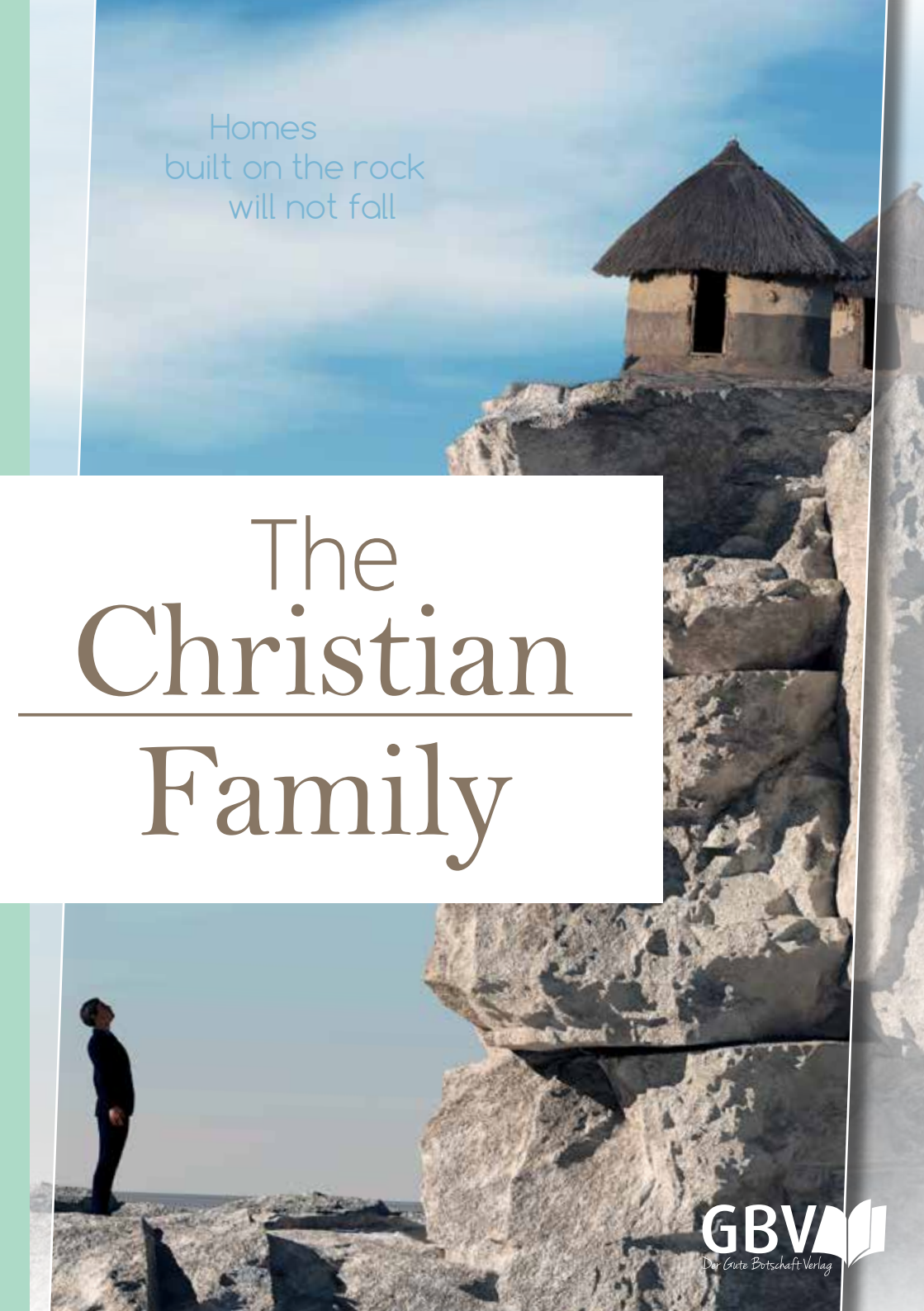

The Christian Family

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Preface

When we hear the word **'family'**, we tend to think of a **father, mother and children.**

Not every family has both parents, and some include other relatives, but the image is one of relationship, **love and care,** and evokes a sense of **intimacy, happiness, order and stability.**

Even if our experience of family life is not as positive as this, we appreciate its potential for these things to be shared and enjoyed, especially if we have seen them in other families. Indeed, where else can we expect to find them naturally? The traditional family is God's default design for nurturing and developing us in preparation for adulthood.

Families are the natural bedrock of stable society. It is sobering to watch the deliberate dismantling of the family unit in the west today despite all the benefits it has brought us down the centuries. To reject God's design, so plainly taught in Scripture, and in the face of the undeniable damage this is doing to the lives of those directly affected and society at large is to reap a terrible harvest.

