

Wisdom for Families

In writing this message I am quite mindful of those readers who live in less-than-perfect family situations, including those who have been divorced or widowed, or in those cases where one spouse does not know the Lord. To you dear ones, I want to say from the Lord, that God is able, and His grace is sufficient in your circumstance. Even though you may be forced into both roles—that of father and mother—remember that His strength is made perfect in your weakness. Believe in His grace in whatever situation you find yourself, and God will meet you in a powerful way!

Finally, this message is not intended to be an exhaustive treatment of the subject. Rather, may the reader consider each topic to be a “seed thought” which the Lord Himself may expand upon as it is prayerfully considered!

Some readers may already know that the Lord has blessed me with a godly wife and seven children. I have desired for some time now, to share a few of the vitally important lessons we are learning about how relationships in a family can either work or fail.

God Himself is the Standard of Measurement

To properly understand the way relationships within the family are supposed to work, we must go back to the Genesis account of the creation of man. Here we read that God said He was going to make man “in his own image”. God’s intention is for men and women to mirror what God is like, particularly in the way they treat their spouses, children, and fellow man! That is a tall order.

I suppose one of the greatest sorrows

in the heart of God is how far we have fallen from His intention in this matter in the church today. Just consider the way we treat each other in the church and in our families and so often, rather than the stamp and image of God, we see the clear mark of the serpent. Satan’s venomous poison has so infested the human heart that we mirror his evil ways, rather than the majesty of God. How this tragic truth only supports our need for, as Peter says, “multiplied grace”!

The truths I want to share in this article are not very deep or profound; they are simple, yet vitally important. And from the very beginning it must be understood that our ability to succeed in possessing those qualities that will enable us to have spiritually successful families is directly dependent upon the extent to which we are allowing the cross to do its purging work in our hearts. Every divine quality that God desires to work in us must spring out of a deeper work of death to ourselves. As, by faith, we reckon ourselves to be dead with Christ, we can then, by faith, lay hold of those qualities that are in Christ so that they can be expressed in and through us. Now we shall look into some of the awesome responsibilities involved in family life.

Exhortations to Husbands and Wives

“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word...So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself.” (Please read the entire text of Eph. 5:22-29).

A husband is called to live a self-emptying, selfless life toward his wife. It is in the heart of every woman to both

know and feel, to be lavished and to lavish in the perfect love of God. Every woman is created with this need. All the problems associated with a wife who is deeply lacking a sense of security stem from an inadequate understanding of Christ’s love for her. God’s perfect love casts out ALL fear, all insecurity, and the heart trusts fully in the rest that such love brings! Of course, Jesus alone can provide this. However, part of the sobering calling of a husband is to put flesh and blood on Jesus, and in a genuine way, be the earthly instrument through which this kind of love can flow to his wife! So often this becomes an important means by which a woman can come to know the reality of the love of her heavenly Husband!

Now let’s be honest husbands—how far short we fall! We can often see so clearly the destructive pattern of selfishness in our own hearts. Nevertheless, we should, by grace, be constantly striving toward the goal of expressing the selfless love of Christ towards our wives! Any area in our lives, guys, that is not lining up to this high calling will be an inroad for Satan to do his work, and even if our wife never complains, the effect will be to slowly erode our relationship. Then when the storms of life come, we will be shaken in ways we never would have believed possible, all because of this destructive pattern of sin that we refused to deal with! How we must pray, men, for God to deliver us from our self-love and self-serving lifestyles, and to fill us with Christ’s self-emptying love.

It is important to note a misunderstanding that often arises regarding a husband’s calling to lay down his life for his wife. We must remember that while we are to serve our wives in love, we are not to serve them in the sense of fulfilling every desire of

their hearts. We are called into a love “as Christ love[s] the church”, and His love certainly does not cause Him to grant us everything that we want from Him. Rather, His love for us is for the purpose of washing and cleansing. The goal of a husband’s service towards his wife must likewise be her sanctification and spiritual growth: he lays down his life for this, not simply to be or do whatever she may wish of him.

A Word to the Wives

“Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church”.

