



# Guidelines for the Christian Family

ROY HARRISON



# ***Guidelines for the Christian Family***

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## ***Background to the book***

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Roy and Ruth Harrison grew up in N. Ireland and came to personal faith in Christ there. They became workers with *Child Evangelism Fellowship*<sup>®</sup> (CEF<sup>®</sup>) in September 1966, serving first of all as missionaries in France and then as Assistant European Directors, based in Switzerland, for 20 years. From 1993 to 2010, they were Regional Directors for Europe. After handing over responsibility for the work in Europe, they became Area Directors for 11 countries of North West Europe until the end of 2018.

Roy and Ruth have four children (who are married and living in the Paris area) and 11 grandchildren. They share from their many years of experience in the Lord's service and at home, what the Bible teaches about the family and how to put it into practice in daily life.

A quote from Roy: "I do not offer a magic formula for instant success, but some principles and guidelines, which I trust God will use, so that more Christian parents will be led into the greatest joy of family life - that of worshipping God together in the name of Jesus Christ."

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# **Foreword**

The education of a child begins at birth. Long before the child learns to reason, he acquires feelings, attitudes, responses and habits that form his life and personality. What a wonderful privilege and responsibility God has given to us as Christian parents to help him in those early formative years!

The greatest Bible institute in the world is father and mother reading the Bible to their children. Yet it is estimated that over 60% of Christian parents do not have family devotions with their children. What a tragedy! No wonder church life is often weak, for church life can never rise higher than the home life of its members. In these last days, Satan seems to be leading an onslaught against our homes and our children - those who, after the Lord, are nearest and dearest to us.

The responsibility of Christian parents is a subject about which the Bible has much to say. My wife Ruth and I have four children of our own and we realise our shortcomings. It takes the same miracle of the grace of God for our children to know and follow the Lord, as for us. I trust that the Lord will use this book to encourage and equip you, as Christian parents, in your God-given task of bringing up your children "*in the discipline and instruction of the Lord*" (Ephesians 6:4).

Roy Harrison

# 1. God's Word to Christian Parents

The Word of God has much to teach us about His will for our children and our responsibility as Christian parents. It is not possible in this book to consider all the passages on the subject. But it is worthwhile to study the "Psalm of the Christian family" as well as the example of a child in the New Testament.

## **Psalm 127 - "The builder's Psalm"**

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### **Reliance on the Lord**

*"Unless the LORD builds the house, those who build it labour in vain. Unless the LORD watches over the city, the watchman stays awake in vain"* (verse 1). All our efforts to raise a family to follow the Lord are useless without His help. Jesus said, *"Apart from me you can do nothing"* (John 15:5). This Psalm teaches us to put our faith in the Lord, and not in our own ability or methods, in order to build a family according to God's will.

### **Rest from working in our own strength**

*"It is in vain that you rise up early and go late to rest, eating the bread of anxious toil; for he gives to his beloved sleep"* (verse 2). When parents see all the evil influences in our world today, it is easy for them to become anxious and lose sleep. The Lord tells us not to worry but to rest in His will. He is able to deliver boys and girls from evil and to help them to grow up trusting in Him.

### **The reward of having children**

*"Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD, the fruit of the womb a reward"* (verse 3). What a precious gift God has given to parents in allowing us to have children! They are a blessing. The world sometimes says that children are a burden; they can hinder you from achieving success in your profession. The Bible says, *"Children are a heritage from the LORD ... a reward."* They are God's gift to us and we have the privilege of bringing them up for Him.

### **The responsibility of guiding children in the right direction**

*"Like arrows in the hand of a warrior are the children of one's youth"* (verse 4). What a beautiful picture of children the Lord paints for us here! He describes children as arrows in the hand of a great archer. Why does the Lord say children are like arrows?

- **Arrows need to be cared for and sharpened.** Parents should look after their children well and make sure that they are prepared to face the challenges of life.
- **Arrows can hit the mark.** Children can reach the greatest goal in life - to live for God and glorify Him.
- **Arrows can go where the archer never goes.** Your children can be useful for God in places where **you** do not go - in school and with their friends. They in

turn can establish Christian families. You have an important part in sending them out for the Lord.

How sad it is if the child is not adequately prepared, not guided in the right direction and his life has little value for God as he interacts with others! Our prayer should be, "Lord, just like the archer with his arrows, help us to care for the children in these important, early years."

### **The results of being faithful parents**

*"Blessed is the man who fills his quiver with them! He shall not be put to shame when he speaks with his enemies in the gate"* (verse 5). The Bible speaks of two results here:

- **Blessing.** Your child (or children), under God, can bring you much joy and blessing.
- **Support of our testimony.** If our children are living for the Lord, they are a good testimony to those who oppose us because of our faith. They can show how great the grace of God is and that it is worthwhile to follow Him.

Take time to read again Psalm 127. Pray that you, as a parent, may experience in your family life the five great truths which the Lord gives us in these verses!

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## **2 Timothy 3:15 - The child Timothy**

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*"From childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus"* (2 Timothy 3:15). It was Timothy's mother, Eunice, and his grandmother, Lois, who taught him the Word of God. The Bible says in 2 Timothy 1:5 that they both had *"sincere faith"* - while Timothy's father was *"a Greek"*, expressing the fact that he was a heathen.

Timothy heard the Scriptures from childhood (meaning from infancy). Eunice and Lois taught him the Word of God from when he was a very young child. They did not wait until Timothy was six or seven years old. Can you imagine the two ladies leaning over his little bed and quoting Scripture from Deuteronomy, or reading from the scroll of Isaiah? Of course, he did not understand very much but God used the teaching of His truth to bring Timothy, some time later, to personal salvation in Christ.

God recorded the work of these two ladies in His Word so that we, as parents (or grandparents), may follow the example of Eunice and Lois today and share the Scriptures with our children in the home. We must begin from their earliest years. I believe that a child in a Christian home should be learning first about the Bible and prayer, rather than simply about cartoon characters and fairy stories. Our children need to know who is the most important Person in our home - Jesus.

Martin Luther wrote, "If the kingdom of God is to come with power, we must begin with the children and we must teach them from the very cradle." Don't allow the world to capture your child. If you teach him the Word of God, as Eunice and Lois taught young Timothy, he too can come to personal faith in Christ. What an awful thing it would be, to withhold from a child the most important message he can ever hear - the Good News of the Saviour. May the Lord help you to teach your "Timothy"!

There are three reasons given in this verse as to why it is important to teach the Scriptures to children.

### **The power of the Scriptures**

*“The sacred writings ... are able to make you wise ...”* True wisdom comes from the Word of God. The greatest science of all is the knowledge of God and that knowledge comes through the Scriptures. There is no more life-changing book than the Bible and that is why we should teach it to our children.

### **The purpose of the Scriptures**

*“The sacred writings ... are able to make you wise, for salvation ...”* The Scriptures were not given simply to bring abstract information; they are not like a history or geography lesson. They were given by God with the express purpose of leading the listeners to forgiveness of sin and into a personal relationship with Himself. What greater purpose is there in the whole world than that?

### **The Person of the Scriptures**

*“... through faith in Christ Jesus.”* Christ is the great theme and key to the Scriptures. He said, *“The scriptures ... bear witness about me”* (John 5:39). From Genesis to Revelation we see Christ. He is the only way to God. How can your child know Him? The answer is simple - through the Scriptures, by which the Holy Spirit will reveal Christ to him.

May we teach the Scriptures to our children because of their power, their purpose and the Person of whom they speak!

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## **The principal responsibilities of Christian parents**

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God, in His Word, gives four main responsibilities to Christian parents.

- To pray for the children whom God has given.
- To be a good example before them.
- To help them to respect the authority given by God to parents.
- To instruct them in the Word of God.

These are not easy tasks, but we can fulfil them by God's grace.

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## **Prayer for the children**

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When the children in Jerusalem were starving for lack of food, Jeremiah gave an urgent plea for prayer for them: *“Arise, cry out in the night, at the beginning of the night watches! ... Lift your hands to him for the lives of your children, who faint for hunger at the head of every street”* (Lamentations 2:19). How urgent it is for us to pray for our children who, in an evil world, need the Bread of Life today!

Hannah could testify, *“For this child I prayed, and the LORD has granted me my petition that I made to him”* (1 Samuel 1:27). She prayed for Samuel before and after he was born. Oh, that we may pray, like Hannah, for **our** children! So often it can be said about us, *“You do not have, because you do not ask”* (James 4:2). Christian father or mother, you pray for your children. But how long has it been since you talked to your child on his own about his problems and difficulties and then knelt down together to pray for him?

Susanna Wesley had seventeen children; she was a busy mother. However, she took time every week to talk personally to each of her children and to pray with that

child. Two of Susanna Wesley's children, John and Charles, became great Christian leaders.

One father prays for each member of his family by name as he drives home from work every day. When he arrives home he is ready to enjoy his family, because he has been praying for them. Could you follow the example of that man? Use the time during your journey home after work, or as you drive to pick up the children after school, or as you go to the shops, to pray silently in your heart for your family!

Seven prayer requests for children (with Bible verses to support them) - one for each day of the week:

- That God, through His Word, will make them "*wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus*" (2 Timothy 3:15).
- That the Lord will "*keep them from the evil one*" (John 17:15).
- That they will be "*faithful*" - trustworthy (Proverbs 20:6).
- That the Lord "*will guide them*" and watch over them (Psalm 32:8).
- That they be kept "*pure*" (1 Timothy 5:22).
- That they will "*present [their] bodies as a living sacrifice ... to God*" (Romans 12:1).
- That they will "*do all to the glory of God*" (1 Corinthians 10:31).

As Christian parents, we need to pray biblically and specifically for our children.

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### **Christian example before the children**

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Children learn a lot from observing others. They are learning from us, as Christian parents. Our words, our actions and our attitude are very important for our children. They do not expect us to be perfect. However, they do expect our lives to be consistent with the faith we profess and to be different from those who live without Christ. Set an example in your daily obedience to God's commands, in keeping your own quiet time with the Lord, in faithful attendance at church and in your witness for Christ.

The little things can count for so much - the way we keep our promises, our honesty, the kind of magazines we read, the films and TV programmes we watch, the way we spend our money and what our priorities are. "*Show yourself in all respects to be a model of good works*" (Titus 2:7). The child needs to see the demonstration of the power of the Gospel in our transformed lives. Remember that what a young child thinks of his Christian mother or father will very much influence what he will think of God.

Isn't it wonderful that God, by His indwelling Spirit, wants to give us the power not just to do some special Christian service, but to live a daily life in our homes to the glory of God! "*Let your light shine before others*" (and, first of all, before your family), "*so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven*" (Matthew 5:16).

If you say or do something wrong in front of your children (for example, criticising others, failing to keep a promise, breaking the speed limit), do not be afraid to say to them that what you did was wrong and put it right with them as well as with the Lord.



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## ***Discipline of children***

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The Bible says, “*A child left to himself brings shame to his mother. ... Discipline your son, and he will give you rest; he will give delight to your heart*” (Proverbs 29:15,17). In His Word God gives us the perfect example of how to discipline our children in the way He corrects us (Hebrews 12:5-11). God’s discipline is a proof that He loves us. It shows that we are His children. We should correct our children because we love them. It is not a blind love which makes us close our eyes to the dangers and problems our children face. Some people think of discipline as punishment for doing wrong. According to the Bible, discipline includes instruction and guidance for doing what is right, as well as correction for doing wrong.

The great principle involved in the discipline of children is **respect for the authority of parents, which God has given to them**. The Bible says, “*Children, obey your parents*” (Ephesians 6:1). It does **not** say, “Parents, do whatever your children want.” God knows that our children need someone with more experience in life to help them turn away from doing wrong and to follow what is good and right. So God put parents in authority over children for their good. From his earliest years, the child wants to see how far he can go in challenging this authority.

Imagine a little girl of five years of age who wants a chocolate bar. Her mother says, “No chocolate bar! We are going to eat our meal in a few minutes.” What does the little girl do? She cries, “But ... I want a chocolate bar,” and her mother gives her a chocolate bar. The next time that little girl wants something, she cries louder. Soon that little girl is controlling her mother. By the time she is 14 or 15, the girl demands to have her way with everyone. When there is no real respect for parents, there will be little or no respect for the teacher in school; there will be little respect for the laws of the land; there will be little respect for the future boss at work; and there will be little respect for God and the Bible. The relationship of children to parents is the basic relationship which influences all others that follow.

