says: "Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers." (I Peter 3:7)

When God says women are 'weaker' he is mainly referring to them emotionally. Let me explain. Men are like stoneware, women like fine China. Men are rough, durable, rugged emotionally. Women are more delicate, sensitive, fine-tuned. They have a very precisely adjusted sensory system. When men treat women like they treat other men feelings are hurt. Men and women both need to understand these differences.

Boaz is a good example of a man protecting a woman (Ruth). He made sure she was safe among his workers, that her needs for food and water were provided, and that there was grain left for her to harvest. She felt secure and protected, which is what women need. He didn't do it as a superior to inferior, but in a way of respect and honor. He was impressed with her motive: taking care of Naomi. No wonder she responded with love and submission to him! Joseph protected Mary. Abraham didn't protect Sarah.

Protect your wife. Protect her from overworking herself. Help with what MUST be done, and let the rest go! Take the burden of child discipline off of her shoulders. Give her time off when she can do whatever she wants and you take over. Take her out on a day each week. Have a yearly vacation together, alone! Develop a close relationship with each child. Your family should be glad to see you come in the door at the end of the day, not fearful or dreading it.

REALISTIC TEACHER God expects men to teach their families (Gen. 18:19; Prov. 4:1). Actually, this is part of leading. Since it is often overlooked let's consider it separately. Men are to teach, communicate knowledge and skills, to their wives and children. A recent national survey showed that only 10% of fathers of home schooled children are actively involved in their children's education. Husbands are often dynamic at work, but not connected with their wife or children. Until recent time it was always the father's obligation to train children: in Bible times, Greece, Rome, even colonial America. Time often makes that impossible today. Still, husbands can do more than they do. This might seem like more of a father-function than husband function, but it really isn't. If the man doesn't do it, then it falls back on the wife to do this important job. A man must protect his wife from this by taking the responsibility on himself. She can do much of the work, but he must oversee it and do all he can.

I'm not referring mainly to school-type teaching, but that which comes up in everyday life. A husband must be alert to ways to apply the Bible to daily situations, to teach moral and spiritual values in every-day life situations (Deut. 6:7-9). Be alert to lessons you can teach as you clean, shop, eat, etc. The best Bible teaching takes place in real-life situations. Be alert for them!

EARNEST PASTOR Have you ever looked closely at a piece of rope? It looks like two strands braided together, but really it is three strands. It is impossible to weave two and have them stay together, but with three it is simple. That's how it is in our family life, too. Unless God is present in a relationship, it just won't stick together right (Psalm 127:1). Men, your marriage is the second most important relationship in your life! If you don't have a top-notch relationship with Jesus, you won't be able to be the husband God expects you to be. You've often heard that the nation and church go as the family goes. Well, the man is the key to the family. Who do you think Satan will attack if he wants to undermine the church and nation?

Even though Joseph wanted to marry Mary even though she was pregnant by someone else, he knew God forbade that and was willing to put God before Mary. That made Mary feel very secure in her relationship with Joseph. All women need to know that their man is listening to God. When a woman trusts a man with her welfare and future, she needs to be sure he is getting his instructions from God! That means a man must have meaningful private devotions each day, as well as leading his family in a time of Bible reading and prayer daily. The husband is the shepherd of the family, as the pastor is of the church. Make sure your sheep are protected from those who would harm them spiritually. Make sure they are fed and led as God wills.

Remember, too, that if you aren't the husband God wants you to be, if you don't treat your wife as God wants you to treat her, your relationship with God will be undermined (1 Pt. 3:7).

What does God expect of husbands today? He expects them to make sure their wives feel secure in their love. Remember, "He who finds a wife finds what is good and receives favor from the Lord" (Prov. 18:22). Richard Halverson, Chaplain of the U S Senate, says: "It is my deep, settled conviction that 100% of the responsibility for the sustenance of the marriage relationship belongs to the husband. The scriptures tell us that as husbands we need to model ourselves after Jesus Christ, who gave Himself up in every way in order to present His bride to Himself without blemish or stain or spot or wrinkle." God expects you to make sure your wife feels secure in your love.

Grade yourself on a scale of 1 to 10. How do you rate as a sacrificial lover? efficient provider? consistent leader? unselfish protector? realistic teacher? earnest pastor? Where is most improvement needed? What can you do, starting TODAY, to be what God and your wife expect you to be? It won't be easy, but it'll be worth it!

Getting married is easy. Staying married is difficult. Staying happily married for a lifetime would be considered among the fine arts.

THE GODLY MAN

What God Expects of Men (How to be a Marvelous Man)

Men are in trouble today! Their suicide rate is four times as high as for women, life expectancy 10% shorter, comprise 80% of the homeless and 90% of all arrests for alcohol & drug abuse. By attacking men, Satan undermines the family and with it the church and our nation.

To being with, ask yourself: "What is a man?" How would you define a Christian man? Since that is our target, it is important we know what we are shooting at. If you don't really wrestle with that question you won't get very far. Personally I like Mark Twain's definition: "A male is someone who starts pretending he is a man when he turns 12 and keeps doing it the rest of his life." That's how I usually feel, but recognizing that helps. Also knowing that I'm not alone in feeling that way helps, too. Often men feel like they are the only ones struggling, that everyone else has it all together and can somehow sense they struggle. Satan really uses things like these to isolate and defeat men today. Many men are trying to be godly Christian men but there are usually obstacles in the way. I think there are seven roadblocks a man needs to overcome to be a man of God today.

1. **FATHER'S INFLUENCE**

Describe your father in 3 words. Were these what you needed when growing up? Would your children describe you in these same terms? What impact has your father had on you as a man? as a father? on your image of your heavenly Father?

Boys need a good, strong, accepting father image. Without it they have no one to show them what a man is to be like, and they find substitutes to 'prove' themselves. They need a father to affirm them and tell them when they become a man. If not, a boy will find what the world uses as standards of manhood and try

to prove himself by these. Growing up in a woman's world (school, home, baby-sitters, even church) doesn't help boys really learn what a man is.

2. MOTHER'S INFLUENCE

Describe your mother in three words? In what way is your wife like your mother? In what ways does she play a similar role in your life to that of your mother?

When a father doesn't fill the leadership role in a boys life, he will turn to his mother to have that need met. Instead of meeting it, though, a mother can make it worse if her son becomes dependent on her. Then he will be dependent on women to accept him and affirm him for his whole life. His wife will replace his mother and, instead of leading her, he will have a need to please her and have her approval.

3. CAREER INFLUENCE

Define success? Why do men identify themselves and others by what they do? Why are men so devastated when laid off and often fade when they retire? From little on up boys are told that being busy is important. They are told to work hard and are accepted for what they produce. This leads to workaholicism in men. Being busy can make us feel good about ourselves. Crossing things off a list can substitute for intimacy and growing relationships. Keeping busy keeps us from thinking about personal problems, troubling emotions, and family needs. Having work fill needs that only family and God can fill can be devastating!

4. UNREALISTIC EXPECTATIONS

What expectations did your grandmother have of your grandfather? What about your mother for your father? Probably they expected their mates to bring home a paycheck and remain faithful to their wife. Is that all wives expect of men today? It certainly is not! Much more is expected. That's good -- because men are to be and do more. But it's also bad -- because no one has taught men just what they are to be/do or how to be/do it! While courting, men convince women they can and will meet all their needs but after marriage that obviously isn't so. Most wives have enormous expectations of their husbands, and men often have great expectations of themselves. If these are more than or different than God expects, though, there will be frustration and hurt. (see my article "What God Expects of husbands" for more on this.)

5. HANDLING EMOTIONS

How did your father handle his emotions? How has that influenced how you handle yours? Most men have a hard time handling emotions. From little on the message was to stuff them and be tuff. Now men are allowed, actually expected, to show emotions. The rules have changed and it is OK. That still doesn't help men know how to show emotion. There are very few good male role models, and showing emotion as women does isn't the solution, either. Love is sometimes hard to show correctly, but negative emotions like anger can be even harder. Little boys grow up afraid to show their anger (it just gets their mothers angry at them). In addition, these boys usually are afraid of their mother's anger and, as a result, grow up to have a built-in fear of woman anger. They'd do almost anything to keep peace and keep from having their wife get angry at them, for it brings back too many bad memories of the rejection they felt when their mother got angry at them. Yes, handling emotions can be a large roadblock.

6. SEXUAL DISTRACTIONS

What is the world's stereotype view of male sexuality? How much has that influenced how you view yourself and sex? Sexual problems are perhaps the most difficult for men to talk about, even among Christian men. Each seem to feel he alone struggles with thoughts and feelings that bring guilt. Deliverance seems impossible. Marriage difficulties can compound the problem. If not handled right, wrong sexual ideas and thoughts can block a man's spirituality.

7. EXPRESSING SPIRITUALITY

Who are more spiritual: men or women? Often we think women are more spiritual than men because they are more emotional, better at relationships and intimacy, more comfortable in church, and pray longer than men. That doesn't make them more spiritual, though -- unless you equate those feminine traits with spirituality! Jesus was certainly spiritual, yet he was in no way 'female'. Men are just as spiritual as women, they just express it in a different way. Men, don't feel guilty about how you pray or show your spirituality, Jesus accepts you as you are!