Next may we consider the wives. The greatest call of a wife is to honor and respect her husband. Ladies, believe it or not, a deep need in our hearts as husbands is to know that we are truly esteemed by you! That is just the way God made us. A husband can endure anything, can go through enormous failure and defeat—so long as he knows that his wife still honors and respects him. But let a wife begin to show in words, deeds, little comments and actions, signs she is losing respect for him, and the spirit of that man becomes deeply wounded. No amount of money, no amount of success or worldly possessions can heal the spirit of a man whose wife no longer honors him. Likewise, no amount of sex, gifts, or presents can heal the heart of a wife whose husband decides to live for himself, and just looks to his wife as a mother to take care of him, or a sex partner to meet his physical needs. Again, the source of this kind of respectful love is found in an ever-increasing supply of Christ’s great love and grace. May we run to Him who alone can equip us!

Submission Based on Love—Not Performance

In the church today, it is the breakdown of this important husband-wife relationship that is the source of much devilish activity in the house of God. So often during the many years of being privileged to assist couples in counseling I have had a young wife tell me that she could not love and respect her husband because he did not love her in a selfless way. Her heart is deeply

wounded because of fights, harsh words that have been spoken, and months, sometimes years of living with bitterness and seeds of unforgiveness. After seeking the Lord about this very prevalent problem, the Lord has led me repeatedly back to the words of the apostle Peter, dealing with the subject of submission in his first epistle.

“Slaves, submit yourselves to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and considerate, but also to those who are harsh....Wives, in the same way be submissive to your husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives...”. (Please read the entire text of 1 Pet. 2:13-3:7.

Please notice the phrase in 3:1 which begins “*in the same way...*”. This is a connecting statement which indicates that the things just said (in reference to being submissive), are to be an example of the way in which wives are to submit to their own husbands. In other words, wives are to submit to their husbands “*in the same way*” that slaves are to submit to masters, “*not only to those who are good and considerate*” (2:18, NIV). Peter is making it very clear that this calling of a wife to honor and submit to her husband is valid even when she feels that her husband is not deserving. The point Peter is making is that even if a husband is falling short of his wife’s expectations and hopes, she is still called to honor him.

When we think that the giving of honor and love is conditional and based on performance, we have not yet touched the realm of divine love, but are yet caught in the realm of carnal, human passions. Beloved, these passions cannot hold a marriage or family together! Rather, we must, by the Holy Spirit’s power, learn to express the unconditional love of Christ to one another within our marriage relationship.

Love is not Earned—Trust Is

Peter said that the servants were to be submissive to their own masters with perfect respect! Beloved, this is not a command to submit to physical, sexual or mental abuse when the situation is unlawful. We may feel that an

individual is not deserving of our trust, but we should still honor and respect that individual’s *personhood*. Trust must be earned in relationships; *love is not earned*.

This truth can perhaps be better understood when we remember that our initial call is to reflect the image and likeness of God in our relationships! God does not trust the young and the immature—those who have never proven themselves to be trustworthy, or who have not yet had enough real life experience. Neither does he trust one who has proven himself unworthy by betrayal, or by making the wrong decisions during times of testing. However, no matter where a person stands in light of how much God may (or may not) trust them, God will always treat that person with love, dignity and respect. Even when God punishes us, He never stops loving us! This is how we are to be toward one another, by the power of Jesus working in us! Wives, the call of God on your lives is to treat your own husbands with perfect respect, even when they fail you and fall short of their calling to love you as Christ loves you! How we need God’s grace in order to prevent Satan’s seeds of bitterness, criticism, dishonor and disrespect from destroying our relationships with one another, and to, rather, mirror the character of God in all our dealings with all people! May God help us in these matters!

Advice for Parents and Children

Now a word to our children as well as to we who are parents. One of the most tragic signs of Satan’s inroad into the lives of our young people today is a dreadful disrespect for parents and their authority, as well as contempt for their wisdom. There is an arrogance that permeates our young people that is like the mocking spirit of those kids who scoffed the prophet Elijah. God said that He hates a proud look, a haughty spirit and a lying tongue! I do not wish to bash our young people but a clear warning out of love is certainly appropriate.