There are two extremes. One extreme is for parents to be too harsh. The other extreme is for the children to be out of control. Some parents can be like tyrants, who impose needless rules and regulations on their children. Trying to dominate your children can lead them to rebel later. That is why the Lord tells us, “*Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord*” (Ephesians 6:4). On the other hand, some parents spoil their children and give them whatever they want. Children need to have some limits. Limits help to give children a sense of security.

Let’s take an example of the **right** way to discipline a child! Imagine a little boy, six years old. In the evening his father says, “I want you to stop watching TV, to put away your toys in your room and get ready for bed.” The boy says, “No! I don’t want to.” What should the father do? I know what we did with our children when they challenged our authority as parents and deliberately disobeyed. I said, “I am going to count to five and you need to start putting away the toys before I reach it. One, two, three, ...” Count slowly to give him time to do what you asked! If the child still does not obey, but defies your authority, take him by the hand and help him to get started. He needs to respect your authority and to know that you keep your word. The first seven years are the most important. Treat the child with respect and help him to obey.

Discipline is the responsibility of both father and mother. So, mother, if your child misbehaves during the day, do not say, “Wait until your father comes home and he will deal with you.” Mother, **you** should correct him and dad will reinforce it when he comes home. On the other hand, when dad is home in the evening and reading the newspaper, **he** should not say, “Mum, tell John to do his homework!” No, dad, **you** should correct John and tell him to do his homework. Otherwise John quickly

learns to play on dad if he doesn't want to do his homework. By the age of ten or twelve, the time for punishment is over. As your child goes through his teenage years, you will need to gradually "relax the reins" and encourage him to make up his own mind and adopt his own standards. You cannot treat an 18-year-old like a six-year-old. You will be praying that he will adopt and apply Biblical standards in every area of his life. The Bible says, "*Whatever you do, do all to the glory of God*" (1 Corinthians 10:31). Put your child in God's hands and trust Him to fulfil His gracious purposes.

God gives the authority for discipline to the parents. It is, in fact, an expression of our love that we fulfil our responsibility and correct, instruct and guide our children in the path of right. The child's relationship with his parents forms the basis of his attitude towards all others. His respect for the authority of his parents will later determine his acceptance of the authority of his teachers, of the law, of the people for whom he works, of church leaders and ultimately of God.

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### **Teaching God's Word**

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This is the responsibility which is most often taught to parents in the Bible. (\*A list of references in is given in the footnote.) In Deuteronomy 6:7, for example, the Lord commanded parents, "*You shall teach them diligently to your children ...*" Parents would never dream of sending their children to bed in the evening without them having something to eat that day. However, night after night Christian parents send their children to bed without them having something from the Word of God.

You do not need to be a gifted teacher in order to read the Bible with your children. No-one or nothing can fully replace you sharing with your own children the Word of God and praying with them. You do not simply hand over this responsibility to the pastor or Sunday school teacher. Hearing some lessons from the Bible in Sunday school or church is not enough. It is primarily the duty of the parents to teach God's Word in the home to their children: "*Hear, my son, your father's instruction, and forsake not your mother's teaching*" (Proverbs 1:8, also Proverbs 6:20). However, the father, because of his leadership in the home, should ensure that this happens.

If, as a Christian parent, you have not been reading the Bible with your children, begin as soon as possible so that your family will learn together from God's Word and pray together. Do not wait until your child starts school to begin family worship. Ruth and I have four children. As soon as they came home from hospital, when we tucked them into bed for the night we prayed with them, quoted a Bible verse or sang a Christian song with them. I know they did not understand much, but we wanted them to know that the most important person in our home was Jesus Christ. Among the first words of a baby in a Christian home should be "Jesus", "Bible" and "pray" and not "TV", "Coca Cola" or "Tom and Jerry."

In the next chapter you will find guidelines on family devotions. These are the structured times of Bible teaching for the family. However, not all spiritual teaching takes place in family devotions.

#### **Informal teaching times**

The Lord speaks about this in Deuteronomy 6:7: "*You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.*" Children can learn about God through the informal times you have together with them every day, for example, ...

- Relate God's Word to everyday activities of the family. It may be in singing choruses as you wash the dishes, or sharing together about the things of the Lord as you clean the house or cook the meals.
- When you go for a walk in the country, you can admire the wonders of God's creation and praise Him together.
- You can pray together for safety as you set out on a journey **and** take time to thank the Lord when you arrive home safely. The children learn that the Lord is with us everywhere.
- When you are coming home together on Sunday from church, each one can share what he or she learnt in Sunday school or in the morning service. You can learn from each other, while reinforcing the teaching which has been given.
- You have special opportunities for talking about Jesus at Christmas and Easter, as you explain what these times of the year really mean.
- As children grow up, they have lots of questions. It is said that the average four- or five-year-old asks 50-70 questions each day: "Where are you going? What are you doing? Can I do that? Why do you say that?" Your patience and your answers can show your child in simple ways that the Lord is there and what He is like.

Always give honest answers to honest questions from your children. If you do not know the answer, tell them so and that you will try to find out. Never lead your children to believe something which is not true. If you deceive them, for example, about how babies are born or what happens when a person dies, they may distrust your word when you teach them about Christ. You do not need to give all the details, just tell them the truth.

Two statements to conclude this chapter:

- "The greatest Bible Institute in the world is father and mother reading the Bible to their children."
- "The greatest joy of family life is worshipping God together in the name of Jesus Christ."

May your home have that Bible Institute and your family experience the joy of worshipping God together!

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\* Bible references about parents teaching their children the Word of God: Genesis 18:19; Exodus 12:26-27; Exodus 13:14; Deuteronomy 4:9-10; Deuteronomy 6:6-7; Deuteronomy 11:18-19; Joshua 4:6-7; Psalm 34:11; Psalm 78:1-8; Proverbs 1:8; Proverbs 6:20; Proverbs 22:6; Joel 1:3; Ephesians 6:4; 2 Timothy 3:15.

## **2. Helps for Family Worship**

The Lord *“appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers to teach to their children, that the next generation might know them, the children yet unborn, and arise and tell them to their children, so that they should set their hope in God and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments”* (Psalm 78:5-7).

A Christian family should plan time together to read the Bible and pray. A hurried request for God’s blessing on the family or a few words of prayer before a meal are not enough. If, as a Christian parent, you have not been having family devotions, begin as soon as possible. Our children are growing up in a world where moral values have been destroyed or ignored. Their ideas and opinions are being shaped by their teachers and peers. They need the haven of family worship where they can discover God’s truth and a sure foundation for life. Through this regular time of worship and Bible reading in the home, your children will grow deep spiritual roots which will hold them firm in the storms of life.

Martin Luther, the great Reformer, was a loving husband and father of six children. He placed the home at the centre of teaching God’s Word. He wrote, “No power on earth is so noble and great as the power of parents.” Luther wrote his Small Catechism and published it in 1529 to help Christian parents to teach the principles of the Christian faith to their children. He made Bible reading and singing hymns with the children part of the daily routine in his home in Wittenberg and encouraged others to do the same. Luther believed strongly in the importance of family worship.

If parents depended only on the Sunday school for spiritual instruction, their children would receive only about four hours per month. This is not enough. We must be convinced that the greatest priority is to lead our children to a personal knowledge of God. That is more important than their having good marks at school, success in sports or material well-being.

There are seven essentials of family worship.

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### **Choose a time which suits you all**

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Family worship could be in the morning, though it may be difficult if parents and children leave for work or school at different times or if they are in a hurry. When children are small (not yet at school) the best time is often in the early evening before they go to bed. As the children become older, they have various commitments in the evenings and the best time could be during or after the evening meal. This is the one meal when families are most likely to be together. If your son or daughter has difficulty sitting still **after** the meal, even for a short time, you can have family worship after the main course and before the dessert. Usually children do not want to miss dessert!

Set a regular time and, if possible, keep to it. If visitors come, let them join you. If one parent is not there, the other can lead the devotions. Sometimes, as a family, you will be invited to someone else’s home for an evening. If they do not make a practice of having family devotions, you can stop the car on the way home and spend a short

time worshipping God together. Do not feel guilty if, for a special reason, you have to miss out on family devotions sometimes but try to have a regular time each day.

How long should family worship last? For children under four years old, three to five minutes should be enough to share a Bible story or verse and to pray briefly. For preschoolers, five to ten minutes will do. If your children are particularly tired, cut it short. With primary school-age children, take about 10-15 minutes. With teenagers, the length of time can vary according to the other activities planned for the evening or what they want to discuss. The fewer children who participate, the shorter the devotions need to be. It is better to leave the child feeling that he wants to hear more, than to have him lose interest. Be flexible - if the children or you, as a parent, want to talk more about something, be ready to do that.

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### ***Make the time interesting and involve everyone***

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Family worship should never be boring or complicated. It is the most wonderful family activity of all. Try out new ideas, so that you do not get in a rut - use pictures or even flannelgraph; use the children's Sunday school material to bring out some truth on Monday. Plan ahead. Let your teenager lead family worship for a few days. Remember to keep the older ones interested.

Family worship is not dad or mum preaching a sermon for five minutes. One family member can read the Bible verses; another can keep a note of people you pray for as a family; another can pray.

Avoid criticising the way your child reads the Bible because that will put him off. It is not like a school test about reading ability. If the child gives a wrong answer to a question, it is better to bring the right answer into focus, rather than simply telling him he is wrong. There should be a happy, relaxed atmosphere which is conducive to all taking part.

Take advantage of special occasions to share from the Bible about relevant themes. For example, use one of the following Bible passages for your family worship when you are getting ready for one of these events:

#### ***Christmas***

- Bible passages in the Gospels about the birth of Christ (Matthew 1:18-23; Matthew 2:1-12; Luke 2:1-7; Luke 2:8-21; John 1:1-18).
- Old Testament prophecies about the coming of the Messiah (Genesis 22:18; Genesis 49:10; Numbers 24:17; 2 Samuel 7:12-13,16; Psalm 72:8-11; Isaiah 7:14; Isaiah 9:6-7; Isaiah 11:1; Jeremiah 23:5-6; Jeremiah 31:15; Micah 5:2).
- Bible answers to the question: Why did Jesus Christ come into the world? (Matthew 20:28; Luke 19:10; John 12:46; Galatians 4:4-5; 1 Timothy 1:15; 1 Timothy 2:5; 1 John 5:20).

#### ***Easter***

- Bible passages in the Gospels about the death and resurrection of Christ (Matthew 27:32-28:20; Mark 15:21-16:13; Luke 23:32-24:12; John 19:16-20:29).
- 1 Corinthians 15:1-9.
- Isaiah 53.

**The birth of a baby**

- Psalm 139:13-18.
- Psalm 127.

**A wedding**

- John 2:1-11.
- Genesis 2:18-25.
- Ephesians 5:22-33.

**A missionary in church**

- Romans 10:9-13.
- The great commission (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:46-49; John 20:21-22; Acts 1:8).

**The death of a loved one**

- 1 Corinthians 15:35-58.
- 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18.

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**Read some verses from the Bible**

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As soon as your child is old enough to read, encourage him or her to read one or two verses for family worship. The Word of God should be at the centre, even though the reading may be short. Bible story books and Bible reading notes are a help, but you should still read something directly from the Word of God. Otherwise you are just sharing someone else's thoughts about the Bible, rather than listening to the Bible itself. Children can learn to take in what God says in His Word.

**Use helps**

I would particularly recommend:

- With children under seven years old:
  - *The New Bible in Pictures for Little Eyes* by Kenneth N. Taylor (Moody Publishers).
  - *The Big Picture Story Bible* by David R. Helm (Crossway).
- With seven- to nine-year-olds:
  - *Every Day with God*, 30-day Bible notes (*Child Evangelism Fellowship*).
  - *Leading Little Ones to God* by Marian M. Schoolland (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co).
- With 10-14-year-olds:
  - *Wonder Devotional Books*, 60-day Bible notes (*Child Evangelism Fellowship*).
  - *Our Daily Bread*, three-monthly Bible notes (Our Daily Bread Ministries).

In each of the above, a Bible reading is suggested for each day. You do not need a book - you can simply read a short Bible passage, for example, from one of the Gospels or a Psalm. As one person reads, the rest of the family looks for one of the following:

- Is there **a truth** to know and believe? (About God, us, the future.)

- Is there **an example** to follow? (What Jesus, David or other Bible characters did.)
- Is there **a warning** to heed? (We are **not** to be like this person in the Bible.)
- Is there **a promise** to live by? (God tells us what He will do.)
- Is there **a command** to obey? (God tells us what He wants us to do.)

You could have five cards laid out, each with one of the things underlined above. The aim is to find which of the five is the main teaching of the passage. At the same time you are teaching your child how to study the Bible for himself.