What's the solution to these roadblocks? Find which one God wants you to work on first (although they are all inter-related) and rely on the power of His Spirit to help you change. Turn to Him as your Heavenly Father to make up for what is missing as He makes you more like Jesus. It's a gradual process. If I can help in any way please let me know!

THE GODLY WIFE

**What God Expects of Wives
(How to be a Wonderful Wife)**

An Andy Capp cartoon I have shows Andy coming home all dejected. "I didn't get the job. They said I was too old, ME!" His loyal wife says, "Fools! Don't brood on it, pet. . . . would you take my afternoon nap for me?" Andy answers, "Sure, kid, glad to." After he leaves his wife says to the readers, "A man needs to feel needed." She's right, you know! God built into a man the desire to provide and care for his wife and family. He needs to know she needs him. Just like a wife needs to feel secure and loved by her husband, so a husband needs to know he is needed by his family.

FEELING NEEDED When a man doesn't feel needed, something goes out of his spirit. That's why men often turn to their work for satisfaction (and therefore overwork) but then when they retire or are laid off they decline in many ways. It is a wife's duty to make her husband know he is needed. Just as a wife needs to hear she is loved, so a husband needs to hear he is needed. This is communicated in many ways. Just how is a wife to show her husband he is needed?

NO UNREALISTIC EXPECTATIONS "Only Jesus can be Jesus," says Ruth Graham, referring to the fact that NO husband is perfect, not even Billy Graham. Women tend to be idealistic, expecting a knight in shining armor to come into their life and make everything perfect. Men try to convince their mates during courtship that they can and will meet their every need. Then reality sets in and this doesn't happen. It never will and never can. God is a jealous God and won't let anyone, even a husband, replace His place in a woman's life. God makes sure each husband falls short of perfection (with plenty of help from us men!) so that a woman will continue to trust in Him first.

Wives must understand this so they don't withhold love from their less-than-perfect husband. Just as they need their husbands to love them unconditionally and not compare them to other women, so husbands need their wives to love them unconditionally, too. This agape love can only come from God (Gal. 5:23; I Cor. 13). Never withhold love, affection, sex or compliments from your husband, no matter how much he seems to disappoint your expectations. We are to be servants to each other, not masters expecting the other to serve us.

<p>No Unrealistic Expectations Empty Spaces Filled Entire Self Submitted Desire Godly Life Encourage & Respect Him Dwell on Internals, not Externals</p>
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Tell him often, "I need you." That goes right to the depth of a man's soul. He'll do anything for a wife who needs him, much more than for a critical nag who acts like a mother to him!

Women must understand that men don't understand women. If not, when a man reacts a certain way she will misinterpret it. She will think, "If I did/said that it would mean _____, therefore he must mean the same thing." Hurt feelings and problems arise, and often the man doesn't know why. This happens to Nancy and I. Fridays are our day off. I'll make a list of things to accomplish that day and charge into it, efficiently trying to do as much as I can as quickly as I can. Sometimes, though, I'll need to run to the hardware store to get something. Nancy will get

wind of this and, since this is our 'day off,' she'll want to spend time with me and come along. Next thing I know we're at the shopping center or a clothing store, and then it's a furniture store or gift shop. We browse and wander. Nancy makes small talk, acting like she's having a good time, holding my hand and drawing the whole thing out. Well, I have my little ways of communicating impatience, after all I do have my list to conquer ASAP. Nancy snaps out of her mood and we rush home and get back to work. Later that evening, when I'm done with my list and feeling victorious about my accomplishments, I'll want to get close and cuddle up to Nancy. However, she's sort of stiff, not much eye contact, friendly but not warm, even unresponsive to my advances. Why? What happened? Men may not know, but women certainly understand. You see, men are compartmentalized and focus on one thing at a time. What happens at the store has no connection to what happens in the bedroom. Women, however, are not that way. They are connected, and what happens in the morning has everything to do with what happens at night!

Men focus on tasks, women on relationships. In focusing on my list, I was rejecting Nancy's need for our relationship to grow, for us to 'connect.' For women, relationships are more important than anything else. Watch little girls playing together sometime. If one gets hurt or upset all activity will stop and they'll gather around the injured girl. Her feelings come before the activity. They may never get back to the game. If it were little boys, however, and one fell or got his feelings hurt -- what would happen? They'd jump over him or run around him and keep going with their competition. The task comes before feelings and relationships.

This is why men often have a hard time getting gifts for women. They get practical, task-oriented gifts like they'd like: membership at the local gym, mud flaps for the car, catchers mit, some kind of tool. Men just don't naturally understand women. No one taught us, and we didn't see it patterned correctly in our fathers. Thus we make stupid male mistakes. I think this is why "Home Improvements" is so successful on TV -- we laugh at ourselves for we see ourselves in the show.

MEN	WOMEN
Mind	Emotions
Rational comes first	Feeling comes first
Production-oriented	Relationship-oriented
shop to get what needed quickly & efficiently	shop to enjoy the experience, browse
long-range sight, distance planning, overall	near-sighted, present details, today's problems

Talking is another area men often don't understand. To most men, it just seems women talk and talk about anything and everything. A typical male arrives home at the end of the day wanting to download, not interact with anyone, just relax and recharge. Unfortunately (or so it seems to him) he is met by a wife who just goes on and on about everything. If she'd just get to the bottom line (like men do) and relate the problem in a summarized form he could give her the solution and that would be the end of it. But it doesn't work that way. She doesn't want answers or solutions, she wants to relate, to connect. To a woman chit-chat is lifeblood to a relationship, the start of intimacy, the way she knows she is loved. For a man to stop what he is doing and give total focus and eye contact while she goes on and on shows a women in a very real way that she is loved and important to him. Anything less communicates that her needs aren't as important as his. Women need to understand that men don't understand, or they will take his ignorance for rejection. Wives, try to give your man a little time before talking. Try to understand his needs, too. Don't have unrealistic expectations. He won't respond with as much emotion and enthusiasm about what excites you as your female friends will. Don't assume your husband understands how you think and feel inside. Educate him! Don't expect too much from him, or you'll never be able to make him feel needed. Take unmet needs to God, He alone can meet them.

EMPTY SPACES FILLED Another way to show your husband you need him is to remember your role is to "fill his empty spaces" (Genesis 2:18, literal Hebrew translation). Adam had everything in paradise without sin, yet something was missing - a helper for him. God didn't create another man, or children, or a hobby, or a job to meet this need in man, but a woman.

Men have needs (empty spaces) that only a woman, THEIR woman, can meet. Make sure your first priority is meeting his needs. The acrostic J-O-Y (Jesus, Others, Yourself) is your goal. For too many women, though, it's C-H-E-W (Children, Home school, Everything else, Whatever is left for husband). No man can make it on a steady diet of emotional leftovers! Again, if your husband isn't meeting you needs like you'd like, go to Jesus with that. Don't substitute children, home, career, etc. Don't use that as an excuse to stop meeting his needs!

ENTIRE SELF SUBMITTED A "Hagar the Horrible" cartoon of several years ago shows Hagar talking to his wife and daughter. "What has happened to men?!!!" he asks. "This used to be a MAN'S WORLD! We ruled the whole place! We didn't have to answer to anyone! No one told us when to eat ... when to drink ... when to take a bath!! We were MEN! And men were SUPREME!" "Is that True, Mama?" the daughter asks. Mother replies, "Yes, Dear ... but that was before EVE."

A "Sally Forth" cartoon shows them talking while working around the house. He starts: "You know Dave Roper from my office? He and Laura invited us over on Saturday." "What'd you say?" she responds. "I said I thought we could come, but I'd have to check with the boss," he replies. She says, "You called me 'the boss' to one of your co-workers?" "You're not the boss?" he asks. "I didn't say that. I just think we should keep our pet names for each other private."

What is there about this male leadership thing that makes it all so hard to understand? We laugh at these cartoons because they remind us of ourselves. Why is it so hard when God clearly says to the woman: "Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you" (Gen. 3:16). Man was created first and woman created to meet his needs (I Cor. 11:2-16; 14:34-35). Since Satan tricked Eve so easily, man is to use his rational abilities to be the leader (I Tim 2:13-14).

Paul says women are to SUBMIT to their husbands (Eph. 5:21-2). While this word is often misunderstood today, its meaning is simple. It comes from a Greek word root meaning "respond." "Wives, RESPOND to your own husbands as you do to the Lord" is what Paul says. This is a mental attitude decision of trust and dependency, in your husband but even more in your God (Who is in sovereign control over your husband).

What makes submission such a hard thing for women is that they usually have been hurt by men they have needed and trusted in the past: father, boyfriend or husband. They haven't seen a loving, trusting response of a woman for her husband in their home or among their friends. They know their husband's weakness' and imperfections, All this makes it harder to trust.

Mary is a good example of trusting and submitting to a husband. When he awoke her in the middle of the night, after a full house of company all day (the wise men) and told her they had to move out before sunrise she followed. What if your husband did that to you? Unfortunately there are more bad examples than good in the Bible: Zipporah (Ex. 4:18-26), Jezebel (I Ki. 21) and Gomer (Hosea 1-3). The disaster that came into their lives is warning enough.