For so many years I have heard teachers and preachers say that children turn out exactly how they are trained. I once heard a preacher speak about the

often quoted scripture which states that if we train up a child in the way he should go, then when he is old he will not depart from it. This preacher was actually scolding a large gathering of adults, parents in particular, telling them that if they had children who were straying it was their fault and that they had failed to raise them properly.

Well, that may be the case from time to time, but to make an inclusive statement like that did not set well with my spirit. At the time, I did not have any children and was quite young. His statement bothered me considerably until I brought it to the Lord and asked Him why I was so troubled. Very clearly the Lord seemed to say to me, “Phil do you think that I am a good parent?” to which I responded, “Of course Lord, you are the best.” He then said, “Well, I have many children who are going astray. Do you think it is my fault?” “Oh, my,” I said, and that forever settled the issue. Sometimes kids do go astray because they were not trained properly, but many times they go astray because they choose to, in spite of being raised in excellent God-fearing homes.

That being said, we do need to be very honest and humble, asking the Lord to show us if some of our children’s faults are because of our sins. For example, if as parents we are loud and argumentative in our dealings with each other, this will most likely be passed on to our kids. So when we are correcting them about being loud and argumentative, we must be willing to admit to them that we have not set a good example in this area and ask them to forgive us for influencing them in an improper way. We must never correct our kids for a sin that we ourselves are openly demonstrating to them by our example—unless we acknowledge our sin to them as well! It is not a common practice among Christian parents today to do this humbling of ourselves, and I think we are seeing the negative effects that have resulted.

Communication and Good Role Modeling Skills are Very Important!

As parents it is vital to learn a couple of very important skills. Firstly, we must ever be seeking to cultivate a relationship with our children, especially when they come to the age of puberty. It is of vital importance that we keep the lines of communication open. If communication breaks down trouble will surely follow. Communication does not have to consist of long discourses and lengthy lectures but can be as simple as taking time daily to LISTEN to your children--what is going on in their lives, with their friends, as well as their own struggles! The key is to pursue this kind of relationship even though it may appear that your child may be aloof.

“...the most valuable lesson for mothers to learn is the need to daily draw their strength from the power of prayer, the Holy Spirit, and the Word of God.”

Next, as children get towards their late teens, and the process of “cutting the apron strings” becomes necessary, it is of major importance that we pray for them, giving them entirely into the hands of the Lord, welcoming His discipline in their lives. Our human love for them makes it is easy to interfere when we see the Lord’s strong dealings in our children’s lives. This is the time when, as parents, we realize that we have done all that we can, and now we must entrust them to the Lord.

Finally, parents must remember that children will ultimately imitate what they see in them and not so much what they have verbally been taught. It is important to know that our actions will have lasting impact upon their learned behavior patterns!

Mothers in particular have a powerful influence in the lives of their children. Mom’s actions, words, and the ways in which she handles life’s stresses, difficulties and challenges will leave a deep impression on her kids, most likely shaping the way they will act in similar situations. I suppose the most valuable lesson for mothers to learn is the need to daily draw their strength from the power of prayer, the Holy Spirit, and the Word of God. As a busy

mom it is very easy to neglect quiet time resulting in failure to live each day in the grace and power of Jesus. When all is said and done, the most important blessing that a mother can pass on to her children is the meek, quiet spirit she possesses and demonstrates each day amidst life’s many challenges and responsibilities. Failure will be experienced in many ways, but to maintain a Christ-like attitude in everything will be the redeeming ingredient in all our dealings with the kids. Children will remember that the most when they grow up! Likewise, they will remember the hurt, turmoil and confusion that results when we respond wrongfully to life’s many challenges.

Fathers are Called to be Instruments in God’s Hand to Bring Maturity to Their Children

Now let’s look more deeply into God’s calling to fathers. Fathers, we are commanded to train up our children with the intent that they may come to maturity. Moms are good nurturers, but it is in the heart of every true father to see maturity in his children. This calling is more far reaching than just reading a Bible story to the kids once in a while, or hanging out with them when you have the time. Fathers in particular, and mothers as well, should be the heavenly interpreters in the lives of their children — making sense out of the “nuts and bolts” of life from an eternal viewpoint. This input is imperative to their spiritual development, determining (when they reach adulthood) whether the children will have a worldly, carnal attitude or one of spiritual understanding.