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### ***Share prayer requests and have a time of prayer***

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One of the biggest blessings in family worship is praying together. Help your children to talk to the Lord from their heart. You will be blessed and even learn from them. Children can pray very specifically. Also they believe that God will answer their prayers.

When you begin having family worship with your child, **you** will pray. Avoid flowery, recited prayers. As your child grows older, he will begin to pray simple sentence prayers, for example, “Thank You, Lord, for the food” or “Please help me at school.” Later on you can help your child to include praise and praying for the needs of others.

#### ***Simple aids to use with children***

The fingers of your hand (suitable for younger children)

- Holding the **thumb** (nearest “finger” to you), you or your child can pray for those near and dear to you - your family.
- Holding the **index finger** (pointer), pray for the Sunday school teacher(s) and schoolteacher(s).
- Holding the **tall finger** (over the others), pray for the government and authorities.
- Holding the **ring finger** (difficult to stand alone), pray for the sick and old people you know who have difficulty standing up and walking on their own.
- Holding the **small finger** (little one), pray for the children. Your child can hold the small finger and pray for himself and his friends.

If there are just three of you, the first person holds two fingers, the next holds two and the third holds just one. In this way you can pray for the five requests above.

#### ***Pictures***

Collect photographs of relatives and friends, as well as missionary prayer cards. You can give out two or three of them at a time for family members to hold as they pray for the various people. In this way you can pray at least once a week for those whose pictures you keep.

#### ***Family prayer notebook***

Note prayer items for yourselves as a family. You can divide the list under the headings: our needs, our teachers, unsaved friends, answered prayers, etc. Bring several of these needs to the Lord and thank Him for His answers.

### **Pray for needy nations**

Use a map of the world and pray for countries which are in the news or where there is great spiritual need. For more information about specific countries, you can consult *Operation World* by Patrick Johnstone and Jason Mandryk.

### **Encourage your children to pray according to the teaching in the Bible**

Take one request for each day of the week.

- For people to be saved (Romans 10:1).
- For workers for the harvest (Luke 10:2).
- For those who rule over us (1 Timothy 2:1-2).
- For other believers (Ephesians 6:18).
- For our enemies (Luke 6:28).
- For the children who need Jesus, the Bread of Life (Lamentations 2:19).
- For each of us as believers to be a light to others (Matthew 5:14-16).

As a family you can pray for your pastor, missionaries, Christian leaders, etc. You could even send an encouraging postcard to the person you have prayed for.

Reading from the Bible and praying together are the two main elements of family worship. As your child goes through primary school, **you can add other activities**. They do not need to be included each time, but as time and opportunity allow. You can decide which of the following three activities to include in family worship and when.

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### **Learn and review Bible verses**

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You can help your children to memorise Scripture. God's Word in their hearts can protect them from sin, guide them in decisions, renew their minds and give them the right words as they witness to friends. It is a great blessing for a family to learn by heart Bible passages such as Psalm 23 or John 1:1-14. Learning individual Bible verses together is also very worthwhile.

With young children you can begin by learning short verses together, for example, verses beginning with the different letters of the alphabet:

A - "*All we like sheep have gone astray*" (Isaiah 53:6).

B - "*Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved*" (Acts 16:31).

C - "*Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right*" (Ephesians 6:1)

... and so on.

The letters of the alphabet are a wonderful "memory hook".

Later you can learn Bible passages, such as the prayer which our Lord taught His disciples (Matthew 6:9-13); the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:3-17 - a short sentence for each); Psalms 23; Isaiah 53; John 1:1-14; John 14:1-6; Romans 8:28-39; Ephesians 6:13-18; Philippians 2:5-11. It is easier to remember passages rather than individual verses.

The best way to learn verses is to say them over and over again. Each member of the family can have the memory verse on a card to carry with them or to stick somewhere in the bedroom. At intervals you need to review verses which you have already learnt, as well as learn new ones.



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### ***Prepare and equip your children to face difficulties***

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As your children grow up, they will face more and more evil influences. The standards and beliefs which you have been instilling in them will be challenged at school, in the media and by their peers. It is important to prepare your children for the false teaching and bad influences which are surely coming their way.

Firstly, encourage them to talk about what they have heard and experienced at school (or elsewhere) and give them the opportunity to share their questions and problems.

Secondly, examine together false ideas and wrong influences in the light of Scripture.

Thirdly, challenge them to seek the right solution. Share with them your own battles, defeats and victories, looking at relevant Bible verses and giving examples of people in the Bible who had to face similar situations. Below is a list of 18 problems which today's children face. Choose which one to discuss at that time. The Bible references (in brackets) will help your child to get God's perspective. In the favourable atmosphere of the home children can consider what the Bible says, what they are going to do and how they are going to react when they face these situations. Ask your child, "What do you think is right? What will you do or say, if you are asked about that?"

- False teaching about the Bible (Matthew 5:18-19; Jude 3; 2 Timothy 3:16).
- Evolution (Genesis 1:1,27; Isaiah 45:12,18).
- Addiction to social media and video games (1 Corinthians 6:12; Philippians 1:9-10; 1 Thessalonians 5:21-22).
- The confusing message about gender identity and sexuality (Genesis 1:27; Matthew 19:4-6; Romans 1:24-27).
- Christians being made fun of (Matthew 5:11-12; 1 Peter 4:14).
- Lack of respect for authority (Matthew 22:21; Hebrews 13:17; 1 Peter 2:13-17).
- Music and accompanying video clips which dishonour God (Philippians 4:8; 1 John 2:6,15).
- Pornography (Philippians 4:8; Matthew 5:27-28).
- Wrong dress (1 Peter 3:2-4).
- Wrong relationships with the opposite sex (Matthew 5:27-28; 1 Corinthians 6:13b,18).
- Close friendships with unbelievers - dating (Proverbs 1:10-16; 2 Corinthians 6:14).
- Smoking (1 Corinthians 6:19-20; 1 Corinthians 10:31).
- Alcohol abuse (Proverbs 20:1; Proverbs 23:31-32; Ephesians 5:18).
- Drugs (1 Corinthians 6:12,19; Daniel 1:8; 1 Peter 2:11).
- Gambling (Jeremiah 17:11; 1 Timothy 6:6-12; Luke 12:15).
- Dabbling with the occult - Ouija boards, horoscopes, spiritualist mediums, etc (Deuteronomy 18:9-14; Daniel 3:17-18; 1 John 4:4).
- Abortion and euthanasia (Psalm 139:13; Galatians 1:15; Exodus 20:13; Exodus 21:22-25).

- Life after death (John 5:28-29; John 11:25; 1 Corinthians 15:54-55; Hebrews 9:27).

Of course, you will not talk to your **four**-year-old about drugs, but it is too late to **begin** talking to him about that when he is **14**. The problems arise sooner than we think and prevention is better than cure. Keep in mind that the main source of the child's wrong actions and reactions are his own sinful nature. He can only find the power to live aright by being born again and receiving a new nature (2 Corinthians 5:17), so pray for his new birth.

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**Share missionary news,  
read a book excerpt or sing a hymn or chorus**

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From time-to-time you can include one or other of these. For example, if you hear or read of **special** news concerning missionary work in a country, share it with your family for praise or prayer. You can have a vital part in missionary work around the world through prayer.

If you have been especially blessed by a Christian book, read a passage from it in your time of family worship. You may want to read part of a book over several days. In this way as a family, you can go through a children's version of *Pilgrim's Progress*, for example. Or you could read short biographical sketches of well-known Christians.

Singing hymns and choruses together is a wonderful way to worship God and to learn Bible truths. Sometimes sing a Christian song or one of the great hymns of the faith, such as:

- Amazing Grace
- What a Friend We Have in Jesus
- How Great Thou Art
- Bless the Lord, O My Soul

You will enjoy singing Christian songs at other times too - when you are out in the country or as you travel in the car.

You cannot include all the suggested parts in every time of family worship. Bible reading and prayer are essential, but you can add one or other aspect according to the time available and the particular needs of your family.

When Richard Baxter went to be pastor in Kidderminster (England) in 1647, the town was known as a place of great wickedness. The Lord led him to visit the homes of the congregation and to help them establish regular family worship. It made a huge difference in the homes of the people, in the church and the town, so much so that people began giving Kidderminster another name. They called it "a colony of Heaven". It is said that one could go down any street in the evening and hear - from at least one home - a Christian family singing a hymn, someone reading the Bible or someone praying with the family. Family worship made a great impact on Kidderminster and the church experienced revival. May your home be "a colony of Heaven" as you have family worship!

## **3. Christ-centred Family Relationships**

Good relationships are vital for a family to function as it should. All families experience problems in relationships from time to time. Which family can truthfully say that they have never had a disagreement? It is part of life to have differences of opinion and arguments at times. There may be an unbeliever in the family and that can create tensions as he or she pulls in the opposite direction to the believers.

The Bible gives us a number of examples of believing families. These were families where God was honoured and where the children became men and women of God as a result of the solid foundation which was laid in childhood. There was the home of Abraham and Sarah, where Isaac was brought up. One day he was willing to be offered up as a sacrifice when his father believed and obeyed God. There was the home of Amram and Jochebed whose children - Aaron, Miriam and Moses - followed the Lord. There was the home of Elkanah and Hannah, to whom the Lord gave Samuel. One night, when he was still a child, Samuel met with the Lord, who called him to be His prophet. The most striking example is that of Joseph and Mary, to whom God entrusted the bringing up of His incarnate Son, the Lord Jesus. These were godly homes where the Lord was at the centre.

Christ-centred family relationships mean that the Lord is present in the activities and decisions of the family. Christ does not want to just occupy the “guest-room” of your home, He wants to be on the throne and to have first place in the family, as well as in each individual life. If you were to put four untuned pianos in one room and try to tune them to each other you would not succeed. However, if you took one tuning fork and accorded each piano in turn to it, they would be in tune one to another. The more each individual in the family is attuned to Christ, the more they are attuned one to another.

In this chapter we will consider seven practical helps for our relationships as parents to children, children to parents, brother to sister, etc.

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### **Talking together**

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The Bible says that “*God settles the solitary in a home*” (Psalm 68:6) - He puts the lonely in families. God, in His grace, has placed you in a family. You do not belong to those with whom you are at work or at school; you belong first of all to your family. For a family to function properly you need to take time to talk together. Parents, something is wrong if you have so many meetings and activities that the children do not have enough time to get answers to their problems and help for their challenges. There must be times when you can talk together in a relaxed atmosphere. It takes time for questions to come out and to be discussed. Talking together leads to questions being answered and joys and needs being shared.

It is important to listen to each other. It is interesting that God gave us two ears and only one tongue. Is it because He wants us to listen more and to talk less? Let the other family members see that you value what they have to say, instead of just trying to impose your viewpoint. Be ready to acknowledge your mistakes and failures. Parents too need to say, “Sorry, I should not have said that/I failed to do that. Please forgive me.”

Talking to each other and listening to each other can bridge the “generation gap”. Find out what others in your family are doing and keep them informed of your activities. Talking together, with Christ guiding our conversations, is a key to improving family relationships.

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### **Facing problems together**

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All of us have problems. Dad has problems at work. Mum has problems at home. Children have problems at school. The first thing to do is to take your troubles to the Lord. The Bible says, *“Casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you”* (1 Peter 5:7). However, we also need the support and prayers of our family when we face problems. It is good for family members to share their needs and problems so that they can pray together for God to intervene for His glory. The Bible says, *“Bear one another’s burdens”* (Galatians 6:2). Some problems need to be kept confidential. You cannot share some problems openly with your family, because that can affect negatively what they think of certain people they also know.

God allows His children to experience problems and difficulties so that they come closer to Him and closer to others who help through the problems. Are there problems in your life which the Lord does not want you simply to keep to yourself, but to share with your family so that they can pray for you? Facing problems together strengthens family relationships.

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### **Working together**

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For a family and a home to function as they should, all the family members need to share in house tasks. Even young children can play their part - it’s not just the job of mother and father. The Biblical principle is *“If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat”* (2 Thessalonians 3:10).

As a parent, you should assign tasks to your children - to tidy up their room, take care of their clothes, wash the dishes, put away their toys, help prepare a meal, vacuum the carpet. At the beginning it takes a lot of time for little ones to learn. It would be much easier and faster to do the job yourself but, remember, you are moulding lives. Also, children need to learn to do these kinds of things when they are young.

An important part of working together is parents helping their children with homework from school in their early years. The Lord, like you, is interested in your child’s studies. You can help your child to examine what he is being taught in the light of God’s Word, to have a right attitude towards his teachers and to respect their authority. Parents, rather than the schoolteachers, are ultimately responsible for their children’s education.