Submitting doesn't mean a wife can't express her feelings. She must do so: one time (any more is nagging and mothering) and stated calmly and in love. A wife doesn't have to put up with emotional or physical abuse (I Cor 7:15b). Neither does a woman have to indulge in sin if her husband demands it (Acts 5:29). Vashti disobeyed her husband when he requested her to sin (Esther 1), and so did Abigail (I Sam 25). Sarah (Gen. 12:13) and Sapphira (Acts 5) went along with their husbands and suffered the same consequences their husbands did -- God didn't excuse them for obeying their husbands, they were accountable. You see, a husband's authority is delegated from God and must be used to represent God. The same is true of parents over children and government over Christians. A sergeant cannot command his privates to rebel against the government, that is out of his realm. He has delegated authority to represent the government and when he stops doing that his authority stops, too. The same is true of husbands.

DESIRE GODLY LIFE These things we've been talking about are hard to do. No, they are impossible to do! Submitting, not expecting too much, putting his needs before your own, these aren't something that can be just done in our own strength. It is only as you trust God, grow daily in Him, and take your unmet needs to Him that you'll have the strength to do all God requires of you. It is purposefully impossible so you will need His help. God doesn't give us things we can do on our own, or we would do them on our own! Ask God to change and mature you, not just your husband. Take the plank out of your own eye before you work on the speck in his eye (Mt. 7:5). Don't use your children, friends, outside involvements or anything to substitute for needs that aren't met -- take them to God! No husband ever has or ever will meet all his wife's needs, so don't expect that. If he met all your needs you wouldn't need God, and God is a jealous God who wants to be first in your life, even before your husband.

ENCOURAGE & RESPECT HIM Down inside of every man is a little boy, full of dreams and fears. Maybe he shows that part to you, maybe he doesn't (it depends on how safe he feels sharing that part of himself with you). When boys become men, they stay little boys and put on a 'manly' facade. Really men are little boys with the same needs and joys, the same dreams and fears they had when young. Get to know this part of your husband. Understand he needs approval and affirmation (just as you do). He needs encouragement and support -- that's why he married you. Men need daily encouragement and compliments from their wives. If a wife doesn't give it, some flirt at the office will!

Men have two mirrors which they look into to see how they are doing as men, one is their work and other is their family. If they get the message they are a failure at home, they will turn all the more to their work to find satisfaction and affirmation. If your husband is putting time and energy into his family instead of work, then you need to make all the more sure he feels it is worth while. When he breaks the work mirror and only has the family mirror, that becomes vitally important. He needs YOU to tell him he's doing a good job and you need him. Women often don't realize what a great impact their words have on their husbands (Prov. 18:21). Listen to yourself speak through his ears, as he hears you -- you might be surprised at what you hear!

Be his best friend. Encourage him. Never mother him (read I Kings 21 for an interesting example of this). You are his friend, his team-mate, his lover, but never under any conditions his mother. If you feel you are in that role sometimes quietly stop filling that role!

One more thing, don't use sex to carry the load of your emotional relationship. Don't use sex to get his attention or affection. It works at first, but cheapens things and doesn't truly satisfy. If you think this is happening talk to him about it. I guarantee you he has no clue! Fall back to your courting days and work on your friendship. Be interested in what he is interested in. Let him talk and ask questions to draw him out. Be his best friend again, the rest will follow!

DWELL ON INTERNALS, NOT EXTERNALS The world today focuses on externals: youth, appearance, and body build. God clearly says godly women can look nice, but their main focus needs to be on inner beauty, not outer (I Peter 3:1-6, Titus 2:3-5). Unfortunately men are shallow enough to be influenced by a woman's appearance at first, but give them credit. Men do know there is more to a woman than that. Don't be so bothered by the changes in your body and appearance that it keeps you from enjoying yourself or allowing your husband to love you. Spend some time being neat and attractive, but spend more time developing gentleness, self control, and godliness (I Pt 3:1-6; Titus 2:3-5). A young, well-built, beautiful woman who complains, nags, criticizes and picks at things is unattractive to anyone (Prov. 11:22). In a cartoon I have a friend asks Hagar, "What can I do that will be remembered and talked about forever?" Hagar replies, "Forget your wife's birthday!" Wives, would your husband laugh at that? Why?

Women, your husband needs to feel NEEDED by you. If you need him, let him know it. He needs to hear it as often and in as many ways as you need to hear that he loves you. A man will do anything for a wife who needs him! What can you do better TODAY to let him know you need him? Don't put it off -- he needs

and deserves to hear from you! Look over the list ways to show him he is N-E-E-D-E-D and pray about the one God would have you start on right now. Pray about it and make sure you start the next time you see him. With God all things are possible!

THE GODLY WOMAN

What God Expects of Women

(How to be a Bionic Christian Woman)

By Jerry Schmoyer Copyright © 1997

A "Cathy" cartoon by Cathy Guisewite from several years ago shows Cathy watching TV, listening as the announcer says: "Welcome to 'The Women's Hour.' Hello. We're talking to Margie Miller, married, mother of two, founder and president of a small manufacturing empire, and author of two best-selling novels and three plays. Margie, at age 29, and with all this going on, how in the world do you have time to be on our show today?" "Oh, it's nothing, Bob." Margie says. "The little ones are at their Greek literature workshop, and the opera I have a small part in doesn't begin until 7:00." "Well, you must have a lot of help at home." "Actually, I find a well-organized house runs itself. Of course, it has been a bit cluttered because of the addition I'm building this week." Cathy's eyes grow larger and the stress is evident on her face as the announcer continues, "My, my ... you don't do anything the traditional way, do you?" "No, not unless you count the 250 sweater sets I knit each year for needy causes." "Marge, thank you so much for being with us today." Then, as Cathy slides to the floor in tears, the announcer concludes, "It's women like you who are helping women all over the world feel better about themselves."

As is obvious from the expression on Cathy's face, she ISN'T feeling better about herself. Women like that just make her feel like a failure by comparison. That is often what the description of the "wife of noble character" in Proverbs 31 does to Christian women today! The purpose of it, though, isn't to set a too-high standard so women feel like failures. That only happens when it isn't really understood correctly. It is to set a good role model for godly women, an attainable set of qualities that is worth aiming for. That is how the Jews have always used it. In fact, they memorized it. To make memorization easier it was written in 22 couplets, each starting with a different letter of the Hebrew alphabet (A, B, C, D, etc.). It is traditional for men to recite this to their wives each Sabbath evening. What does it really mean? Lets look at it closely.

HER WORTH (Proverbs 31:10-27) This woman is described as **valuable**, rare, scarce (v. 10; Prov. 12:4; 18:22). But just what does it mean to be of "noble character?" That's what the rest of the chapter describes. For one thing, she is **faithful** (v. 11). Her husband has full confidence in her and she responds to that trust by acting worthy of it. He allows her freedom and she responds by using it wisely. She doesn't take advantage of his goodness or misuse her freedom.

While her husband isn't described, it doesn't take much reading between the lines to learn about him, also. He obviously makes his wife feel loved and secure enough to want to please him. He shows his trust in her by not criticizing or pointing out imperfections. He meets her needs which results in her being able to meet his! A man can't expect his wife to be a Proverbs 31 woman unless he is first a Proverbs 31 man!

When a woman is shown love and made to feel secure, she responds by **supporting** (v. 12) her husband. She "fills up his empty spaces" (Genesis 2:18-20), meeting his need to feel needed. You see, a perfect wife doesn't expect to have a perfect husband! It is ideal when the man initiates and the woman can respond, but if he isn't perfect or meeting all her needs she still is to treat him as if he were! By treating her husband as if he had already changed there is much

better opportunity for him to really make the changes. The surest way to keep him from changing is to try to change him! Treat him as if he has already changed. Go to God with you unmet needs. Let Him meet them (not friends, children, career, TV, books, etc.).

Another trait of a godly wife is that she is **useful** (v. 13). She is ambitious and works with a good attitude, not continually wasting time. The work she does is **efficient** (v. 14). She is a smart shopper, seeking the most effective use of her buying power. She's no impulsive shopper, but neither does she spend 3 hours driving around trying to save \$1.

Responsive (v. 15) is another word to describe her, for she responds to the needs of her family by getting up early and staying ahead of things. She is motivated by love so her work isn't drudgery. She is a very **practical** (v. 16; Prov. 11:22) carefully investing money so it earns a profit for them. Again, her husband trusts her and gives her freedom to make these decisions. On top of it all she is **healthy** (v. 17). She knows proper diet, rest and exercise makes her more effective mentally, emotionally and physically. Thus she is a **cheerful** (v. 18; Prov. 21:9; 25:24; 21:19; 19:13; 27:15) person. That her light doesn't go out at night doesn't mean she stays up all night, for she couldn't do that and get up early, too! It means there is joy ("light") in her presence, not gloom ("darkness").

This woman is also **industrious** (v. 19) and doesn't mind working with her hands. She is no workaholic, but doesn't see herself as too important to pitch right in and work with the others. With all these traits she is financially prosperous, but this doesn't make her greedy for she is **generous** (v. 20) with those truly in need. She gives of her time, talent, money, sympathy, care and material possessions. Since she sees it as all coming from God, she doesn't feel she has to hang on to it. She knows God will provide for her family, and He does.