Herein lies a great lack among the ranks of fathers. Most fathers are too caught up with their careers, or their own dreams and passions to take time to be the priests of the home, resulting in families who are very dull to spiritual things. Fathers must set the spiritual climate in the home. Fathers have the power of reproducing “after their kind” (in a spiritual way) in their sons, daughters and wives. Now is a good time, fathers, to ask yourself what you

are reproducing in your family. Are you setting the holy example of Christ for your family to see, or are you just “living”—eating, sleeping, and pursuing your dreams? These are heart-searching questions that must be answered. Fathers, what message are you teaching your sons and daughters? Not the message they hear from your lips, but the one they see through your lifestyle, by the things you prioritize, the things you spend time doing.

Are we speaking into the lives of our sons, fathers, showing them the face of God as seen in Jesus, the radiance of His countenance shining through our lives? Are they hearing the words of God from our lips—not just the cute Bible stories and videos—but the Word that cuts as a sharp sword, exposing the very depths of sin in their lives? Are they seeing one who will pray through with them until peace with God is secured? Remember dads, we cannot give what we do not have! To be a father who is making an eternal difference, the most important thing is that we would personally be close to the Lord.

Parents Must Impart Eternal Values to Their Children!

Our children need fathers and mothers who will lead them out of the darkness and hellish rat race of this evil day into a life of brokenness before a God who is not impressed with how much we know, but with how much we fear Him and tremble at His Word! In my understanding of being a father, which is still growing, I think that our sons and daughters need more than just a “buddy” as a father. They need a man who will love them enough to tell them the truth, show them the truth and be unconditionally committed to this throughout their journey to adulthood. It is great to fish with our children, to play ball and to have fun together, but if this is all we give them, they will never come into the kind of spiritual inheritance that God intends for them. This is a real danger in this age in which we live; may we be lovingly warned.

Parenthood is essentially the gift of being able to impart a spiritual seed into our children, a seed that will have inherent a kind of life that will bring

forth after its own kind. Then they, in turn, can impart the seed to their children, etc., and so it is passed on from generation to generation. It is good to help our kids see the unique gifts they have been given by God, and to encourage them to develop them, but if that is all we do, we do them a great disservice. We must give them something of Jesus, something genuine and life changing if we hope for them to grow up as men and women who are wholly committed to the Lord!

This present culture puts great pressure on young adults to excel, to be successful, and make a lot of money. Unless our sons and daughters have been taught by godly parents that to submit to this pressure is for the most part, a sure way to spiritual ruin, they will fall prey to this spirit and end up sacrificing the eternal inheritance for the pleasure of temporal success. Rather, as fathers we must teach our children how important it is to possess such qualities as humility, meekness, contentment and an attitude of preferring another’s interests above one’s own.

Pride is a most dreadful sin, and unless its venom is deeply dealt with in our children, you can be sure that it will be their destruction. Additionally, we must teach our children about the deceitfulness of greed, and admonish them to flee from any form of covetousness. Such sins will destroy their spiritual life, making the eyes of their hearts blinded to the true riches found in Christ. Yet how can fathers be effective in dealing with these sins in their children when they have never been dealt with in their own lives?

Every father should pray over the words of the holy writ, and impart its truth to his entire family! *“Love not the world, nor yet what is in the world; if anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the desire of the flesh and the desire of the eyes and the proud glory of life, belongs not to the Father but to the world; and the world is passing away with its desire, while he who does the will of God remains for ever”* (1 John 2:15-17, No-Fault Translation).

Every Family Needs a Protector!

Another important feature of being a

father is to be the protector of the family, to stand at the gate, the entryway to the home and hearts of the family, and to support those things that are of God and steadfastly resist those things which are not. This is of great importance fathers!

One aspect of this role is to take the lead in discipline. All too often I have seen men push this responsibility onto their wives. This is not good. A mother should have the rest and security of knowing that her husband will take the burden of disciplining and dealing with attitudes that need correction. Moms have enough to do without having to take the lead in this matter too! It is a father’s job to put the fear of God into his children, teaching them to respect their parents as well as other authority figures in their lives, i.e. grandparents, aunts, uncles, neighbors, teachers, and public servants. Any form of disrespect should be immediately dealt with!