Together, you can do homework and housework to the glory of God and He can give you the strength to do it. This is a key to good family relationships.

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### **Playing together**

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You may wonder how “having fun” can help advance Christ-centred family relationships. Playing and laughing with each other does us good. The Bible says, *“A joyful heart is good medicine”* (Proverbs 17:22). Most of us take ourselves too

seriously and we need to learn to laugh at ourselves. Playing together is important for good family relationships.

One day a Christian shared with Campbell Morgan, the well-known pastor in London, that he had a problem in establishing a close relationship with his young son. To the man's surprise, Pastor Campbell Morgan asked him, "When did you last play marbles with your boy?" The man answered, "I have never done that." "Well," said Campbell Morgan, "go home and play marbles with him." That is how the man got close to his son.

Take opportunities to join in with your children when they are playing - whether it is playing football, hide and seek, colouring pictures, playing with cars, soldiers or dolls, building Lego or a model aeroplane. You can also organise family games and activities which you and the children enjoy together. In the "supplement" at the end of this book you will find a list of activities where the family can all participate and have fun together. Playing together builds stronger relationships.

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### ***Witnessing together***

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Having a common goal unites people. When it is God's goal, there is special unity. Jesus said, "*You will be my witnesses*" (Acts 1:8). You can pray together as a family for other families and your children's school friends, as well as your relatives, friends and colleagues, who need Christ. When you pray together for others, you are drawn closer to each other. It sends a message to your children when they see their parents serving the Lord and helping others to learn about the Saviour. You can invite unsaved friends to come for a meal in your home, give Bible calendars to your neighbours at Christmas, invite others to go with you to church or pass out tracts and Gospel booklets. (You can order *Meet the King!* booklets, for example, from your nearest CEF® office.)

When you, as a Christian parent, are a witness for Christ it speaks to your family. They learn from your example. Your children see what a Christian is like when you show the love of Christ in practical ways and reach out to help others. Is there an older person or someone in need, near you or in your church, whom you and your children could visit and who would appreciate a small gift and a word of encouragement? Have you as a family adopted your own missionary for whom you pray and support? Could you open your home for a Christmas or Easter Club for children in your neighbourhood? It may even lead to a monthly or weekly *Good News Club*®. Your home can be a "mission station" for your area and the Lord will bless you as a family and make you a blessing to others.

Every Christian needs to be part of a local church. This means not only attending the services, but being actively involved by praying, giving and helping in whatever way possible. A Christian family can make an impact for God by their example. People see the difference Christ makes in a home; they feel the atmosphere of love. Christian families are not perfect, but there is a big difference when Christ and His Word are at the centre of a home.

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### ***Pulling together***

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Unless each family member accepts his part in making the home what it should be for God, something is missing. You need to co-operate. Just as a chain is as strong as its weakest link, so a family is as strong as its weakest member. In many families

there are unsaved members who can be “pulling” in the opposite direction. Pray for them and keep encouraging them.

The Bible says, *“Let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works”* (Hebrews 10:24). Encourage each other to be at your best for God. Husband, encourage your wife in her activities at church. Wife, encourage your husband to have family worship. Children, help your mum on Sunday morning with the breakfast and preparing for lunch so that you can all go to church without being under pressure. Parents, encourage your teenagers to be active in the youth group at church. It is not just about one or two of you doing what is right. It is best to all pull together. Satan wants to divide or even destroy the Christian family; he can even use a family member to pull it apart. We need to pray for each other to build together a Christian family with good relationships.

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### ***Establishing priorities***

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Paul prayed, *“That you may approve what is excellent”* (Philippians 1:10). In other words, we are to recognise and choose what is of highest value. In our busy world it is not possible for families to do everything that is on offer. To have Christ-centred relationships, you need to establish priorities. You cannot do whatever comes along. Schools, local authorities, sports clubs, etc - as well as churches - organise activities and programmes. As parents, you know how many activities your child can handle and which ones are best for him.

Does your family participate in too many activities? Make a rule that all the family should be together for the evening meal, if at all possible. Try to have a family evening once a week when you put aside other business, turn off your smartphones and TV and enjoy a time of sharing together, playing together and enjoying each other's company.

There is no easy formula for Christ-centred family relationships. It takes a lot of prayer, discipline and effort on the part of each family member, especially the parents. I trust that the above suggestions will be of practical help and that your family will be drawn closer to Christ and closer together.

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### ***A word about the “prodigal”***

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You may have a child who is far from the Lord, either unsaved or backslidden. It may be a teenager who is rebelling against your authority, refusing to go to church, “hooked” on video games, using drugs or living immorally.

#### ***Try to understand the reasons for his wrong behaviour***

Is he giving in to peer pressure? Has his faith been undermined by false teaching at school? Has he had an emotional disappointment (perhaps a girlfriend has let him down)? Is there a crisis in his spiritual growth? Is he deliberately turning his back on God and choosing to go his own way, enjoying the pleasures of sin? Keep communications open with your child. If you can identify the source of the problem you can pray more intelligently and, hopefully, help in a better way with the remedy.

#### ***Maintain biblical standards in your home***

You are not helping your child if you allow him to take drugs, get drunk, sleep with his girlfriend, read pornographic magazines, etc freely in your home. If you compromise and give in to his demands there, he will just want to have his own way

more and more. Be firm about what you can allow in your home and he will secretly respect you. Of course, your own actions must be consistent with what you are asking him to do.

If he threatens to leave home, because he does not want to obey the basic rules, do not be intimidated or worried. Let him know your reasons and help him to realise the difficulties of being on his own. It may even come to the point where he leaves home. Remember, when the prodigal son asked for his inheritance his father, although he loved him, gave in to his choice and let him go. Eventually the prodigal came back home.

***Keep on praying for him and loving him***

Do not let Satan discourage you. God can still overrule and intervene in answer to prayer. It is important that, when the “prodigal” turns around, he can come back to someone who is still living faithfully for the Lord and ready to take him back. Remember the promises contained in Scripture, such as Proverbs 22:6: *“Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it.”* Joel 2:13,25: *“Return to the LORD your God, for he is gracious and merciful ... I will restore to you the years that the swarming locust has eaten.”* Remember the message of the potter’s vessel in Jeremiah 18:4: *“The vessel ... was spoiled in the potter’s hand, and he reworked it into another vessel, as it seemed good to the potter to do.”* God is still able to take again that life and mould it for His glory.

## **4. Presenting the Way of Salvation**

What is your greatest prayer request for your children? I am sure your answer is for their personal salvation. The Bible teaches that a child can trust in Jesus and have a real personal relationship with the Lord. What is your first purpose in teaching the Word of God to your children? Is it not that they may know Jesus Christ as their Saviour?

As Christian parents we do not simply look to the pastor or the Sunday school teacher to evangelise our children. It is, first of all, **our** task. You cannot save your child. You should never put pressure on him to make a human decision about Christ in order to please you. As we pray for his salvation, we are completely dependent on the Lord to do His gracious work in the soul of our child. We have Christ's command to share the Good News with our children. He said, "*Proclaim the gospel to the whole creation*" (Mark 16:15). The Good News is for everyone, including children. The Holy Spirit uses the Gospel to bring them to salvation and new life in Christ (Romans 1:16; James 1:18).

So what can we do to tell our children the Good News?

### ***Take opportunities to talk to your child about salvation***

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#### ***During family worship***

As you read the Bible and pray together as a family, the question of your child's personal relationship with the Lord will come up naturally. Be ready to talk to your child about what it means to have Jesus as his personal Saviour and to answer any questions he may have.

#### ***Coming home from church or Sunday school***

You can reinforce the teaching given in church by referring to truths which have been taught. For example, you could say, "Wasn't it wonderful, the story which the pastor used to show what Jesus did for us on the cross?" or "I'm glad your teacher told you the story of Nicodemus, because it's so important to be born again."

#### ***Christmastime***

This is a great opportunity to explain what Christmas really is, why Jesus came into the world and what His coming means to us personally.

#### ***Easter time***

At Easter, parents can tell their children what happened that first Easter and why we have Palm Sunday, Good Friday and Easter Sunday. Explain what the Saviour came to do for us and be ready to answer their questions.

#### ***Bedtime***

Often when you are tucking your child into bed at night, he will have questions. He may say, for example, that he is afraid that the Lord will come back and he will



be left behind. He may ask, "Why did Jesus have to die?" Answer your child honestly, telling him what the Bible says.

### ***The death of a relative or friend***

Children have questions about what happens after death, especially when they learn about the passing away of a relative or a friend of the family. At such a time, we can share what the Bible teaches about eternity. You don't need to go into a detailed Bible exposition but let your child know where the soul (the real inner person) goes and why.

### ***A Good News Club in your home***

My wife and I have always had a *Good News Club* in our home, wherever we have lived. We tell the children who come that, if they have a question about how to be saved, they can wait after the club. In this way we have also had the privilege of counselling a number of boys and girls, including two of our own children for salvation. For our other two children, it was as we read the Bible with them in the evening, that they expressed their desire to know how to be saved. (If you make yourself available for personal counselling, be sure to comply with the Child Protection Policy of your country.)

There are many other opportunities for sharing aspects of the Gospel with your children in everyday conversation.

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## ***Teach your child about salvation***

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You can teach about salvation during family worship, as you go through a booklet from the series *Every Day with God* or the flashcard series *What Every Child Ought to Know*. You can explain the *Wordless Book* or read a tract or Gospel booklet, like *Meet the King!* with your child. (These literature items are available from CEF.)

Don't try to teach everything about salvation at one time. Teach aspects at different times, praying for the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit that your child may believe and receive the Word of God.

The message of salvation includes the following truths.

### ***Who God is and what He has done***

Teach your child who God is and what He has done. Emphasise that God is holy, good, loving and gracious. He made us and has spoken to us through the Bible.

### ***Our sin***

Teach that sin is disobeying God's commands: that all are sinners before God - by nature as well as by the wrong things we do. Teach that sin has consequences.

### ***Jesus Christ, the Son of God - crucified, risen and exalted***

Teach him that Jesus is truly and fully God and man. Teach about His perfect life, His words and miracles. Teach the meaning of His death, resurrection, ascension and that He is Lord of all. Jesus is the only One who can save us from our sin.

### ***Repentance and faith***

Tell your child what it means to turn from going his own wrong way and to trust the Saviour. Speak about the cost, as well as the privilege, of following Jesus.

*Note: It is not necessary for your child to know everything about the Gospel in order to be saved. However, as you talk to your child about salvation, you may see the need to explain some aspects more clearly.*

Tell your child that if ever he wants help in knowing how to receive Christ, he can talk to you. It may be that he will receive Christ on his own without your help. Never put pressure on your child. Be sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit and be ready to give him the needed help and counsel about this important step.

### **Try to see if your child really has the Lord living in his life or not**

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Do not take it for granted that, just because your child goes to Sunday school and church, talks about Jesus and even prays, he has truly trusted the Saviour. Believing certain things **about** Christ cannot replace a personal relationship *with* Him (James 2:19).

Usually the conversion of a child in a Christian home is not as spectacular as that of someone who was saved from a godless life. Children in Christian homes are often protected from gross sins. They may even have adopted some of the outward lifestyle of true believers in their words and actions. Keep in mind that each one, young or old, can only be saved by the grace of God through depending on Christ alone (Ephesians 2:8).

A child who has grown up in a Christian home may not know exactly when he was born again. There needs to be real evidence of an inward work of grace. If the child professes to be saved, we should be praying for and looking for the fruit of the Spirit in his life. Galatians 5:22 teaches that *"the fruit of the Spirit is love ..."* This fruit is the one you can look for, first of all, in the life of a child who has received Christ. The child may show this fruit in different ways.

- Love for the Saviour - desire to know more about Christ.
- Love for the Word of God - an interest in the Bible and the things of God.
- Love for prayer - a growing eagerness to talk to God in prayer.
- Love for other Christians - a desire to be with others who belong to Christ too.
- Love for the lost - a concern to see others come to Christ.

If you see your child manifest love in one or more of these ways, you can rejoice and be encouraged. Such fruit may be still quite weak and immature, but it is **fruit** and evidence of the new birth.

If your child's life does **not** manifest the reality of his conversion, be ready to counsel him. If he then sincerely wants to receive Christ as his personal Saviour and Lord show him simply, step by step, what to do. You should, of course, only encourage him to come to Christ for salvation if you believe that he does not truly have a personal relationship with the Lord.

To help you find out if your child is truly converted, ask him some questions (without making him say something which is not a personal conviction, just to please you).

- What can we count on that will make us right with God?
- How can we know that we are going to Heaven one day to be with the Lord Jesus?
- Are you sure that your sins are forgiven and that you are ready to meet God? How do you know?