This woman plans ahead for predicable occurrences so her family is ready for them. This shows she is **organized** (v. 21), but all this doesn't go to her head. She is still **modest** (v. 22), both in dress and attitude. Her dress is tasteful but not brash. She has a good, balanced view of herself as a woman and also of her sexuality. She has self confidence, and is secure enough to **submit** (v. 23) to him. He is a top official in their city and she does all she can to support & enhance his position. She works behind the scenes to take burden off him so he can do his job. She's not a woman's libber but is truly a liberated woman!

Again her **skill** (v. 24) is mentioned, this time in sewing garments and selling them. This is probably something she supervises instead of doing herself. She has a good business head and produces excellent work. She is naturally **dependable** (v. 25), a person of strength and dignity. She has no fear of the future (v. 25b) because she knows God always provides. Thus we see she is both **kind & wise** (v. 26). Her speech is characterized by positive compliments. She builds up her listeners and never gossips or criticizes. Finally, she is **ambitious** (v. 27), constantly alert to the needs of her family. She continually looks for ways to be of service to them.

HER PRAISE (31:18-31) Her **children** praise her for the kind of person she is (v. 28a). Note that she has grown children! Thus this is an older, experienced woman without all the demands and needs of child care. She could never do all she does if that were the case! These children are obviously older and probably helping her with her activities. Note, too, that she has servants (v. 15) to do much of the mundane labor for her!

Her **husband** also highly compliments her (v. 28b-31), especially for her inner beauty. Notice that nothing is said about her outer appearance, size, weight, hair color, etc. NOTHING about her physical appearance is given, because that doesn't matter. That isn't what is important in being a good wife and mother!

One other Person compliments her - **God** (v. 31:30b). She "fears the Lord"-- she has respect for God and wants to please Him. She goes to Him with her unmet needs, knowing God has promised to meet them (Ex 22:22-23; Ps 68:5). How much better it is to have His praise than any one else's! If a woman makes that her goal in life, everything else will fall into line.

THE GODLY PARENT

What God Expects of Parents (How to be a Perfect Parent)

One quiet afternoon a father took his young son out in the fields for a walk. Tiring a bit, he decided to lie down under a beautiful shade tree, for the day was hot. The little child ran about gathering wild flowers and bits of fern. Coming to his father he said: "Pretty! Pretty!" At last the father dozed off. While he was sleeping the youngster wandered away. When he awoke his first thought was: "Where is my child?" He looked all around, but could not see him. He shouted at the top of his voice, but all he heard in return was the mocking echo of his own voice. Running to a little hill, he looked around but couldn't see the boy anywhere. Traveling a bit further he suddenly noticed a cliff. Advancing to the edge, he looked down and there upon the rocks and briars below was the mangled form of his dear little son. He rushed to the spot in tears, took up the lifeless form, and hugged it to himself. For the rest of his life he accused himself of being the murderer of his own son.

Can you imagine living with guilt like that? That parent's neglect affected the child's whole life! There are other ways of neglecting children, though, ways with even worse consequences. Spiritual and emotional neglect can have eternal consequences. There are other ways of allowing our children to go their own way than falling asleep!

Just having a child doesn't make one a parent any more than owning a piano makes one a musician. There are certain basic needs a child has that must be met. Children need to feel **LOVED**. Did you feel the love you needed when growing up? I didn't ask if your parents loved you, I asked if you felt their love to the extent you needed it? What about your children? Do they feel the love they need -- continual, unconditional love? Love is the main thing we need and get from our heavenly Father. Love covers a multitude of sins (1 Peter 4:8). How are to make sure our children feel loved?

Love them Unconditionally
Oversee them Instructionally
Validate them Continually
Emancipate them Gradually
Discipline them Consistently

LOVE THEM UNCONDITIONALLY Jesus sets the pattern by loving His children unconditionally, with agape love. This is love in spite of, not love because of, if love. Did your parents withhold love or acceptance when they disapproved of something you said or did (or didn't do)? How did it make you feel? Rejection is never a good form of correction. It brings the opposite results.

Joseph, step-father of Jesus, was an example of a man who loved his children unconditionally. He loved Mary the same way, and she responded by trusting and following him. Joseph spent 25 or so years in the carpentry shop with Jesus and 30+ years in the same home with Him. They spent every minute of every day together. What an impact he had on Jesus! By looking at the lives of some of Joseph's other sons, James and Jude, we can see what a loving, accepting man he was. That must be why God picked him to raise His Son.

David, on the other hand, didn't know how to make his children feel loved and secure. Maybe that was because his own father and brothers rejected and looked down on him. This culminated with Absalom doing all he could to get his father's approval but failing (I Sam 14:28-33). Finally he rebels against his father and is killed. Finally, heartbroken, David's love for Absalom comes spilling out (II Samuel 19:4), but it is too late. Don't wait until it is too late to show love! Who are you more like -- Joseph or David? Whom do your children respond more like, Jesus or Absalom? Love them unconditionally and you'll see a great change!

OVERSEE THEM INSTRUCTIONALLY The Bible says that children are like arrows (Psalm 127:1-5) - carefully formed so they can be sent to accomplish a task. Parents mold and aim the arrow. The target is Christ-likeness, what our goal is for our children. This is a life-long process which includes birth and grown, spiritually as well as physically:

Birth (salvation - John 1:12,13; 3:3) is the start of life. We must see to it that our children are born spiritually, not just physically. We must pray for them, set a godly example for them, and teach them God's Word. Children don't have to understand all about Jesus in order to accept His free gift of salvation. In fact, adults are to come to God as children, children are never told to come as adults (Mt 19:14; Mk 10:14; Lk 18:16). What is the minimum requirement to be born again? I think it is to accept (more accurately stop rejecting) God's free gift of salvation. He wants to give it to us, we just allow Him to do so. A child can do that. When a child is old enough to understand their need and Jesus' provision, then can accept this free gift. This can be as young as 3-4, certainly by 8 to 10 years old. What we do is give all we have to all of Jesus which we understand. When we give all to all we know, we have salvation. Later, as a child matures, he understands more about himself and Jesus, so sometimes wonders if he really accepted Jesus as Savior. Periodically over the years a child will do this. Help them understand it doesn't mean the first time wasn't the decisive time, but that they have more of themselves to give as they mature, and they understand more about the Jesus Whom they decide to serve. We all do this. Husbands and wives do this to each other in marriage. Their marriage vows are what makes the marriage legal, but as they grow individually and in love for each other their commitment is reaffirmed and deepened. The same thing happens with salvation. For this reason I don't encourage my children to be baptized when really young. I'd like them to save that for later, as they grow and better understand more. However when they come saying they want to be baptized I will never put them off for I don't want it to seem to them that Jesus is in some way putting them off for they aren't old enough for him. I don't push, but I don't hold back, either.

Growth comes wherever there is life. Following spiritual birth comes spiritual growth (II Peter 3:18). **Nourishment** brings growth. We are to feed on the Bible, God's Word (I Cor 3:1-2; Jer 15:16). This starts from little on (II Tim 3:15). Not only are we to teach content, we are also to develop a desire for God's Word in them ("train up" in Prov. 22:6 literally means "create a taste for"). **Communication** (talking = prayer) is something babies soon discover, by words or actions. We must teach our children to communicate with their Heavenly Father by prayer. These things are all done by daily example (Deut 6:4-9) as well as by teaching content. **Walking** soon follows when there is growth. Our children must learn to walk by faith (Gal 5:16; II Cor 5:7), obeying God and parents.

It's exciting to see a baby grow physically and just exciting to see our children born and grow spiritually. Neither happen alone, though. Each take lots of work and time from the parents. Putting in that time and care shows children we love them. It helps them feel loved. It helps them start their life-time walk of becoming more Christlike.

VALIDATE THEM CONTINUALLY "Valid" means "sound, effective, well grounded." We produce this in our children when we 'validate' them by encouraging, complimenting them, and building them up. "Fathers (sometimes translated 'parents'), do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4). We "instruct" by teaching, praying and setting a good example to build proper behavior and values into our children. We "train" (correct improper behavior) by disciplining children. These are what we DO. What we are to NOT do is frustrate or exasperate them. This can easily be done by expecting too

reward for success, swat with newspaper for failure. Often that is the way we raise our children, too. Better is intrinsic motivation, that which comes from within the person himself, from his own goals, motives, priorities and values. Manipulation is forcing external actions without real inner change. It's better than nothing, but

motivation from within must be our goal for our children. It takes maturity they usually don't have, but if we patiently keep working in this direction eventually we will see improvement.

HOW can we motivate our children? For one thing, **use their natural bent**. Train a child "in the way he should go" (Prov. 22:6). Keep in mind his individual temperament, personality, learning style, birth order, etc. What works for one child won't work for another! Also, **use the salt principle** to motivate. You can lead a horse to water but you can't make it drink, but you can feed it salt! Develop their natural interests. Use their curiosity and creativity. Work WITH them, not AGAINST them. Along with this, **help them choose their own goals**. The older they get the more long-range these goals can be. Instead of focusing on what is easiest at the moment, have them work toward a goal. This will help them motivate themselves. Always **let them experience the negative results of not reaching goals**. Don't bail them out. God uses natural consequences to teach us the importance of doing what is right, use them with your children. **Remember the power of praise**. Positive reinforcement (praise) works much better in motivating all of us to try harder than does criticism. Like a small spark that needs to be fanned, praise them for whatever you can.