Being passive in the role of protector will result in untold damage to our homes. We should support and encourage the unique calling and personality of each member of our household, and the specific gifts that each possesses, as well as those words, attitudes or character expressions that are worthy of God’s approval. In our role as protector we are also to resist anything that comes into our home, either by external or internal entrance, that is indicative of evil, that does not reflect the dignity or respect that we are to express as redeemed humans.

God’s word says that we are to follow Christ’s example in everything that we do and say. As protector, the father is called to stand against, both in prayer and in public, all that is contrary to the likeness of Jesus. We are not to tolerate any kind of impurity in our homes. Dirty stories as well as jokes are to be resisted. All foul talk and course jesting should be eliminated; never allow gossip or slanderous speech in any form. You see fathers, this is YOUR job. You as the priest and protector are to know the atmosphere of your home, and the spiritual condition of your family, and always be prepared to confront anything that would threaten the integrity of the home!

The word is so very clear on this matter, beloved: *“...throw off your evil nature—the old you that was a partner in the evil ways—rotten through and through, full of lust and sham. Now your attitudes and thoughts must all be constantly changing for the better. Yes, you must be a new and different person, holy and good. Clothe yourself with this new nature. Stop lying to each other; tell the truth, for we are parts of each other and when we lie to each other we are hurting ourselves. If you are angry, don’t sin by nursing your grudge. Don’t let the sun go down when you are still angry—get over it quickly; for when you are angry you give a mighty foothold to the devil....Don’t use bad language. Say only what is good and helpful to those you are talking to, and what will give them a blessing....Stop being mean, bad-tempered and angry. Quarreling, harsh words and dislike of others should have no place in your lives. Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God has forgiven you because you belong to Christ”*(Ephesians 4:22-32, The Living Bible).

Fathers Need to be Men of Prayer, Filled with the Word and the Holy Spirit

The most effective way to ensure that a man is faithfully fulfilling his high calling as protector of the home is for him to immerse himself into a prayerful and consistent studying of the Scriptures. As the very Words of God go deeply into the heart of a father and he allows the Holy Spirit to wash him to the depths of his being, he will then be enabled to speak to his family out of the rich resources of the Word’s deposit within.

However men, this work cannot ever happen if we are passive “couch potatoes”, seeking a life of ease or comfort. Neither will it happen if we are casual seekers of the Lord only, reading the Word on a superficial level. If we are constantly filling our minds with unprofitable information from the television we can be sure that we are

seriously neglecting this high calling. Additionally, if we as fathers are dedicated to serving our own interests, following hard after our own pleasures, hobbies, and “fun” entertainment, we also can be much assured that we will fall very short of being our family’s protector.

God Seeks True Worship in Every Home where His Name is Mentioned

Now let us consider for a few moments another important role of a father and husband. What we want to look at is his role of being the “worship leader” of the home. Now by worship

“Our homes are in great need of men of God to arise and demonstrate the way of true worship, a life lived by faith in the Word of God and not by feeling.”

leader, we do not mean one who picks songs each day and leads the family in singing! Worship is much more than singing songs (although the singing of songs could most certainly be included!). Instead, it is a heart posture of deep brokenness, a bowing down prostrate before the Lord in humility and meekness, with a heart of continual praise and thanksgiving, in spite of the circumstances. The man of the house needs to be able to model this kind of worship each day, teaching and leading the family into Christ’s presence.

As worship leader, the man of the house must not allow the home atmosphere to fall into spiritual decline, with unthankfulness, complaining or grumbling. Additionally, the hearts of the family must be guarded against depression that can hurl the atmosphere into one of darkness and despair. This is a very high calling, men, and, spending time each day in the presence of the Lord, feasting on His word and praying earnestly for grace are the only things that will enable us to hold up this high standard.