- When you and your child hear the Gospel message preached, you can ask him, “Have you done that? Have you really asked Jesus to save you?”

The child’s answers to these questions should show if he is counting on Christ alone for salvation and if he has personal assurance in his own heart of being saved.

### **Conclusion**

The Bible teaches that a child can trust the Lord and have a real personal relationship with Him. Scripture does not set an age when children can know the Lord. Neither should we, for it is a question of the Holy Spirit revealing Christ to the heart through the Word of God. It is biblical to pray for the real conversion of your child.

## **5. Counselling the Child Who Wants to Come to Christ**

If your child comes to you and says, "How can I have Jesus in my life?", what are you going to say to him? If he is unsaved, it is vital that you be prepared to explain clearly to him what is involved in coming to Christ.

### **Be thorough**

Take sufficient time to deal with his questions and problems. One child may need more help and explanation on particular points than others. Make sure he understands each step before going further. Just lead your child as far as he is ready to go. If he is not ready to trust Christ as Saviour do not force a profession of faith which is not genuine.

### **Use questions**

Through questions you will be able to discover what he understands. Avoid questions where the answer is obvious or which simply have "yes" or "no" answers. Because you have already been teaching your child about the way of salvation, you will introduce nothing new in the counselling time.

### **Use your Bible**

Have your Bible open as you speak about these things. Let him know that this is what the Bible says. Do not look up too many verses of Scripture as this may confuse your child. You can quote some verses from memory; but be sure to look together at a verse in the Bible when you explain how to be saved.

### **Adapt the following outline to your own situation**

In this chapter you will read about various truths a person needs to know in coming to Christ. However, because you know your child well and because you have already been teaching him about salvation, you do not need to go into great depth about this first section - making sure he understands about God, sin and the Saviour.

You may find it helpful to use a *Wordless Book* as you remind him of the truths he needs to know. This little book of five colours is available from CEF. The gold page speaks about God and Heaven; the dark page about sin; the red page about Christ's death and resurrection; the white page about being made right with God; the green page about growing in the Christian life.

We should keep in mind that there is no "mechanical" method of counselling which has to be followed with each child. The Bible says, "*Salvation belongs to the LORD!*" (Jonah 2:9; Psalm 3:8).

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### **Make sure your child understands about ...**

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#### **God**

Ask, "Who is God?"

God made us. He speaks to us through the Bible. God is holy and pure. He loves us.

### **Sin**

Ask, "What is sin?"

Sin is disobeying God's commands. It is thinking, saying and doing what is wrong. Speak about wrong things such as lying, stealing and cheating. These wrong things spoil our lives, hurt others and, worst of all, keep us apart from God.

Ask, "Do you want Jesus to make you different?"

*Note: Do not go further until he sees that he needs the Lord's forgiveness.*

### **The Saviour**

Ask, "Who is the only One who can take away your sin?"

Ask, "What has Jesus done to save us?"

Ask, "What happened after Jesus died and where is He now?"

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## **Explain how to be saved**

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### **Use a Bible verse**

Possible verses are John 1:12; John 3:16; Acts 16:31; Romans 10:13; Revelation 3:20. Use the **one** you feel is best in your situation. Have your child read it or read it to him if he cannot read. Use the verse to explain what your child needs to do and what the Lord will do. For example, you could say something like this if you use Romans 10:13:

- What **you** need to do: "*call on the name of the Lord*"  
= ask Jesus to forgive you, trusting Him to do it.
- What **the Lord** will do: "*... will be saved*"  
= He will take away your sin and you will be safe with Him.

Make sure he understands clearly what the verse is teaching. You may have to repeat your explanation. You could use the following illustration of the watch to make the explanation clear, if you wish.

"What would you do if your watch was broken? You would **not** take it to the butcher, the baker or the tailor. You would take it to the watchmaker. Our lives are broken with sin, and there is only One who can fix our lives - the Lord Jesus. What do you do with your watch when you take it to the watchmaker? You trust it to him and you ask him to fix it. That is what Jesus wants you to do: trust your life to Him and ask Him to fix your life - to save you."

*Note: You can use this basic outline with any other of the above verses - what **you** need to do and what **the Lord** will do.*

### **Tell him that it is a very important step**

"It is a very important step to come to Christ. When you ask the Lord to save you, the Lord takes control of your life and you will want to do what He tells you in the Bible - from the *heart*. It isn't easy when you follow Jesus. Others may make fun of you because you belong to Jesus and act differently - and that annoys them."

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**“Do you want to ask Jesus to save you?  
Or do you want to think more about it?”**

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Give your child a valid choice, so that he does not feel he has to say “yes” just to please you. If he says he would rather wait and think about it, don’t force him into some kind of decision which is not real. Let him know that “*now is the day of salvation*” (2 Corinthians 6:2) and pray for him to come to Christ - the sooner the better.

**Encourage him to pray aloud if he is ready to come to Christ**

If your child wants to trust the Lord, *encourage him to speak to the Lord*. It is not the words he says that are so important, but that he is truly trusting Jesus to forgive his sin. If he doesn’t know what to say, you can help him with words like this:

“Dear Lord Jesus, I am sorry for the wrong things I have done. Thank You for dying on the cross for me. I ask You now to take away my sin and to make me what You want me to be.”

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**Speak about assurance of salvation**

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The child can **know** he is saved. Do not tell him, “Now you are saved.” His assurance should not be based on your word or on his own feelings, but on what God has promised in the Bible.

Go back to the Bible verse you used and help him to see God’s promise

Read, for example, Romans 10:13 again and say,

- “What did you ask Jesus to do for you?” (“I asked Him to save me.”)
- “What does the Lord say He will do? Let’s look again at Romans 10:13: *‘Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.’*” (“He says that He will save me.”)
- “So, what do you think He has done for you?” (“He has saved me.”)
- “How do you know?” (“Because He said in the Bible that He would.”)
- “That’s it! Remember His promise when you are tempted to doubt. Some people think that you have to hear a voice from Heaven or see a flash of light. God does not promise that. He simply promised in the Bible to save us if we call on Him. So, when you wonder if it’s true, remember the promise of this verse. You will also see the difference which Jesus is making in your life.”

He can know that ...

- All sin is forgiven when a person comes to Christ.
- God is the Heavenly Father of each one who truly trusts in Christ.
- Those who are trusting in Christ will go to Heaven one day.
- The Holy Spirit lives in him, to enable him to live to the glory of God.

He can thank the Lord for what He has done for him - and you can thank Him too.

If your child truly knows the Lord, there will be spiritual fruit and growth (Galatians 5:22-23; 2 Peter 3:18). Jesus warns us a number of times in the Gospels about professions of faith which are not genuine, for example, in several of the parables in Matthew 13. He said, “*You will recognise them by their fruits*” (Matthew 7:20). Pray that your child may grow to maturity in Christ. Pray that he may be a faithful witness, that he may reflect Christ’s likeness and that he may fulfil God’s will for his life in the body of Christ.

## 6. **Nurturing the Believing Child**

When a child comes to Christ this is not the end. It is just the beginning - the beginning of a new life in Christ for the child and the beginning of a new responsibility for you, the Christian parent. Jesus said, "*Feed my lambs*" (John 21:15). They are *His* lambs if they are trusting in Him. God makes His "*lambs*" grow (1 Corinthians 3:6-7). The Lord tells us to pray for them, teach them, encourage them and help them.

As a believing child grows up there are **seven important truths/instructions**, which he should learn from you, his parents, at home, as well as from his teachers in church, Sunday school, the youth group, *Good News Club*, Bible camp, etc. The following is a brief summary of them.

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### **The Bible**

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#### **What the Bible is**

- **The Word of God - verbally inspired** from beginning to end (2 Timothy 3:16). Every word of Scripture is God-given. The Bible is God's "letter" to us.
- **Complete** - nothing is to be added to the Bible or taken away from it (Revelation 22:18-19). God has shown us once for all what we are to believe and what to do.
- **Completely true** (John 17:17) - we can rely on every part of the Bible. Everything it says is trustworthy. God gave us a Book without mistakes.
- **Powerful** - able to change lives. God used His Word to bring us to new life in Christ (Romans 1:16; James 1:18; 1 Peter 1:23). The Bible also makes us strong as Christians when we read and obey it day by day (James 1:22-25; 1 Peter 2:2).

It is good to tell your children how we obtained our Bible - not only who was involved in writing it, but also in translating, printing and distributing it.

#### **What to do with the Bible**

- **Read it.** Encourage your child to read some verses from the Bible every day. He can use Bible reading notes, such as *Every Day with God* (for seven- to nine-year-olds) or the *Wonder Devotional Books* (for 10-14-year-olds) - available from CEF. If he is too young to read his Bible by himself, you should read the Bible to him. He needs take in the Word of God every day (Matthew 4:4).
- **Know it.** Help your child to learn the books of the Bible, as well as the way the Bible is divided up - the books of the law, history, poetry and prophecy, as well as the Gospels, Acts, the epistles and Revelation. He should know the main events and content of the Bible and how to find the words in a verse from a reference.

- **Memorise it.** Childhood is the golden age of memory. Take time to help your child memorise Scripture verses. Two keys to learning verses by heart are to repeat and review them.
- **Use it.** Your child needs to learn to put into practice the Word of God in his way of life day by day. He will use the Word to win victory over Satan. He will use it in witnessing to his friends. He can look up verses which will help him.

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## **Prayer**

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### **What prayer is**

Prayer is talking to God, who is all-powerful and who loves us. God wants His children to talk to Him often about what is happening in their lives each day. Prayer includes worship, confession of sin, thanksgiving and petition for others as well as ourselves.

### **How to pray**

Jesus gave us a model prayer to follow in Matthew 6:9-13. The Bible gives us many examples of how people prayed, as well as guidelines for coming to God in prayer. These help us in our praying. Our prayers should be:

- to God, our Heavenly Father (John 16:23).
- in the name of Jesus (John 14:13-14).
- guided by the Holy Spirit (Jude 20).
- in faith (Mark 11:24).
- recognising the Father's will (1 John 5:14-5).
- with definite requests (Philippians 4:6).

### **How God answers prayer**

God answers prayer in three ways.

- God may answer **"yes"**.  
Hannah asked God for a son and God gave her Samuel.
- God may answer **"no"**.  
Paul prayed three times that God would remove his thorn in the flesh, but God answered, *"My grace is sufficient for you"* (2 Corinthians 12:9). The Lord's answer to Paul was "no".
- God may answer **"wait"**.  
Mary and Martha asked Jesus to come and heal their brother, Lazarus, but He waited two days before going to their house in Bethany.

Sin can cause our prayers to remain unanswered (Psalm 66:18), but God's Word teaches that *"if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness"* (1 John 1:9).

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## **Witness**

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God can use saved children to reach others who do not know Him. Encourage your child to be a good witness for Christ wherever he goes (Acts 1:8).



### **How to witness**

Teach him to show by his life that he is a Christian (Matthew 5:16). He will then have opportunities to tell what Jesus has done for him.

He can tell others about his Saviour at school and play, and wherever he goes (1 Peter 3:15). Warn him that witnessing about Jesus is not easy (2 Timothy 3:12). Others may laugh and make fun of him. They may even want to hurt him.

### **Helps for witnessing**

Help your child to tell others the way of salvation and give him helps for witnessing, such as,

- ***The Wordless Book***

A simple visual aid, comprising five pages, each a different colour, to help explain the Gospel message. (Available with an explanatory leaflet from *CEF*.)

- The gold page - God's holiness.
- The dark page - we are sinners.
- The red page - Christ died for us.
- The white page - we can be made right with God.
- The green page - growth in grace.

- **Tracts and booklets**

He can pass on, for example, a copy of the *Meet the King!* booklet, a 16-page booklet presenting the birth, life, death and resurrection of Christ. (Available from *CEF*.)

- **The Gospel hand**

An object lesson using the five fingers of the left hand.

- The *thumb* is crooked and so are we in our hearts and lives. The thumb is separated from the pointer finger: these wrong things come between us and God.
- The *pointer finger* is the one your schoolteacher uses to say, "I'm asking **you**." It reminds us that God sees each one of us: He knows everything about us and He loves us very much.
- The *tall finger* stands above all the others. When I lay it flat and bring sharply the pointer of my right hand down on it (do that several times), it reminds us that God put our wrong on Jesus at the cross. As He died there, Jesus took the punishment for our sin.
- The *ring finger* is where your parents wear their wedding ring. On their wedding day, mum said to dad, "I take you to be my husband," and he said, "I take you to be my wife," and the wedding rings were put on. It reminds us of a Bible verse: "*To all who did receive him ... he gave the right to become the children of God*" (John 1:12). Each one needs to say, "Lord Jesus, I take You to be my Saviour," and He says, "I take you to be my child." That is so important.
- The *small finger* reminds us that, although we may be small, we can take our stand for Jesus and live for Him.