EMANCIPATE THEM GRADUALLY Earlier we talked about children being like arrows which parents are to form into something useful. Arrows are made to be sent to a destination, a goal. Arrows must be released to accomplish their work. As in archery, the release of children is critical, too. It is not a one-time event but a life-long process which starts the day they are born! Many adults still struggle with freedom from parental control. Releasing a child smoothly takes real skill and maturity. It means overcoming the fear that your children can't make it without you, that maybe you didn't adequately prepare them for all they will face. It means denying your urge to be in control, to accept that you aren't as needed by them as you used to be. Letting go needs to be done over and over, each day. It means being totally convinced that they really belong to God and are just on temporary loan to us.

Emancipating doesn't just mean turning them loose to head any direction. The direction we shoot our arrows, the goal for them, is to be like Jesus. We want them to be the mature Christian man or woman that God wants them to be. When arrows were invented they changed the face of warfare forever, for a soldier could impact a battle scene from a great distance. He didn't have to be there to have an influence in the outcome. So, too, our children will go places and accomplish things far beyond anything we could do. They will impact a world for Jesus that we won't be able to touch! What a privilege to send them to a need world to show people Jesus!

DISCIPLINE THEM CONSISTENTLY Note the key word here is "consistently." Children need to be disciplined consistently (not CONSTANTLY). It's more important that we be consistent with where we draw the line than where the line is drawn. Too often we are inconsistent depending on our mood or stress, if others are around, etc. Inconsistency is very confusing and frustrating to children (Eph. 6:4), and makes it very difficult for them to figure out what we really want. They end up either outwardly rebelling against everything or inwardly thinking they are miserable failures. Neither is a response we want!

The Bible makes it clear that children need discipline (Titus 1:6; I Tim 3:4-5; Prov 13:24; 22:15; 29:15; 23:13-14; 29:17). Children won't admit that and come asking for it, but down inside they realize it and are insecure without it. It's not uncommon for a strong-willed woman to marry a weak man so she can control him, but when she does, she loses respect for him. Down inside something makes her know she needs him to be stronger than her (in a loving, gentle way). While she fights his every attempt to assert himself, secretly she wishes he could bring the control and order she needs in life. The same is true of strong-willed children.

For the first several years of life, babies can't be disciplined because they aren't able to make free-will decisions to rebel. Parents who give in to their every fussy need find they will eventually have a spoiled, demanding baby on their hands, so don't create self-centeredness by always giving in. But discipline is not an issue about 1 1/2 years. For the most part, firmly but lovingly removing the object from them (or whatever it is) will give them the idea. Be persistent and consistent. After age two, though, their will is strong enough to start making their own decisions. They begin to realize there is a more self-satisfying alternative than obedience, its giving into the flesh. They will start to purposefully test the limits. Respond with loving, firm, consistent discipline: sitting in a chair or standing in the corner. Physical punishment should only be used for overt, willful rebellion, not immature mistakes, forgetfulness or clumsiness. It should never be administered in anger. From the age of 4 or 5 on try to teach them the why's of things, not just what they are to do by why. Part of maturity is being able to give up immediate gratification for a long-range goal. As they understand better the reasons for your rules, they will be better able to discipline themselves.

Part of good discipline is making sure they clearly understand just what is expected of them. Any good rule must be clearly understood and enforceable. Always reassure them with hugs and words after a confrontation is over. Always remember that "love covers a multitude of sins" (I Peter 4:8). Make sure they know they are loved no matter what. Better to overdo this than underdo it. Better to be a little spoiled than grow up with a poor self image. The reality of life will quickly burn away the self-centeredness of being spoiled, but a poor self image can take a lifetime to overcome.

A good way to help decide how to respond to a situation is to ask yourself how God would respond. After all, we teach about Him in how we treat our children, for from us they learn about the sovereign authority figure in their lives (us now, God later). As far as this goes, remember how God disciplines us. Usually if we go astray He lets us learn the hard way, but suffering the natural consequences of our actions (drive too fast - speed ticket, don't pay taxes - penalties and fines, ignore our health - sickness, neglect our mate - distance and conflicts). It's always good, from as soon as possible, to let children suffer the consequences of their actions instead of bailing them out. If they break something they must pay for it. If they hurt someone they can't be with people for awhile. If they don't use their money wisely they don't have it when needed. Instead of nagging my children to practice their musical instruments, if their teacher says they aren't prepared for a lesson then we make them pay for the lesson themselves. The Bible sets up this principle when it says that anyone who doesn't work shouldn't be given free food (II Thes. 3:10).

Remember our goal is to discipline, not punish our children. Discipline is to train for future (Heb 12:10) while punishment just pays them back for what inconvenience or embarrassment they've caused us (Isa. 13:11). Discipline is motivated by love, the mind controls and love and security results in the child. Punishment is motivated by anger and frustration, the emotions control, and fear, guilt and anger are built into the child. As far as anger, it can't be that which controls us. However, we will sometimes feel it for justifiable reasons. We should be righteously indignant at a child who mocks a parent or hurts a sibling. Still, we must control the anger and not let the anger control us (as Jesus did when chasing out the money changers -- He could stop and weave a whip before doing anything [John 2:15]).

Remember, parents are nothing but baby-sitters for God. They are HIS children, and He will use all things to help them grow and mature (Rom. 8:28). God gives us the children we need to help make us more like Jesus! No family is perfect, no parent perfect. We all struggle and wonder if we are failing. Raising children correctly is impossible without God's help and wisdom, but He does promise that if we just ask for it (James 1:5). Make sure you keep constantly going to Jesus for wisdom and power, for encouragement and guidance, for He alone can help you.

THE GODLY CHILD

What God Expects of Children (How to have a Charming Child)

George Washington's mother made an interesting reply at a banquet given to the allied officers after the surrender of Lord Cornwallis. A distinguished French officer asked Washington's mother how she managed to rear such a splendid son. She replied, "I taught him to obey." There's nothing clever or profound about that, nothing new or unexpected. We all try to teach our children to obey, some with better success than others! I wonder what Mrs. Washington did that worked for her? We all know the same thing doesn't work for everyone. Still, having children that obey isn't too much to expect -- it's what God expects of children.

CHILDREN, OBEY YOUR PARENTS "Children, obey your parents..." (Eph 6:1, Col 3:20) is God's command to them. It's what He expects of children, so we should expect it, too. Jesus Himself obeyed his parents (Luke 2:51). Please understand that we're not talking about outer conformity here. We're talking about an inner attitude of respect. That's why God also says children are to "honor" their parents (Eph 6:2). Just like a wife isn't to submit outwardly while having an inner attitude of self-centeredness, and Christians are to serve God motivated by love, so children are to obey parents with their whole heart. This is why respecting parents is so important. That's where the parent comes in. Just as wives respond to a husband who sacrificially loves them and puts them first, as Christians do to God, so children respond in obedience much better when they are treated with consideration and respect. For children to respect parents, parents must respect their children. Be sensitive to their needs and emotions. Treat them as you would want to be treated, were you them (that's the Golden Rule, and it's still in effect). Expect obedience from them, but realize learning obedience is a life-long process. How complete is your obedience to God? Do you expect more from your child than God expects from you? Are you as patient and understanding with your children as you want God to be with you?

WATCH WHAT YOU EXPECT Remember, children are not short adults! "When I was a child, I talked like an adult, I thought like an adult, I reasoned like an adult" is NOT how I Cor. 13:11 reads! Don't expect them to be adults. We are competing with no one but ourselves, trying to improve and grow. We measure ourselves now by comparing ourselves to how we were a year ago. Use the same standard on your children. Don't compare them with other children. Don't be expecting too much of them. That will just frustrate them and build anger into them (Eph 6:4). Too high expectations will discourage your child and work against them. The same happens when others expect too much of us. Children need encouragement and building up more than having every weakness and failure pointed out to them. If weakness' are focused on more than strengths, than they will grow up insecure, feeling inferior, with a poor self image. That is VERY

difficult to overcome! I think it's more damaging in the long run that growing up a little indulged. Personally I think its better to err on the side of being too easy on a child than too hard. A semi-spoiled child will take a few knocks in life and learn they'll have to have more self-discipline, and they'll have the internal value and worth to be able to make the adjustment. An insecure person, though, won't have anything to fall back on and can struggle for years. To be perfectly honest, I think God is WAY too easy on me and lets me get away with FAR too much, but He knows what He is doing. We are to pattern ourselves after Him, and that means extending mercy in love.

I think our biggest problem with this is fear (they won't grow up right) and peer pressure (what will others think of me as a parent, they'll embarrass or inconvenience me, etc.). These are selfish reasons, thinking more about ourselves than the child! Thus expecting too much can cause disobedience more than curing it!