One danger of which we all must be aware, and one that has the immediate power to destroy true worship is the presence of anger or unthankfulness in

our hearts. We men must always be on guard against letting any form of anger, rage, or unthankfulness gain a foothold. Satan knows that if the man of the house gives way to these sins they will soon spread to the whole family. Any form of bitterness, complaining or unthankfulness of any kind must quickly be forsaken. Yes, even matters we might consider insignificant such as being upset over the weather saying, “Oh, it is too hot” or, “I wish it were not raining,” etc. are leaven that can destroy the spirit of worship in the home. If we allow sins to live in our hearts even in the smallest measure, they will eventually overcome

us.

Beloved, we must not put up with anything that is not pleasing with the Lord. We must never allow anything contrary to the clear Words

of God to gain a foothold in our hearts lest we be overcome by the very evil we allow. You remember that God told the Israelites to drive out ALL the nations in Canaan and not to learn any of their pagan practices. Well, we all know that Israel allowed some of the Canaanites to remain, and was seduced by them, resulting in God’s judgment. May we be warned through their example not to put up with even the smallest sins in our homes and families.

Our homes are in great need of men of God to arise and demonstrate the way of true worship, a life lived by faith in the Word of God and not by feeling. Men, we cannot be governed by our feelings if we want to lead our families into the depths of beautiful worship. Life is full of ups and downs, of emotional highs and lows. This is quite normal and very much a part of our human experience. However, as leaders in our homes, we must not allow our feelings to govern us, but instead, we should live in obedience to the Word by a living faith that is being energized by the power of the Holy Spirit. Let us remember that central to true worship is a heart attitude of instant obedience to the Lord, a cry within the deep resources of our being for God to have His way in every area of our lives. Worship



involves an ongoing release of everything out of our own hold and hands into the hands of our great God, so that *“in all things He might have the preeminence”*. True worship is giving the rights of our lives to the Lord because *He actually already owns them*, having purchased them by His precious blood. May the Lord make us to be worshippers and give us the grace to lead our families into the beauties of true worship.

A Little Leaven will Leaven the Whole Lump!

As we have looked into the Word and learned important standards which the Lord intends to be increasingly adhered to in our homes, it would be well for us to ask for a teachable spirit so that we can receive light from the Lord to expose any areas in our relationships with one another that are in need of improvement. Too often we find that people hide behind lame excuses to avoid the need to acknowledge an area of need in their relationship with a family member. We’ve all heard someone say, “Well that’s the way I am, and you’ll just have to deal with it.” Having this attitude is dangerous because it can lead to an unwillingness to change areas of our life that are in need of change!

It is extremely dangerous to read over these truths which we have just considered and take a passive attitude saying, “Oh well, the Lord knows my weaknesses and in His timing He will change me.” This is not the right attitude, beloved. Rather, we need to possess an earnestness in seeking to be changed, and as His light shines exposing some area of sin in our homes, there should be immediate confession and a subsequent seeking for change to occur!

All too often families will go on as usual, ignoring warning signs that there are problems present. Remember the divine principle, *“a little leaven leavens the whole lump”*. Surely we cannot expect our homes to be free from the destructive forces of Satan when we do nothing about failures in our relationships with one another. We cannot just ignore problems within our families and expect them to disappear

overnight. It was this attitude of passivity that seduced the Corinthians resulting in Paul having to write his strong words of warning to them. They had failed to correct things, just little things at first, and this resulted in major problems. This is a law, beloved: We will reap what we sow; just a little leaven will infest the whole lump!

Paul, by the Holy Spirit had to rebuke the Corinthian believers over many issues that they had failed to deal with when they were just little problems. Some of the rebukes were against earthly wisdom taking the place of heavenly wisdom in the church; carnal envy and contentions resulting in divisions; sexual immorality; saints taking each other to court over issues that they should have settled themselves, and a lot more too. In our day as well, some people ignore failures in the home and continue to pursue their careers and their dreams. Even in the ministry, many leaders ignore problems at home and just keep right on leading and preaching when suddenly...the whole house falls apart, and then it is too late! Remember the words of Jesus, *“A house...divided against itself...cannot stand”*. May the Lord help us.