The fingers of our hand tell us the Good News. We should heed the message and then we can use the fingers to tell others the Good News.

- **The Roman road**

An explanation of the Gospel based on several verses in Romans. Your child can underline these verses in his Bible to show to his friends; he can write the words shown in bold.

- Romans 3:23 - “**our need**”. Romans chapters 1-3 show us our faults and failings.
- Romans 5:8 - “**the only Saviour**”. The Book of Romans tells us, “*Christ died for us.*”
- Romans 6:23 - “**God’s gift**”. New life together with the Lord for ever, begins now.
- Romans 10:13 - “**What you must do, what He will do**”. “*Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.*”

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## **Sin in the Christian life**

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### **God wants our lives to glorify Him**

God made us new people when we came to Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17). God tells us how we should live as those who belong to Him. We read in the Bible, and see in the life of Jesus, how we should think, speak and act according to God’s standards. The Holy Spirit helps us.

### **The Christian has two natures**

Sin is a reality in the Christian’s life (1 John 1:8,10), because he has two natures. The Bible calls these two natures the “*old self*” and the “*new self*” (Ephesians 4:22-24), and they are in continual conflict (Galatians 5:16-17). When the Holy Spirit is in control, the new nature is victorious and our lives are pleasing to God. When the old self is in control, the old nature is victorious and we sin and displease God.

### **What sin does**

Sin in the life of a Christian breaks his fellowship with God. He is still a child of God, but his wrongdoing makes a barrier between him and God (Isaiah 59:2). If he continues deliberately to disobey the Lord will discipline him (Hebrews 12:5-11).

### **What the child is to do, especially when bad habits take over**

**Recognise** his sin, confess it to the Lord and claim His forgiveness (1 John 1:9). He should name the specific sin he has committed and confess it to the Lord. If his sin involves someone else, it is necessary to put it right with that person also.

**Reckon** by faith on what Christ has done for him - that he, the saved child, has died and risen to new life in Him (Romans 6:11). He should thank Jesus for the victory He has won through His death and resurrection.

**Resist** Satan and sin - in Christ’s strength (Romans 6:12). A little Christian girl once said, “When Satan knocks at the door of my life and wants to tempt me, I send Christ to answer him.” We cannot say “no” to temptation in our own strength, but through Christ we can.

**Render** (give or yield) every part of his life (heart, mind and will) to the Lord so that the Holy Spirit can control his life and use him for His glory (Romans 6:13).

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## **Fellowship with other believers**

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### **Help your child to understand the importance of Christian fellowship**

The New Testament teaches the unity of believers. We are members of Christ's body, sheep and lambs in His flock, living stones in His temple, soldiers in His army, etc. All believers, even the youngest, need to worship and serve together with other believers in the local church.

### **Encourage him to go regularly to church and Sunday school**

Do not simply "send" your child to church! Go with him and help him to feel that he belongs there (Hebrews 10:25)! As he grows up, he can begin to take part in worship, witness and work more and more.

Your child should have some **Christian friends** of his own age, if possible. He can be a witness to unsaved friends, of course, but he cannot be like them in all that they do.

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## **The indwelling of the Holy Spirit**

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Your child does not need to try to live the Christian life in his own strength. The Holy Spirit indwells every believer (Galatians 4:6; 1 Corinthians 3:16; 1 Corinthians 6:19) - to lead, strengthen, keep, enlighten, comfort him and make him like Christ. He is our "Paraclete" - the One alongside us to help (John 14:16). Teach your child about the wonderful Person and ministry of the Holy Spirit.

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## **Obedience to parents**

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God has given especially to Christian children the command to obey their parents. "*Honour your father and your mother*" (Exodus 20:12). "*Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right*" (Ephesians 6:1). All children should honour and obey their parents, but saved children, because the law has been written on their hearts by the Holy Spirit (Hebrews 8:10), should show this in their lives.

Tell your child that he can do this in three ways:

### **Respect your parents**

*"Every one of you shall revere [respect] his mother and his father"* (Leviticus 19:3). Your child needs to show you respect because God has set you over him in authority. As parents, you are God's servants for his good.

### **Obey your parents**

Children should heed the instructions of their mother and father: "*My son, keep your father's commandment, and forsake not your mother's teaching*" (Proverbs 6:20). To disobey parents is to disobey God's command. Children who are disobedient to parents will have problems throughout their lives. They need to learn submission when they are young. However, if ever you were to give instructions to your child which go against the expressed will of God, your child "*must obey God rather than men*" (Acts 5:29).

***Love your parents***

The Lord Jesus Christ, as He hung on the cross, made sure that Mary, His mother, would be cared for by John (John 19:26-27). Parents are special and merit the love of their children and their care in old age (1 Timothy 5:16).

Of course, as parents, we should show ourselves worthy to be respected, obeyed and loved, by asking the Lord to make us the parents He wants us to be.

Perhaps in your home you have a future missionary, pastor, full-time Christian worker or even Prime Minister! What tremendous potential there is in the life of a child who knows the Lord! May the Lord help us to encourage, teach and help our children in the Christian life!

## 7. The Role of Husbands and Fathers, Wives and Mothers

The three parts of this chapter deal with biblical principles concerning our role as Christian husbands and fathers, wives and mothers.

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### Your person

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God created you for a purpose - to glorify Him (Romans 11:36; 1 Corinthians 10:31) and to have fellowship with Him (1 Corinthians 1:9; Philippians 3:10). He is worthy of your faith, your obedience, your worship and your love. It is more important to have a right relationship with God than to receive promotion in your job or to succeed in the eyes of the world.

So the two important questions are these: Do you know Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Saviour? Are you walking day by day in fellowship with Him?

As a believer, you should put Christ first in your personal life, your family and social life, your work and in every other area of your life (Matthew 6:33). Take time each day to read God's Word and seek to put it into practice in your daily life! If you have not been living for the Lord as a Christian should, you need to put things right with the Lord. The Bible says, *"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness"* (1 John 1:9). The closer your walk with the Lord, the stronger your relationship will be with your spouse.

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### Your partnership

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The most important person in your life, after the Lord, is your marriage partner. The Bible gives important instructions to married couples in Ephesians 5: *"Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her ... [Let] each one of you love his wife as himself"* (verses 25,33). It also says, *"Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord ... [Let] the wife see that she respects her husband"* (verses 22,33).

We all have challenges obeying these commands of the Lord as we should. The only perfect marriage was that of Adam and Eve, **before** the Fall. We, however, are living **after** the Fall. We need to work constantly on our relationship with our spouse and children. A marriage relationship requires willingness from both partners to "give and take". We cannot prevent changes from happening in our families. Time brings changes. Circumstances change. Children are born into the family. They grow up and leave the nest. Our job and economic situation can change. We cannot stop the stream of influences on our lives. As your spouse grows older, he or she will look different from when you first met - and the same is true for you!

God instituted marriage, and marriage is for life. The Bible says, *"What ... God has joined together, let not man separate"* (Matthew 19:6). Sometimes people (including Christians) say, "I don't feel love for my wife/my husband anymore." When the Bible says that a husband is to "love" his wife, it is the same Greek word "agapaô" as found in John 3:16, *"God so loved [agapaô] the world ..."* So it is not simply a question of how we **feel**. Marriage, like God's covenant love, is first and foremost a

commitment of a husband to his wife and a wife to her husband. According to the Bible, husbands are to love their wives with God's kind of love - selfless, sacrificial and unconditional. What the Lord commands He enables us to do. The road of marriage may not always be smooth, but by God's grace we can love our spouse right to the end.

There are, I believe, three important ingredients for a happy marriage.

### **Communication**

For a couple to have a strong relationship, they need to take time talking and listening to each other. Your wife/husband is your closest friend and confidante. When a husband and wife share freely their thoughts and feelings, their joys and concerns many problems can be solved. Do you share everything with your spouse?

Express your *appreciation* to your wife or to your husband. Perhaps you think that he or she is aware of your appreciation, without you having to verbalise it. The words "I love you" and "thank you for \_\_\_" are very important - use them often.

It is also important to express *encouragement* to your marriage partner. The Bible says, "*Let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works*" (Hebrews 10:24). Do you see an area of your spouse's life where he or she is aware of their limitations and needs some encouragement? When problems arise do not simply ignore the situation. You need to "get alongside" them, to encourage and help. Sometimes there is the need for a word of correction. (Only do that when the two of you are alone.) Do not criticise your wife or husband but encourage her/him to act or react in a more God-glorifying way. When you are open to talk and to listen your love as a married couple will grow. You will respect each other all the more when you are prepared to accept correction and seek to do better.

Husbands and wives have drifted apart simply because of forming a wrong opinion in their own minds without checking things out. When does your spouse feel like talking? Is it when the children go to bed? Is it when the two of you are travelling somewhere? These are important times for you to talk and to listen to each other. Go out for a walk or for a meal together and share openly together. Talking together will strengthen your marriage.

### **Self-sacrifice**

Ephesians 5:21-33 is the key New Testament passage about the responsibilities of Christian husbands and wives. It is not by accident that this passage follows the command in *Ephesians 5:18*: "*Be filled with the Spirit.*" The Holy Spirit is able to make you the husband or wife He wants you to be. Can you say that He is in control of your life if you are giving your family a hard time? God wants us to live our married lives to His glory. Verse 21 says, "*Submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.*" Submission is a military term which simply means "to take your place". There is no contradiction between mutual submission and a relationship of leadership and response. Mutual submission doesn't mean that both partners must submit in exactly the same ways. Christ submitted Himself to the church in one way, as a Servant-King who gave His life for us on the cross. The church submits herself to Christ in another way by following His leadership on the Calvary road. God has ordained a particular role for you as a husband or a wife.

"*Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands, as to the Lord*" (Ephesians 5:22). Some husbands have used this verse as an excuse for being dictators in the home and for treating their wives as their inferiors. That is **not** what this verse says. Nowhere in the Bible is the woman said to be inferior to the man. They are equals. The woman has a different role from the man; she is to follow his leadership in the home. Both are equal in the sight of God. Why is the wife to submit herself to her husband?

Because she was created from man. Matthew Henry wrote, “The woman was made of a rib out of the side of Adam; not made out of his head to rule over him, nor 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 and near his heart to be beloved.”

Whenever you put people together and where there is more than one will involved, you must have a division of responsibilities and some governing rules. The husband is the leader in the home. He has a great responsibility. What would the alternative be? To have two identical authorities in the home! That would lead to conflict.

The wife is to be the “helper”. This does not mean that she is less important. It is interesting that the word for “helper” in Genesis 2:18 is used of God Himself in 1 Samuel 7:12. It is the word “ezer” from “*Ebenezer; for he said, ‘Till now the LORD has helped us.’*” It is an honour to be a helper; it is not an inferior position. It involves **self-sacrifice**. Your husband needs a helper and is incomplete without you. The Bible says that the “*wife is the crown of her husband*” (Proverbs 12:4). Wives are to submit to the authority of their husbands when a decision has to be made after joint consultation. Christ always submitted to the will of the Father and He is our example to follow.

The **husband** has the role of leader. Ephesians 5:23 says, “*The husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Saviour.*” What a tremendous responsibility! As husbands, we are to be the leaders, sustainers and helpers of our wives. We are to be like Christ. A husband is **not** to act as a dictator towards his wife, just as Jesus is not a dictator towards us. Husbands, are you fulfilling the role God has ordained for you or do you simply consider your wife to be the “home-maker”?

“*Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her*” (Ephesians 5:25). As Christ cares for and provides for His church, as husbands, we are to show the same concern for our wives, placing their interests before our own. That means **self-sacrifice**. As Jesus gave Himself to suffer on the cross to save the church, so we are to be willing to deny ourselves and suffer trials and loss for the safety and well-being of our wives. One day Jesus took a towel and washed the feet of His disciples. We are to love our wives like that and sacrifice ourselves for them, because we want them to be at their very best for God. It is the duty of the husband to provide for her needs, to deny himself of rest, if necessary, in order to attend to her in sickness and to be ready to die to save her. A successful marriage is **not** the husband giving 50% and the wife giving 50%. It is both you as a husband and you as a wife each giving 100% - for your marriage to be all that God wants it to be.