LOOK FOR INNER MOTIVES Not everyone will always get along with everyone else (Romans 12:5,9,13,15-18). Some temperaments clash, certain personalities rub each other wrong. It's harder to be nice and obedient when tired or sick. Being on top of the same people day after day can bring out the worst, too. It always helps to ask yourself WHY a child is disobeying. Become a student of your child, putting yourself in their mind and heart. Ask God for wisdom (James 1:5). Disobedience should be treated according to its cause. Ask yourself: Is this just natural, surface personality difference? Is this motivated by a legitimate need (not want) the child has which I'm not meeting? Is this because they are immature children and let everything out without thinking? Is this deep-seated inner rebellion and sin which they choose to harbor in their hearts? You see, we often treat all disobedience as if it is for the last reason when often it isn't. Please try to be sensitive to these differences.

TEMPERAMENTS We all know the promise in Proverbs 22:6 which says *"Train up a child according to his way (bent) and when he is old he will not turn from it."* The key to making it pay off is the command to train children up *"according to his way/bent."* This refers to the 'raw equipment' we receive from God at birth. Perhaps the most important, yet least understood factor is the temperament. Personally God used it more than anything else to help me understand myself and work through problems that long plagued me. He continues to use knowledge of the temperaments in my family and ministry. I don't know of any one tool outside of the Bible that has been more helpful.

Hippocrates (460-370 BC), the father of medicine, first developed the four basic temperaments and showed that emotions affect our bodies. It has been passed on down by many men through the ages. Immanuel Kant backed it in 1798. In more recent times, though, it has been rejected because of Freud's influence, saying man is a total product of his environment and is not born with natural tendencies, a sin nature, etc. Man is just like other animals they say. Christians have been studying the temperaments as popularized by Tim LaHaye (and to some extent Gary Smalley). I strongly, strongly, strongly recommend you get a book on the temperaments by Tim LaHaye and devour it! There are many different ones: the temperaments in general or specifically related to man, woman or child.

Before surveying the four temperaments there is one more thing to understand. By temperament I am referring to inborn traits that subconsciously affect man's behavior. It differs from character (the real you: mind, will & emotions) & personality (the 'face' you show others).

EXTROVERT - INTROVERT There are four basic temperaments: two extrovert and two introvert. Extroverts are optimists, make friends easily, talk fluently, and are people-persons. Introverts are pessimist, shy, have few close friends, express themselves better in writing than talking, and are loners. The two extrovert temperaments are Sanguine and Choleric, the introvert temperaments are Melancholy and Phlegmatic. Everyone has one basic temperament and also a secondary temperament. These create a unique blend for everyone. God uses three colors (red, blue and yellow) to create all the various colors and shades today. He uses four temperaments to create all the various temperaments today. Understanding these can help a LOT in knowing what to expect from your child, as well as understand WHY he does what he does.

BASIC TEMPERAMENTS

	SANGUINE	CHOLERIC	MELANCHOLY	PHLEGMATIC
Teen	David - Esther	Joseph - Miriam	Daniel - Ruth	Timothy - Mary
Adult example	Peter	Paul	Moses	Abraham
Color	bright YELLOW (sun)	hot RED (fire)	deep BLUE (ocean)	cool GREEN (grass)
Animal	Rooster	Lion	Beaver	Turtle
Summary	Respond to Environment	Strong Will	Sensitive Perfectionist	Easy-Going
"P" word	Popular	Powerful	Perfect	Peaceful
Extrovert - Introvert	Extrovert - Optimist	Extrovert - Optimist	Introvert - Pessimist	Introvert - Pessimist
Careers	Salesmen, Actors	Businessmen, Police	Art/Music, Computers	Accountant, Diplomat
Strengths	Friendly - Talkative Warm - Outgoing Emotional - Enthusiastic	Confident - Determined Practical - Productive Independent - Decisive	Gifted (talent, analyze, organized, intellect) Sacrificial/Loyal	Flexible - Conservative Easy-going - Dependable Calm - Humorous
Weakness'	Weak-willed - Unstable Changeable, Undisciplined Self-centered - Unorganize	Self-Sufficient - Proud Control - Unemotional Unsympathetic - Cruel	Insecure - Critical Negative - Moody Unsociable - Revengeful	Unmotivated - Fearful Self-protective - Selfish Slow - Stubborn
Problems	Personality carries through life, so hides many problems inside self. Puts hard things off, over-extends self, doesn't follow through and finish what he starts.	Most to offer in strengths, most to overcome in weakness'. Lacks love. Needs love most, but hardest to love. Lacks kindness, wants to win.	Sets too high standards for self. Afraid of rejection, criticism because overly sensitive. Loyal to friends, but few close friends. Poor self image.	Easy-going, loving nature hides deep problems of selfishness. Hurts people with unkind jest or humor. Does not put out full effort at consistent pace. Protects self from problems.
Teen Strengths	Popular, joins clubs Charming, want to please Daring, life of party Apologetic	Natural leader Organized Competent Excels in emergencies Responsible	Good student, organized High standards Conscientious, Responsi Sensitive Thrifty	Witty, humorous Good listener Casual attitude Hides emotions Gets along with everyone
Teen Weakness'	Deceptive, con-artist Needs peer approval Easily led astray Not responsible	Bossy, controlling Knows Everything Critical, judgmental Loner, few friends	Depressed, withdrawn Inferiority, poor self image Suspicious, critical Inflexible	Quietly stubborn Indecisive, procrastinates Sarcastic Uninvolved

SIBLING RIVALRY Often our major discipline problems come in trying to have our children get along with each other. That is one area where its often hardest to get obedience. In trying to understand why children disobey and making sure we don't expect too much of them, knowing what makes siblings not get along is also helpful.

What causes sibling rivalry? Basically, it comes from having more than one child! It doesn't seem to take more than that! Two children, two sin natures, two immature self-centered people, and conflict is inevitable. There are factors, though, that make this much worse. These include:

1. Favoritism by parents If children feel they are competing for parent's attention or approval (it doesn't have to be real, even if they just imagine it) they will see each other as rivals to defeat. Since no two children are alike, none can be treated alike, and that can be perceived as favoritism. Isaac showed favoritism to Esau over Jacob, Jacob did the same with Joseph. These led to disastrous results. Children who feel left out will disobey to get attention. Even scolding is better than being ignored. Negative emotion coming their way is preferable no emotion!

2. Displaced anger When a child gets angry at others things or people in life they are often tempted to take it out on a sibling. Thus Cain killed Able and Jacob and Esau grew up in constant conflict. Bickering and fighting are usually just the fruit of deeper problems festering within.

3. Feelings of inferiority I've always felt badly for Leah who wasn't as pretty or popular as her younger sister Rachel. Living in the shadow of a sibling that is more successful at something can cause anger.

4. Developmental changes As children become adolescents, they view of younger brothers and sisters can change. Part of their pulling away (see next article about Godly Teens) can be seen in impatience and looking down on younger siblings. Younger children can find good ways to "get to" these older ones. Understanding what is happening and why can make prevention easier.

5. Temperament differences Some temperaments rub others wrong, some are just harder to get along with than others. All this can contribute to disobedience and not getting along.

6. Birth order Another important factor is birth order. Understanding that, too, can help us know better what to expect and to determine the cause of disobedience in a child.

BIRTH ORDER An understanding of the impact of birth order is very helpful.

1. Eldest / first born (the "bossy" one, the junior parent) Miriam, eldest sister of Aaron and Moses, is a typical firstborn: responsible, cooperative, willing to do unpleasant tasks for the parents, studious and serious. Reuben, the first-born in Joseph's family, was the same way. He was conscientious (protected Joseph from death). He was also the family boss, even when they were all grown. Because parents treat first-born in a more adult manner and give them more responsibility, they seem to mature more quickly. Firstborns need (demand) approval, especially from parents. First-born Absalom is a case in point, as are Cain and Esau. They strive for excellency and tend to become type A over achievers (James, Peter). They most closely identify with parents and their values. (A middle child who is the first child of their sex can also show characteristics of a first-born. Also, the first of two or more children born after a long gap will be like a first born.) Its not unusual for first-born boys to have problems growing up. Just as God claimed the first-born male of Israel for His own, so it seems Satan works extra hard today to oppress first-born males, and through them the whole family.

2. Only child ("ruling the roost," the lonely only) Only children like Isaac, Samuel, timothy and Samson are in many ways similar to first-borns. They are treated as if they are the center of the universe and feel that way. They are often over-protected and more comfortable being with adults than peers. Judging himself by adult standards all the time makes him try to grow up quickly and often causes perfectionistic standards. (A single baby born long after others in the family will also show characteristics of an only child.)

3. Middle child ("I can't win") Middle children, especially second-borns, compete against the first-born for dominance, as Cain did to eldest Able. They often become the opposite of the first-born because, being younger, they can't beat the first-born at his/her strengths. They often are full of contradictions: shy but outgoing, impatient but laid back, competitive but not competitive, rebel but peacemaker, aggressive but avoiding conflict. They have more freedom to develop as themselves for they aren't working so hard to be adult-like and get adult approval. They tend to have lower expectations and don't expect things to always be fair. They are more likely, however, to rebel against authority (and parent's values) later in life. Out-of-family friends and peers are important and they are often more open to peer pressure. We see these traits in Andrew, John and Aaron. They are often not motivated to be very studious but can be good peacemakers and mediators. (Middle children who are the youngest of their sex take on some of the qualities usually seen in youngest. Remember, the closer children are in age the more emotional impact they will have on each other, especially if they are of the same sex.)