A Warning against Spiritual Deception

A word of caution is in order here: We must never trust in our knowledge about spiritual things. Deception along this line is rooted in the mistaken belief that what we know about God’s Word is somehow equal to our obedience to it. The only true test of how well things are going with us spiritually is: how much of God’s Word are we actually practicing in our daily lives? God says to be a doer of the Word, not a hearer, lest you become deceived. Only the doer of the Word is blessed. Jesus in another place said that a person is happy if they know and DO the things they are taught. All too many times a person will hear God’s Word, read God’s Word and even talk about it and somehow equate that with obeying it, when many areas of their life may be in direct disobedience to the very Word they know, profess and talk about. You may already know (in your head) every truth shared in this article, but how much of it is working and being expressed in your life? That

alone is the true test as to how secure and firm relationships in your family may be!

I want to strongly encourage each reader to take to heart all the things we have discussed, talking them over with the family, point by point. Go over each particular quality mentioned and ask yourselves how well your family is doing. Husbands, ask your wife to be honest with you, and tell you the areas of improvement that are needed with regard to each aspect of your calling. Wives, too, do the same, and include the children as well. Remember the Proverb, which says, *“Open rebuke is better than secret love”*. Openly discuss these matters with one another, and pray one for another. Do not silently endure wrong actions and behavior in the home but bring them to light. Ask one another to point out “blind spots”, those areas of fault and failure in all of our lives that we do not see, but others do! Do not point the finger in judgment or criticism, but in meekness let each one see the need of his own heart!

We should fervently pray for an abundance of God’s love and all of its divine qualities: a forgiving heart toward one another over our faults and failures, as well as divinely wrought patience and forbearance, seeing we are all yet imperfect. Beloved, if we ignore our relationships and let them fall apart, then our homes and families will be as the house that is built on the sand. Though it may look fine to the casual observer, you can be sure that when the storms of life come and the winds beat up against it, it will fall and crumble and “great will be the fall”. On the other hand, if we obey the Word of God, and with humility and earnestness let God build our homes on the Rock of obedience to His Word, then we will have a “storm proof home”. When the winds come and the storms rage, we will stand firm!

Secret to Success: Living in Dependence upon His Mighty Power and Grace

In closing, there is a most critical matter that must be dealt with, especially after seeing the very high standard to which we are called. What shall we do with all our failures, and the guilt

associated with them? What shall we do knowing that time after time we have attempted to do our “best” at making our family work, yet have met with failure after failure, even to the point when at times we wanted to just give up in defeat, thinking it simply would never work the way we know it should? Is there really a way for our family to function in the life and power of the Son of God? Can we establish God’s order and make his truth a living reality in our homes and in our hearts?

The answer to these heart-searching questions is an unquestionable NO, we cannot! As long as we are looking to some kind of inner resources that we think we have within ourselves, we will forever meet with horrifying defeat! To experience success we must learn to live by the power of Christ in us! Here are some wise words from a man who learned the lesson of living by the power of Christ, as the secret of success:

And if, dear brethren, many of us have perhaps never fully realized this holy truth, let us understand that every shortcoming and every failure to live like Christ springs from this one mistake—we have tried to become like Him without having first come to bankruptcy in ourselves and without losing confidence in our own moral goodness, which cannot bring forth Christ. Until we come to that point, Christ can never, through His Spirit, impart to us miserable, proud, detestable ones His character of love and forbearance. The fact is we have failed before God—failed in our own eyes and in the eyes of all around us. How truly have all our surroundings failed to reproduce in us the character—the Divine nature of our Lord Jesus Christ! God does not share His glory with us; therefore He is obliged to bring us from failure to failure, not however to end in discouragement, but that we may come to condemn and abhor ourselves. Then when we have found there is no more anything to hope for in ourselves, we learn to come in a new way—perhaps after a

long career of Christian profession—as undone ones at His feet; ready now, on the ground of our dreadful experience, to be introduced into the divine simplicity of a life like Christ by the Holy Spirit, who never ceases to work even when we are halting at the first steps of Christ’s redemption. He introduces us, through the Holy Scriptures, into the simplicity of Divine secrets when we are yielded up to Him in full despair about ourselves and in despair of bringing forth anything worthy of Christ and of God, then we learn how all must be done by Him in us and that the Holy Ghost waits to show His power to transform us into the image of Christ, even through our very

“Remember that growing up in a Christian home is not any guarantee that our children will come to know Jesus.”

failures.¹

Beloved, the church can only be as strong as its families. If we want to see healthy, vibrant churches in this land the work must start in the home. Family altars must again be built, and the family must meet there on a daily basis. Prayer in the church will never exceed the prayer that is going on in the home. Likewise, love for God’s Word in the church will never exceed the love we have for it in our homes. Obedience to what we hear preached from those called to preach will never exceed the current obedience we are practicing in the home. Worship in the church will never exceed the worship in the home.