## **Love**

Love is absolutely essential in the marriage relationship. In summing up the first responsibility of husbands towards wives, Paul wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit: “*Let each one of you love his wife as himself*” (Ephesians 5:33). The Bible also says, “*Train the young women to love their husbands and children*” (Titus 2:4). You must love your wife/husband above all other people, in fact next to the Lord. God by His Holy Spirit fills our hearts with His love (Romans 5:5). In that way true love for your wife/husband is renewed every day, because it is not simply human love but Calvary love. Have you told your spouse today how much you love her/you love him?

It is interesting to note what the Bible says in Ephesians 5:31 (as well as in Genesis 2:24, Matthew 19:5 and Mark 10:7): “*Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall be one flesh.*” When we marry, we have a new responsibility. In a special sense, which is not just about moving out of our home, we leave our parents and our wife (or husband) is to be the first person in our

lives. That does not mean that we neglect our parents, but the new relationship takes precedence. Parents and parents-in-law should not be allowed to run your home. You are no longer under their “rule”. When you were married, the Lord established a new order.

Love is the foundation of a happy marriage. It is not the sentimental, unreal love of which the world speaks. It is a love which does not depend on moods and circumstances. It is a love which is true at all times, a love which grows deeper and stronger with the passing of time. God wants to give us that love and is able to do it. Someone has said, “The best thing parents can do for their children is to love each other.” It makes a tremendous difference when a child can say, “Dad loves mum very, very much and mum loves dad very, very much”. Our love for each other will show itself in our living day by day. That love, which reflects Christ’s love for His church, gives great assurance and security to your children.

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### **Your parenthood**

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What is our role as Christian fathers and mothers? Children in our Western countries receive many toys, gadgets, games, clothes, etc. Yet many children are insecure and have deep problems. Instead of simply showering more things on our children, parents need to give them **love and time**. You love your child very much, but you need to keep showing that love and giving him or her time. So it is good to give that little girl (or boy) a hug and to tell her you love her (or him). It is good to tell that teenager that you are proud of him (or her) and are praying for him (or her). Instead of giving your child a toy or a computer game and saying, “Now go into your room and play with it,” sit down and enjoy it with him/her.

Dad or mum, when you come home from work in the evening, spend quality time with your children. It will mean turning off the TV, laying aside your smartphone or putting down the newspaper in order to give your full attention to your child. Ask your child what he did that day and talk to him about his friends and the things which interest him. If you do not give your child time now, he will not give you time later when you want him, as a teenager, to share his problems with you. One teenage girl said to her Christian parents, “Don’t tell me that I cannot marry my boyfriend! You were not there to talk to me when I needed you.”

Parents have special responsibility for ...

### **Leadership and teaching**

God commands us in Ephesians 6:4, “*Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.*” Mothers also have an important role to play in teaching their children (2 Timothy 1:5; 2 Timothy 3:15). “*Hear, my son, your father’s instruction, and forsake not your mother’s teaching*” (Proverbs 1:8). However, the final responsibility lies with fathers to ensure that their children are taught the Word of God. Christian parents are to give spiritual guidance to their family and not simply leave it to the pastor, the Sunday school teachers or youth leaders.

In the Bible God says about Abraham, “*I have chosen him, that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing righteousness and justice*” (Genesis 18:19). God’s purpose in choosing Abraham was that from him should spring a nation through whom to reveal His will to man and from whom, as concerning the flesh, the Messiah should come. It was vital for Abraham to teach the way of the Lord to his children and household so that they would live aright. Each



new generation needs to be taught the way of the Lord. May God help us to follow the example of Abraham!

### **Supervision**

Among the qualifications of an elder is this: *“He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God’s church?”* (1 Timothy 3:4-5). A little further we read, *“Let deacons each be the husband of one wife, managing their children and their own households well”* (1 Timothy 3:12). Later in the epistle we read, *“I would have younger widows marry, bear children, manage their households ...”* (1 Timothy 5:14).

As parents, we are responsible to give guidance to our children - to behave correctly, show respect for their teachers, do their homework, go to church, etc. We cannot follow every detail of the child’s education or even what he does outside school hours, but we can keep a check on how their lives are being impacted and, where possible, see that they are not being harmed by those who try to lead them astray.

### **Discipline**

This subject was dealt with more fully in chapter 1.

Decide, on the basis of the Word of God, which things are wrong for your children and what possible good things to do instead. Be sure that you are not demanding things of your children simply because of what others say or think. The rules in the family should be consistent and be based on the unchanging principles of the Word of God.

Parents have the most important job in the community. Only the Lord can give you the strength, wisdom and grace you need to fulfil your responsibility. If you think that you have everything under control and don’t need to learn any more, beware! *“Let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall”* (1 Corinthians 10:12). Being parents is a high calling - but what a wonderful ministry it can be by the grace of God!

## 8. God's Plan for Marriage

God instituted marriage in the beginning when He created the first man and the first woman: *"A man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh"* (Genesis 2:24). Marriage was not invented by man or by the state but was established by God for our highest good. God has given in His Word clear and permanent rules and principles concerning the marriage relationship.

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### **What is marriage?**

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God instituted marriage in the beginning when He created the first man and the first woman. Some people, for the sake of the Gospel or because of a special calling, see that it is God's will for them to remain single. There is no rule that everyone should marry. Marriage is a lifelong commitment whereby a man and woman enter freely and mutually into union before God. This commitment (formal covenant or promise) is entered into publicly before the community, according to the laws and customs of the land. The unsaved couple may not even recognise that God is their witness, but He is, even if the ceremony takes place before two human witnesses in a registry office.

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### **Why did God institute marriage?**

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Marriage meets three specific needs.

#### **Companionship**

This is the major reason. *"The Lord God said, 'It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him'"* (Genesis 2:18). God provided marriage so that the marriage partners might find completion in this close, lasting relationship. A husband and wife are to share life together as counterparts, rather than living individually in solitude. Being in close friendship as a married couple helps you to overcome many difficulties. Having a wife or husband meets the individual's basic need of companionship.

#### **Stability**

Marriage is necessary for the fundamental stability of society. The Bible says, *"A man shall ... hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh."* (Genesis 2:24). A man and wife are called "one flesh" (one body); they are a unit, forming the strongest possible human relationship. A married couple (that unit) is the basic nucleus of society. Without marriage human society would be a confused multitude of scattered individuals. The married couple gives stability to their children, to the church, to the community and to society in general.

### **Procreation**

God also ordained marriage for giving birth to children: *“Male and female he created them. And God blessed them. And God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it’”* (Genesis 1:27-28). John Calvin wrote about these verses: “God’s blessing may be regarded as the source from which the human race has flowed.” God desired that children should be born into the harmonious relationship and secure environment of a stable married couple. In this way society was to grow in number in the way God meant it to be.

There is joy, fulfilment and purity in marriage. God has given us rules about marriage in His Word. Keep them and you will be blessed; break them and you will experience misery.

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### **How should Christians prepare for marriage?**

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Because marriage is a lifelong commitment, it should only be entered into after much thought, prayer and preparation by the believer. Christian young people often ask the question, “How do I find the right marriage partner?” Let the Lord guide you. Remember that God led Eve to Adam (Genesis 2:22). Remember how He brought Isaac and Rebekah together (Genesis 24). Ruth refused to marry any of the young men of Bethlehem. She continued with what she was meant to do until *“she happened to come to the part of the field belonging to Boaz, who was of the clan of Elimelech [Ruth’s deceased husband]”* (Ruth 2:3). The Bible says, *“a prudent wife is from the LORD”* (Proverbs 19:14). Put the Lord and His will first in your life and He will work things out. Being impatient and trying to take things into your own hands is dangerous.

It would be better to remain single, rather than to spend a lifetime of unhappiness married to a person whom God did not choose for you. Remember, God clearly tells us that it is **not** His will for believers to marry (or enter into a close relationship with) unbelievers: *“Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness?”* (2 Corinthians 6:14). Even when both of you are believers, if you are contemplating marriage, it is important to have similar basic views concerning God’s will for your future lives and service, otherwise conflicts can arise later.

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### **Is there a place for sexual relations outside marriage?**

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The Bible forbids sexual relations outside marriage. In God’s sight Adam and Eve first met and were united. God said, *“They shall become one flesh”* (Genesis 2:24). God created man and woman with sexuality. He tells us plainly in His Word that sexual union is only for married couples, within the marriage relationship. The Bible says, *“Let marriage be held in honour among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous”* (Hebrews 13:4). Marriage provides the proper climate of mutual trust and security.

In the Bible premarital sex is called “fornication” (sexual sin) and it is strongly condemned. In the Old Testament a man taking away a girl’s virginity with force before marriage was to receive the same severe punishment as for murder: *“If in the open country a man meets a young woman who is betrothed, and the man seizes her and lies with her, then only the man who lay with her shall die.”* (Deuteronomy 22:25). In the New Testament God commands us, *“Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body.”*

(1 Corinthians 6:18). As a young man Joseph fled from the temptation of such a relationship outside the marriage union (Genesis 39:6-12). Young people today face many wrong influences in the area of relationships with the opposite sex. God, in His Word, gives warning after warning about the dangers of sexual immorality (1 Corinthians 6:9-18; Galatians 5:19-22; Ephesians 5:5; Hebrews 13:4; Revelation 21:8). God knows that “free love” and “trial marriages” often bring great harm and long-term unhappiness (see 2 Samuel 13).

The Bible also warns those who are married about the dangers of adultery - unlawful relations with someone who is not your wife or husband: “*You shall not commit adultery*” (Exodus 20:14). Jesus takes this commandment even further and says, “*I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart*” (Matthew 5:28). God’s commands and standards do not change; they are true for today and must be respected. Breaking those commands brings serious consequences.

### **Does the Bible allow divorce?**

The Bible only allows divorce in certain very exceptional circumstances. Divorce is not the unpardonable sin; it can be forgiven. However, it causes deep wounds and heartaches for those involved - the couple, the in-laws and especially the children.

The Bible speaks about marriage as being a permanent, lifelong relationship between one man and one woman: “*What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate*” (Matthew 19:6). This means that no church, no parliament, no legal authority, no individual or group has the right to say that marriage can simply be dissolved for incompatibility, breakdown in relationships, loss of first love or change of circumstance. Death, not man, dissolves a marriage. From the beginning it was never God’s will that married couples divorce: “*He said to them, ‘Because of your hardness of heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so’*” (Matthew 19:8). Moses permitted divorce, but only under certain circumstances and with strict regulations (Deuteronomy 22 and 24). In Malachi 2:15 the Lord says, “*Let none of you be faithless to the wife of your youth.*” He is against divorce. God sees marriage as a joining of spirits, according to His will, which can’t be broken without spiritual damage.

The New Testament allows believers to divorce in two *exceptional* cases, but in negative and reluctant terms.

#### **First exception: a couple who are both believers**

Jesus said, “*Everyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of sexual immorality, makes her commit adultery*” (Matthew 5:32) and, “*Whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery*” (Matthew 19:9). Divorce is **permitted** in a case of sexual sin (marital unfaithfulness), but it is never required. Instead the marriage partners should seek repentance, forgiveness and reconciliation. Paul refers in 1 Corinthians 7:10-11 to what Jesus said: “*To the married I give this charge (not I, but the Lord): the wife should not separate from her husband (but if she does, she should remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband), and the husband should not divorce his wife.*”

They are required not to marry another person (in order not to rule out the possibility of being married to each other again). Until one or the other dies, there is always hope for the believing couple to be remarried to each other (knowing the power of the Spirit and the Word, and the role of church discipline).

***Second exception: a convert whose spouse is still an unbeliever***

In 1 Corinthians 7:12-16 Paul, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, deals with an additional exception. Once again it is stated clearly that divorce is **not** God's will. Everything should be done to prevent it.

If the unbelieving partner is willing to live with you, do not divorce. Live together in peace. Your marriage is legitimate and blessed of God. There is real hope of your unbelieving partner coming to Christ through the testimony of your life.

If the unbelieving partner does not agree to go on with the marriage, divorce may be forced upon you. It is not sinful to divorce in such circumstances. Only if the unbeliever insists on separating should there be a divorce. In that case do not try to hang on to a marriage which is not at peace. There is always hope that the unbeliever will be saved and you can be remarried.

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***What should you do if your marriage is in trouble?***

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There are many pressures and temptations in our world today and the family is under attack. This serious problem is not limited to unbelievers. What should a couple do when problems arise in their marriage?

***Recognise the problems***

Most marital problems do not come up suddenly, rather there is usually a slow decline in the relationship. It will show itself when you are not praying together as you should. Communications gradually start to break down and everything is not shared openly. Each one blames the other. The one feels hurt by something the other has said or implied and it is not put right. Often this situation drives the husband and/or wife to look for satisfaction in work and even Christian activities. Each one may even start trying to win more attention and admiration from the children (almost competing with each other for their love).