4. Youngest child ("baby") Last-born children often have the least expectations to meet and can become spoiled (over-protected, assuming others will take care of him). He can thus be unsure of himself and lack confidence. Last-born Joseph lost all of this during his imprisonment in Egypt (one of the reasons God allowed it). Youngest get less spontaneous joy from their parents at their accomplishments (its no longer new and parents are busy with other siblings) Therefore they often becomes the clown of the family for it give him attention. However he can have trouble being taken seriously. Last-born are perceptive people persons and often end up in people-

oriented vocations. David, Moses and Solomon were last-borns. (If other children are born after a long gap, the original 'baby' still continues to have last-born characteristics even though others are born after him/her.)

Solution Pinpoint the severity of the conflict. Is it natural, normal rivalry or do you sense something more? Talk to the children, listen between the lines, draw out their feelings by questions ("How does that make you feel?"). Differentiate between normal personality differences (especially during adolescence) and deep bitterness from unmet emotional needs or allowing sin to dominate. Teach (by word and example) how to handle anger, frustration, unfairness, not getting your own way. Set a good example by your tone of voice and attitude. Teach them to label their feelings (hate, fear, jealousy, hurt, selfishness, etc.) so they can handle them. Show unconditional love no matter what. Seek counsel from mature Christians if necessary, don't be afraid to ask for help!

So, then -- obedience is our goal, and even if we realize we won't ever fully attain it, we must still aim for it. We must try to understand what causes our child's disobedience and deal with that, or at the most we will just force outer conformity (hypocrisy). Having them feel loved and secure is more important than discipline, but both should be accomplished. Treating them as we would want to be treated is important. Setting a good example by showing them how we discipline ourselves and handle our weakness' is a must. Asking God for wisdom and then treating our children as He treats us is something we must always remember. And, of course, pray, pray, pray, pray, pray, pray, pray.

THE GODLY TEENAGER

What God Expects of Teenagers (How to have a Terrific Teenager)

IN-BETWEEN-AGERS Mark Twain once said, "When a kid turns 13, stick him in a barrel, nail the lid shut, and feed him through the knot hole. When he turns 16, plug the hole." What happens when a child turns 13, or 16, or whatever teen age, that causes such changes? What's it all about? Adolescence is like a house on moving day - a temporary mess! Everyone goes through it. Even the apostle Paul went through this process (1 Cor. 13:11). How can parents help?

CHALLENGING THE GIANTS Children grow up seeing themselves as helpless, totally dependent on 20 foot tall sovereign giants to provide for them in every area of life. They feel small and powerless, needing protection and care. Suddenly they are thrust into adolescence when their hypothalamus starts sending chemical messages to the pituitary gland telling it to start preparing the body for the onset of puberty. Changes in the body, mind and emotions begin. The child finds himself aiming for a position of equality with these giants. What a scary, seemingly-impossible task looms before them! If parents can understand this, though, they can help a lot. For one thing, it helps parents understand why their teens start paying more and more attention to the parent's faults and weakness'. He's trying to whittle the 20' giant down to size, to a more attainable goal. Mark Twain also said: "It was a curious thing. When I was about 13, my father's intelligence started to drop. His mental abilities continued to decline until I reached 21, when these abilities began miraculously to improve."

For adolescents, its easier to pull away, to separate, to feel like they are abandoning their parent when they see that parent as more of an enemy than a friend. Also, if a parent can take himself down from the pedestal by admitting to his faults and sharing his own struggles (past and present) his child won't feel he has to look for chinks in the armor.

CHILDHOOD ALL OVER AGAIN Its interesting to note that the emotional stages adolescents go through are very similar to the physical stages young children go through. Both start with the child making an effort to separate from the parent and be their own person. They begin to discover who they are in their own right. Before long they start exploring the adult world around them, unaware of the dangers it holds. When they get into trouble or venture too far away they come running back to their parents to be cared for. They live in a very selfish, self-centered world, thinking only of themselves. They try taking on adult mannerisms and activities. Children will dress up and pretend different activities. Adolescents do something similar when they 'try on' various peer or adult actions, vocabulary, mannerisms, or activities. They'll find some that fit and others they reject. Its sort of trial and error. As more and more begin to fit they will become increasingly independent until they develop their own personality and character, something they like and which they feel fits them. The world calls this 'finding yourself.' Young children do this physically through the first years of life. Adolescents follow the same pattern emotionally during their teen years. It isn't always a smooth transfer. Some go through really rebellious times ("terrible twos" all over again). Often it is like a car stuck in the snow. They rock back and forth, gaining ground and sometimes loosing ground, until there is a sudden surge ahead, only to repeat the same process.

PREPARING THE SHIP TO LEAVE HARBOR What is our role as parents in all of this? Its like preparing a ship to leave the harbor. Before heading out to sea on its own the ship is securely tied to the dock while it takes on fuel (love, acceptance, security, confidence, good experiences to draw from) and makes preparations for the voyage (training in values, knowledge, etc.). If the ship is sent off too soon it is doomed. Once the engine starts

(hypothalamus, etc.) it better be loaded for if the ropes aren't cast off in time for a smooth departure it can tear some of the pier on its way out.

This leaving parental authority and control is natural and normal. It is a God-given drive to 'leave the nest,' 'cut the apron strings' or however you want to phrase it. Genesis 2:24 says a person must leave (break dependency) parents before being able to cleave to a mate. Parents must help their teens with this process. Thus parents find their role changing from sovereign control (20' giant) to more of a friend-friend relationship. The lines of control are drawn in (but not completely severed). Responsibility for actions is passed to teen (let them suffer the consequences of actions, positive or negative). Peers take on more and more importance as adolescence compare themselves to see if they are acceptable to others their age.

During the early stages of adolescence teens will argue and talk back. During the later stages, though, if things haven't been worked out right, they'll start distancing themselves from their parents by rejecting some of their parent's more important values, especially spiritual ones. This is a prime way of 'getting back' at their parents. Often this is why pastor's and missionary's kids rebel so much.

If children don't work through these stages they won't mature into a balanced adult. We all know many adults who have immaturity's from stages they missed as teens. In the parable of the prodigal (Luke 15:11-32) son we see this. The younger son rebelled (one extreme) to exert his independence. His ship pulled away prematurely and failed. However the older brother who stayed home and never went through the stages of maturing wasn't any better off. He never established a secure identity for himself, that's why he couldn't rejoice in his brother's return. He still needed parental favoritism because he didn't have any security in himself. Sometimes they stay like that for the rest of their lives.

MOTHERS & FATHERS, BOYS & GIRLS It is usually the mother the teen first starts breaking from. Mothers stand for childhood, and being close to and dependent on a mother makes a teen feel like a child. Girls can have a harder time of this than boys. Not only do they tend to hypersensitivity and emotionalism more than boys during these years, but they often don't have anyone to turn to when they turn from their mother. Boys have long been taught not to be 'Mamma's boy', and they have their father to draw closer to. Fathers play important roles during these early adolescent years. They serve as way stations for adolescents leaving childhood (mother). They can greatly help their sons and daughters.

If mothers or even fathers talk to them or treat them like children they will immediately notice. This more than anything causes more rebellion in them. They aren't mature enough to say "I want to think and decide for myself. Don't treat me like a child. When you boss me around I feel like a child, and I don't like that." Parents must listen to hear that said in their actions and forms of rebellion. Parents must learn to really listen - be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to become angry (James 1:19). That means parents must work through their own fears and insecurities, their own immaturity's and lack of self-control, their own hesitancy about letting go. Adolescence, to be handled right, means a parent must be mature and secure in their own right. If you can't handle your emotions you can't handle theirs!

EXIT PARENTS, ENTER PEERS When adolescents start turning FROM parents, it is peers they turn TO. They need to know how they compare to others their age. Are they OK? Do they fit in? Can they make and keep new friends? These become VERY important for them. If they are unwilling to spend a night away from home, avoid peers, or seem especially fearful, then something is wrong.

Do your best to help them have the right friends. Make your home open for others. Get to know their friends (sometimes you can help someone else's adolescent better during these years than you can your own). Talk with them about their friends: why they picked them, traits they like and don't like (ones they'll want to copy or reject), why they do what they do, etc. Its a good way of keeping communication open and helping them think through what they are doing.

OPPOSITE SEX FRIENDS As adolescence progresses, teens are more and more interested in the opposite sex. As they become more secure with their own identity and fitting in with same-sex friends, they start wondering if the opposite sex will accept them for who they are becoming. This is natural and important. Anything having to do with dating, romance, love, etc., must be rejected (they should have been thoroughly trained in this for years - a future article will cover it). However brother-sister friendships are very valuable. Unless they understand the opposite sex and know what traits in the opposite sex they like and dislike, they will have a much harder time when God does bring the right person into their lives. It helps them know how to act around the opposite sex -- what is accepted and what is rejected.

REGRESSIONS Its natural for the boat to make a quick trip back to the dock to take on emergency supplies from time to time. Sudden regression is natural, they'll pass through it if you give them some space. Encourage them, but they must do it on their own. Like a bird getting out of an egg or butterfly out of a cocoon, they have to do it on their own to survive.