How can we think that we will begin to weep and pray for our neighbor’s spiritual welfare and see revival come to our towns, when we do not even weep and pray for our own family’s spiritual needs? How can we win the lost to Christ when we are not even seeking to win our children to Christ? When we try to “do” these things as a church when they are not happening in the home, we create a religious system and introduce

hypocrisy into our lives—the wearing of masks and pretending to be something in church that we are not in our home. May God deliver us from all forms of being fake, keeping us from every vestige of hypocrisy, which is the leaven of the Pharisees.

Christians are Born—Not Taught

In closing may I share one last word of loving warning: Remember that growing up in a Christian home is not any guarantee that our children will come to know Jesus. We must intercede for them, wrestling in prayer each day that they may see their hopeless and sinful state before a holy God and cry out for mercy!

We must never think that we can “teach” our children how to become Christians. A Christian is BORN before taught. We must be careful that we do not teach the flesh how to act like a Christian. Natural birth and the process of growth to maturity are essentially of an organic nature. One does not learn “how to be a human”. Likewise, when the Life of Jesus is, by the new birth, imparted into the spirit of a sinner, that person becomes a new creature. That new life is destined to bring forth after its own kind! We may help by instruction in the Word, but the real substance of what we are and become as Christians springs out of the growth of that new life in Christ. Our greatest help then to our family is to pray for an atmosphere which is most conducive for the full growth of the life of Christ. Do it even today, Lord Jesus!

Let us now pray together. Father, we thank you so very much for the great plan that you have for our families. How we need to see the high standard you have set for our relationships, and to be able to submit to the power of Your Holy Spirit as the source of enablement to become all that you desire us to be. Father, we look to You to help us, depend upon your grace to strengthen us, and ask that you will give to us a teachable spirit, keeping us from all

pride which can surely bring nothing but destruction to our families. Protect our families from the attacks of Satan and keep our hearts deeply in the love of God. We offer our homes to you now by faith and request that you take them and make them into places where, in every area you are truly Lord. We ask all this in the name of your lovely Son, our Lord and Savior, Jesus, Amen!

Phil Beach, Jr.

¹Otto Stockmayer, *Divine Love* (Three Brothers), 15, 16.

Dads and Teens

What Does a Teenager Want from Her Father?

What does a teenager want in a Dad? Here is a list from a 15-year-old girl describing in her own words what she would like her Dad to be:

Things I would want in a Dad:

- Someone who loves God above all and is not afraid to tell me “no” about something he feels is wrong, just because I really want it (this prevents stuff that I can’t yet see, but that could end in trouble).
- Someone who is affectionate but doesn’t necessarily have to be always hugging me etc.— his actions and the way he treats me should be enough to assure me of his love.
- Someone who I would feel comfortable talking to about everything, who will listen and then tell me what he thinks I should do.
- Someone who is there to point me back in the right direction if I start to mess up.
- Someone who is cool in that he can relate to my friends, be nice to them, etc., but who is mature at the same time and doesn’t try to act like a teenager just because he’s around them. Adults are adults, and we like them to be like that—authority figures, acting like they should act because we need them to be that. If we want someone immature to talk to or hang out with, we have our friends. Fathers and other adults as well don’t need to try to be anything they’re not. There is no need to stoop down to our level to relate; fathers can relate in a mature way, from experience.
- Someone who will listen to my views and ideas and respect them and consider them as if they were his own. However, if they are in some way wrong, he should point out to me where they’re wrong.

It is quite clear from this list that the heart of a teenage girl is to see in her father a friend, role model and spiritual guide, one whom she knows is genuinely concerned, enough to speak the truth in love! I think this is the heart of young men also. What a calling! May the Lord equip us for such a task!