If such things have been happening in your marriage relationship, stop pretending that everything is all right when it isn't. Be honest (not harsh) with each other. Identify specific problems rather than making general criticisms. Make a list of differences of opinion and points of conflict. Bring the problems between you into the open. Express your frustrations to your partner and start talking about them. If you are not honest with each other nothing will change. Surrender the situation to the Lord - His grace is sufficient.

***Do whatever is necessary to put things right***

Take whatever steps are needed to correct the problems. Your pastor or a wise Christian counsellor can help you both and pray for you. Don't wait for your partner to take the first step. Decide right away that you will do whatever you can to resolve the conflicts and save your marriage.

Work out a plan together and decide who should take responsibility for each change needed.

From time to time look back at the list of problems you have identified. See if you are making real progress or if the situation is virtually the same as before. Pray for changes in your own behaviour. You are not responsible for the actions of another, but you are responsible for your own actions and reactions towards that person.

***Accept each other's strengths and weaknesses***

No-one is perfect, not even you! You will have to accept certain unchangeable characteristics in your spouse. You can't change the entire behaviour pattern of your husband or wife, but you can change your own behaviour. Look for positive qualities in each other's lives and emphasise them. Don't just dwell on the problems. God loves us deeply as we are, even though He knows that there is still much which needs to be refined in our lives. God wants to give Christian couples that kind of love for each other.

***Keep on applying the Word of God to every area of your lives***

The Bible contains the principles needed for a happy marriage. Take God at His Word and obey Him: husbands, love your wives; wives, submit to your husbands; children, obey your parents; love God with all your heart, soul and strength; love others as yourself.

The relationship of a Christian couple can be compared to a triangle. God is at the apex: He is Lord of your married life. The husband is at the tip of one angle at the base of the triangle and the wife at the other. As the husband and wife draw nearer to God in their daily lives, they are drawn closer together in their marriage relationship. Our personal fellowship with God is vital to make us the husband and father or wife and mother God wants us to be.

# Supplement

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## **Ideas for family activities**

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Fifteen hundred school children were asked the question, "What makes a happy family?" The most frequent answer was, "Doing things together." Someone has said, "Playing together breaks down the walls that keep people apart."

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## **Outdoors**

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### **Fill the match-box**

Take a matchbox each or one for the whole family. The idea is to fill the match-box, for example, with objects which are mentioned in the Bible, each beginning with a different letter of the alphabet.

### **Knee-knocker**

One person takes a ball (not too hard) and the others run round him. The one he hits with the ball between the knee and ankle is the next to have a turn.

### **Text-building**

Using whatever materials are available (sticks, stones, pine cones, etc) on the ground the family makes the letters to form the words of a Bible verse.

### **Non-stop cricket**

Take a bat, a ball (not too hard) and a large cardboard box. The first batsman stands in front of the box, which has been placed upright. The other players are placed to catch the ball. A "bowler" throws the ball from a mark about 10 metres away to try to hit the box. The batsman tries to make as many runs as possible by hitting the ball (although not behind the box) and running to and from the marker. The batsman is out if the bowler hits the box with the ball, if the ball is caught after hitting the bat or if the batsman is run out.

### **Making your own garden**

During a day in the country or a walk around a piece of waste ground, each one tries to find a little plant growing on a wall or tree trunk. When you come home, plant them in a corner of the garden or in a window-box and mark where each one's plant is. (Be careful not to take home protected species of plants.)

Another possibility is to buy some seeds such as sunflowers or marigolds. Each one plants and looks after their own.

### **Blind man's castle**

A member of the family sits with his eyes closed and an object placed on the floor in front of him. The others try to creep up and take the object without his pointing them out as a thief. Once he identifies you, you're out.

**On a car trip**

Each member of the family chooses a different colour of car and each time someone spots a car of that colour, he gains a point. The first one to have 25 points wins.

Another game to play on a car trip is "I spy". Someone says, "I spy with my little eye something beginning with \_\_\_ (*a letter of the alphabet*)". The others try to guess the identity of the chosen object.

**Rounders (soft-ball)****Hide and seek****A walk in the park or in the countryside****A picnic beside a river or a lake****A visit to a zoo or a farm**

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**Indoors**

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**What about your day?**

Let each family member, in turn, say another's name and a time during the day, for example, "Jane - 10.30 a.m." The person named responds by telling in detail what he or she was doing at that time. Give everyone an opportunity to take part.

**Sock puppets**

Each participant puts a sock over his hand. (If you use old white socks, you could draw faces with coloured felt pens.) The family can use the puppets to act out little plays based on incidents in everyday life - such as going to the hospital or a shop, or a day at school or at the seaside.

**Reading books**

Reading to children is very important. Read a part of a book each day. Possible books include:

- Christian biographies (some are written for children).
- *Pictorial Pilgrim's Progress*.
- Christian adventure stories for children.
- Articles from Christian magazines.

**Charades**

The family divides into two teams. The first team goes into another room to choose a word and decide how to dramatise it. The word can be several syllables long, with each syllable able to be acted out, as well as the whole word. It is the **sound** of the syllable which counts, not the spelling. For example, "expensive" = eggs, pen, sieve or "adorable" = add, door, rabble. The team returns to the main room and announces the number of syllables in the chosen word. The word is acted out, in mime, one syllable at a time. Then the whole word is mimed and the other team has to guess what it is.



**Careers**

One member of the family acts out a profession. The others try to guess what it is.

**Give mum and dad the word**

The children think of one word which they can give to each of their parents. Mum and dad must then tell a story from their past, built around that word. Take a word like “barn”, “mountain” or “swimming pool”.

**Cooking**

Children like this very much, provided you don't mind putting up with some inconvenience for once. They can help make simple pies, for example.

**Scribble art**

Each person makes a few large rough scribbles on a white page and gives his page to someone else. The other person tries to make a drawing out of part of the scribble by adding other lines. It's amazing the number of hidden shapes you can find in a scribble.

**Bowling alley**

You can make your own simple bowling alley with some toy soldiers as skittles and marbles as “bowls”.

**Nutty talk**

Each member of the family puts a walnut in his mouth and tries to say a nursery rhyme. To make it more difficult and interesting, older family members can put two or even three walnuts in their mouth. (If someone in your family has a nut allergy, you can obviously adapt this idea by using something other than nuts.)

**Games**

It is good for the whole family to play games together, such as Snakes and Ladders, Happy Families, UNO, Ludo, Cluedo, Scrabble or Dominoes.

Choose games where you do not have to “put down” the other people to win.

**Good memory**

One member of the family prepares a tray with 20 different objects on it. He shows it to the others for 20-30 seconds. Afterwards each one tries to write from memory the names of the 20 objects.

**Roots**

Together the members of the family try to make up the family tree, tracing it as far as they can from memory.

**Indoor olympics**

Have an “indoor olympic games” with the following events:

- The sprint - time how long it takes for each person to eat two crackers and whistle.
- The javelin - throw a straw and then measure the distance it travelled.
- The (s)mile - measure each person's smile to find the broadest.
- The discus throw - throw a paper plate and measure the distance it travelled.

- The 10-mile walk - time how long it takes for each person to walk on all fours from the kitchen to the bedroom.
- The high jump - make it the “low jump” and place a stick between two stacks of books and see who can wiggle under the lowest height.
- The shot put - use a balloon to toss, then measure the distance it travelled.

You can give points for each event, if you wish, and the winner is the olympic champion.

### ***Participating in children's activities***

Instead of organising things for the children to do together with you, take opportunities to join them in what they're doing - colouring pictures, playing with cars or dolls, making a model airplane, building Lego, etc.

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## ***Bible games***

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### ***Last letter add-a-word***

One person says a Bible word. The next person thinks of a Bible word which starts with the last letter of the word just said. For example, if the first person says “Joshua”, the second person could say “Angels” (which begins with the last letter of Joshua), the next person could say “Samaria” and so on. Go around the circle several times.

### ***Miming a Bible story or passage***

Each one acts out in front of the others a character in a Bible story (such as Zacchaeus) or you can mime a Bible verse or passage (such as Psalm 23).

### ***Who said it?***

Each one chooses a Bible verse and the others try to guess who originally said the words.

### ***Drawing competition***

Everyone draws a picture to depict a favourite Bible story or Scripture verse. Decide which one is most original.

### ***Word scramble scavenger hunt***

Divide your family into two teams and give each team a list like this one:

- toac - 1 Samuel 17:5
- kobo - Exodus 24:7
- pmal - Matthew 5:15
- rufit - Genesis 1:11
- edatrh - Judges 16:12
- kebtas - Luke 9:17
- saldna - Mark 6:9
- wlob - 1 Chronicles 28:17
- cabhrn - Isaiah 17:6
- cokr - Matthew 16:18

Each team tries to unscramble the words to discover the objects by looking up the references. (The above list can be used with the English Standard Version or the

New King James Version. If you are using another version of the Bible you may need to adapt some of the clues.)

*(Answers: coat, book, lamp, fruit, thread, basket, sandal, bowl, branch, rock.)*

### **Fill in the missing words**

One person reads a familiar passage, for example, from the Sermon on the Mount. Now and then he leaves out a word. The others try to write down the complete list of missing words.

### **Sermon search**

After lunch on Sunday, the family members can share what they learnt from the message preached in church that morning. Here are some activities and questions to choose from:

- Illustrate the sermon with a drawing or picture.
- What was the main point of the sermon?
- Which part of the message did you like best?
- Complete the sentence, "The sermon made me feel \_\_\_."
- What did you not understand?
- What should the sermon lead us to do?

### **Bible professions**

Each family member thinks of a Bible character's profession, such as, ...

- Joseph - carpenter.
- Luke - doctor.
- Matthew - tax collector.
- Amos - shepherd.
- Paul - tentmaker.
- Cain - farmer.

Everyone in turn acts out a Bible character's profession while the rest of the family tries to guess **who** the character is and **what he/she is doing**.

### **Who am I?**

For each family member write the name of a Bible character on a card - David, John, Ruth, Esther, etc. Pin a card to each person's back, without his knowing what is written on it. The one chosen should then try to discover who he is by asking questions to other family members.

### **ABC praise list**

Either individually or together, the family works on a list of things to praise the Lord for, beginning with the letters of the alphabet, for example, ...

- A - Answer to prayer.
- B - Body.
- C - Christ.
- D - Daylight.

... and so on. See how many letters of the alphabet you can do.

## **Postscript**

If this book has helped you to teach your own children in the things of God, please pray about what you can do for the children in your neighbourhood who do not have Christian parents. The great majority of children have never heard the Gospel. Their parents cannot teach them because they themselves do not know the Saviour. These children do not attend a church or Sunday school where the Bible is faithfully taught.

Who will bring the Word of life to the unreached children? Our homes should be, in some measure, “mission stations” extending the outreach of our local church and helping to meet the spiritual need of those around us. Pray about the possibility of opening your home for a *Good News Club*. This is a weekly or monthly home meeting for children. The club activities are varied. The children sing choruses, take part in review contests, enjoy true missionary stories, learn Bible verses and are taught Bible lessons in an interesting and creative way.

If you are interested in having a *Good News Club* or in opening your home, please contact your nearest *Child Evangelism Fellowship* worker. May the Lord richly bless you, as you share the Good News of the Saviour with your children and with their friends! Jesus said, “Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me” (Matthew 18:5).

# **Additional Helpful Material**

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## **Available on TeachKids.eu website**

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- *A Manual on the Evangelism of Children.*
- *First Steps.*
- *U-can Lead Children to Christ.*
- *U-can Counsel a Christian Child.*
- *Little Kids Can Know God Through the Saviour.*
- *What Every Child Ought to Know.*
- *Our Awesome God.*
- *Right and Wrong.*
- *The Lord Jesus Christ.*
- *Overcoming the Enemy.*

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## **Other materials available from CEF**

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- Gospel booklets, such as *Meet the King!*
- *The Wordless Book.*
- *Every Day with God* - 30-day Bible notes.
- *Wonder Devotional Books* - 60-day Bible notes.

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## **Available elsewhere**

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- *Leading Little Ones to God* by Marian M. Schoolland (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co).
- *The New Bible in Pictures for Little Eyes* by Kenneth N. Taylor (Moody Publishers).
- *From Nothing to Nature* by Prof. E. H. Andrews (Evangelical Press).
- *The Big Picture Story Bible* by David R. Helm (Crossway).
- *Our Daily Bread* - three-monthly Bible notes (Our Daily Bread Ministries).
- *Pictorial Pilgrim's Progress.*