Thus adolescence can be an exciting and growing time. Special bonding and closeness can take place. Or it can become a constant battle for control, a time of uncontrolled emotions and a home in uproar. Understanding what your teen is going through can help a lot. Working through your own problems is also essential. With God's help you can enjoy a rewarding relationship with your teens, one that will last the rest of your lives

THE GODLY FAMILY

What God Expects of Families (How to be a Fantastic Family)

Most marriages go through a time of struggle. All face difficulties. None are perfect. Since opposites attract, and since we all come to marriage naturally self-centered and with a sin nature, conflict in families shouldn't surprise us. God uses our mates to bring our out sinfulness and polish our rough edges. What makes conflict in families so painful is that it is one place where we really desire and need peace. Is a peaceful palace too much to expect? What can we rightfully expect from our family? What does God expect? Let's look at these things.

THE MYTH OF THE PERFECT FAMILY Perfect mates come only in shoes and gloves. Unlike the children's' stories, we don't "live happily ever after." Someone said that all marriages are happy, it's the living together afterwards that is tough! Adam and Eve had problems with Cain. Abraham and Sarah certainly had their times (Genesis 16, 21), as did Isaac and Rebecca (Genesis 27) and Jacob and Rachel (Genesis 30, 31). Moses's marriage to Zipporah failed (Exodus 4) and so did David and Michal's (II Sam. 6). Hosea and Gomer ended up back together, but only after much pain and hurt. William Bradford's wife committed suicide on the Pilgrim's trip to this country. John Wesley had a very difficult time in his relationships with women. William Carey, the father of modern missions, had a disastrous first marriage and home life. The list could go on. Still, God has something better. Marriages can struggle, but homes don't have to always be in turmoil.

CAUSES OF CONFLICT IN HOMES Putting two sinful, self-centered people together where sharing and putting someone else first is required will sometimes bring out the worst in a person. It is inevitable. But there are other reasons why homes aren't always peaceful.

1. Unrealistic expectations Lets face it, we aren't honest with our mates before marriage. We put our best foot forward, are attentive to their needs, and do all we can to win and impress them. That is dishonest, for our mates assume we will be that way after marriage, too. We fall in love with a person's strengths, but then we end up living with their weakness' If love is blind, marriage can be a real eye-opener!

2. Stages marriages go through All marriage go through these stages.

STAGE 1	STAGE 2	STAGE 3
LOVERS: fall in love & marry	ANTAGONISTS: children & money problems	ALLIES: acceptance, maturity
ROMANTIC commitment UNTESTED	RESENTFUL commitment UNCERTAIN - good times & bad	HARMONIOUS commitment UNDOUBTED
conflict AVOIDED mate IDEALIZED - focus strength	conflict CONSTANT open or below surface mate DISAPPROVED (focus on weakness	conflict RESOLVED, trust grows mate ACCEPTED

The trick here is to make it from stage 2 to 3. Going from stage 1 to 2 will happen (it's downhill) but from 2 to 3 (uphill) often doesn't happen. Then the relationship ends in separation (physical, which is divorce, or emotional, which is living and working together but without real intimacy). The transition from stage 2 to 3 takes work. It means working through conflict.

CONFLICT ISN'T ALWAYS BAD There's an old saying that a man has no business marrying a woman who can't make him miserable because it means she can't make him happy. A husband and wife have the capacity to make each other either more happy or more miserable than anyone else. Marriage can double your trouble and divide your joy or double your joy and divide your trouble. Moving parts always cause friction. The key is to keep the friction down with the oil of love.

REASONS FOR FAILURE OF MARRIAGE There are several reasons why some conflicts aren't worked through, but instead destroy a marriage.

1. Failure to leave and cleave In order for a marriage to be successful, each mate must totally abandon any emotional dependence they may have on their own parents ("leave" Gen 2:24) and instead depend 100% on their mate for everything ("cleave" Gen 2:24). It's hard enough for two people to bond and work together, but when one of their parents can still pull strings (and a parent can do this without saying a word, they can even do this after they have died) they the husband wife relationship will suffer. Needing a parent's approval, being influenced by past guilt, in any way being unable to make ones own value and priority judgments -- all these and more will undermine a home.

2. Failure to understand male-female differences Failure to understand this major difference will doom a relationship, for our expectations of the opposite sex will be unrealistic, we won't understand and meet their needs, and communication will break down.

MEN	WOMEN
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Mind	Emotions
Rational comes first	Feeling comes first
Production-oriented	Relationship-oriented
shop to get what needed quickly & efficiently	shop to enjoy the experience, browse
long-range sight, distance planning, overall	near-sighted, today's problems ('nutrition')

3. Failure to Communicate Ann Landers says her experience shows that most family problems stem from the inability to communicate. Ephesians 4:25 - 5:2 explains some good principles to assure good communication:

a. Be honest and truthful (25) Don't fight to win or you will try to hurt & destroy. Be honest with yourself about your own feelings and motives. Plan ahead what you will say if you think conflict will result. Write it out and give the note to your mate, there's less pressure to respond quickly (and in anger/hurt). Ask yourself what you want to accomplish by what you say. If it's vindictive, to hurt back, to justify yourself, to win in any way then don't do it.

b. Be self-controlled (26a) Handle your hurt as pain. Don't turn it into anger and try to hurt someone back. Learn to listen. It does take two to fight.

c. Keep it short (26b-27) Never go to bed with unresolved conflict, don't let it settle in!

d. Watch the timing (26-27) Don't get into things when tired, hungry, busy, tense, etc.

e. Take positive action (28) Don't fight each other, find the common problem & fight it.

f. Build up, don't tear down (29) Edify, build up, encourage - that takes humility

g. Keep close to God (30) Pray before talking and while talking (together & in own heart)

h. Develop constructive behavior (31) It takes time to break bad habits, but break them!

i. Be forgiving (32) Say "I'm sorry, forgive me," forgive others even when they are wrong

j. Live by love (5:1-2) Jesus is our example, ask yourself what Jesus would say/do

PREVENTION IS BETTER THAN CORRECTION (Eph 5:15-21) Always lean on God's wisdom (15). Use your time correctly (16) which means saying NO to things. Be understanding and sensitive (17). Submit to God and your mate (18-21).

ANY HOME CAN BE RESTORED By building in God's strength on Biblical principles any marriage and home can be restored (Proverbs 24:3-4). It takes work and commitment. It means surrendering one's own pride and pain for the good of the relationship. It means putting God first and mate second with self last. That doesn't come naturally, but it can come. It must come.

THE GODLY HOME

What God Expects of Homes (How to have a Heavenly Home)

One of the most overlooked love stories in the Bible is the story of Ruth and Boaz. After coming back to Palestine with Naomi, a young widow named Ruth had no future from a human viewpoint. A Gentile in a small town, it took her full time efforts just to provide food for herself and her mother-in-law. Israel was at a low ebb, spiritually destitute and far from God, in bondage to pagan neighbors, and in economic turmoil. The future looked bleak for young Ruth, but she trusted in God.

A GODLY HUSBAND God led her to Boaz's field where she was protected. Boaz loved and married her, sacrificing much of his finances to get Naomi out of debt. There was nothing in it for him, he took a financial loss. That's why a closer relative who should have done the same thing turned it down. Boaz was a sacrificial lover, an efficient provider, a consistent leader, an unselfish protector, a realistic pedagogue and an earnest pastor.

A GODLY WIFE Ruth responded to Boaz's protection, provision and sacrifice for her by submitting to and trusting him with her life. She was a very trusting wife. She had no unrealistic expectations. She put Boaz first and filled his empty spaces by encouraging, supporting and respecting him. She lived a godly life herself, focusing on internal qualities, not surface appearance.

A GODLY CHILD Before long Obed was born. God honored their faith and love and provided a special son. I'm sure they loved him unconditionally, oversaw him instructionally, validated him continually, emancipated him gradually and disciplined him consistently. His son, their grandson, was Jesse, father of David and ancestor of Jesus Himself.

A GODLY HOME Still, Boaz and Ruth weren't perfect. Boaz knew a woman needed to feel loved and protected, but he was slow to act and needed her to initiate the relationship (Ruth 3:8-14).

Ruth had a good heart for God and others, but had a lot to learn about Boaz and marriage according to God's principles. Somewhere between Boaz and Jesse, something went wrong in the area of parenting, for Jesse seems to have been a poor father (he forgot about David as a son when Samuel came to anoint a king) and his sons were cruel to their brother (when David went to them in the army). No marriage is perfect. God uses marriage to help mature His people.

Someone said building a good marriage was like building a good log fire. You build with paper and kindling, careful of each step, and all of a sudden it goes up in a brilliant blaze. When the primary blaze burns down you wonder if the fire will fizzle out and leave you in the dark. You blow on it and fan it for all you are worth. Sometimes smoke billows out and almost chokes you, but if the materials are good and if you invest enough energy and interest in maintaining it, soon the big solid logs catch and your fire takes on new qualities. Protect your fire from rain (sin) which can slow or extinguish the fire. Pray. Patiently persevere. Pray. Humble yourself. Pray. Pray. Pray.