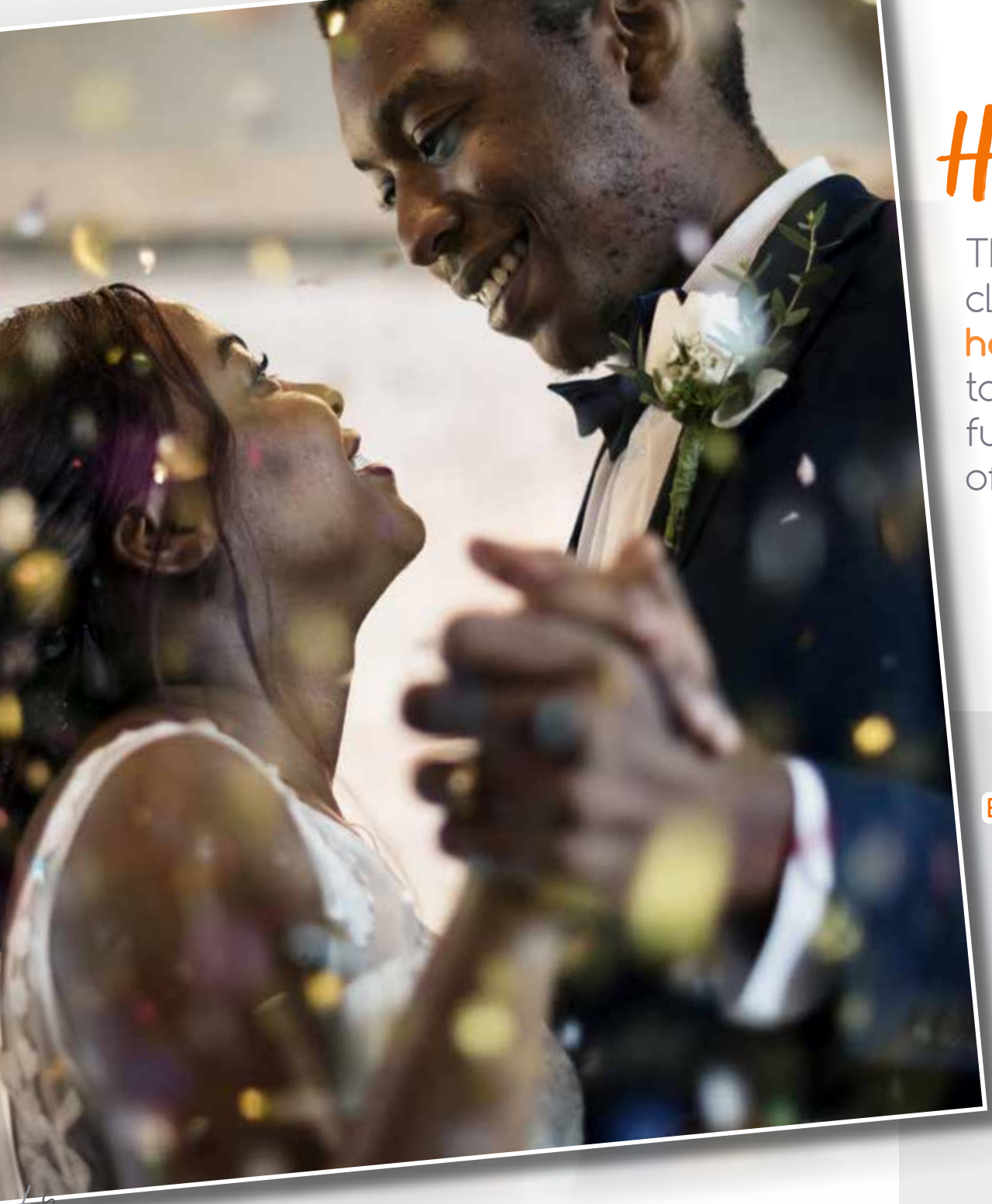
But believers on the Lord Jesus have the priceless privilege of raising their families according to His will, and the opportunity to be a witness in this practical way to the blessing of knowing the Savior.

But Christian families are not always what they should be. And what else can we expect if the Lord Jesus and His things are not central to them? Parents and children face many pressures and problems that can harm healthy family life, but we ourselves put it at risk if we let in or bring in the flesh or the world, or fail to discipline in a wise and loving way.

The purpose of this booklet is not to criticise but to focus on the principles of Scripture that guide us and the practical examples in its pages that can help us overcome the challenges that have threatened families in every age, but especially today.

Some of us are not parents but all of us have been children.

May we give practical and prayerful support to families among God's people with the desire that they add to and help on the testimony of our Lord in the days that remain before He returns.



Husband and Wife

The relationships of our domestic circle should **express and reflect our heavenly relationships,** but this will only take place as we enter into a deep and fuller realisation of them in the power of an ungrieved Spirit.

Thus, throughout the epistles of the Apostle Paul, the Holy Spirit first sets before us the full truth of our heavenly relationships, blessings and position. Then, as flowing from these, our earthly relationships are set forth and our responsibility and related duties are fully dealt with.

Enjoying our heavenly relationships

To the extent that we are at home in the blessings of our heavenly relationships up there, and hold Christ as Head, shall we fill our place in our respective relationships down here. Those who do not enjoy these heavenly truths will not shine in a Christian home here below.

If the head of a Christian family does not know how to behave as the head of the household and as a husband, he shows that he does not hold the Head above or appreciate the love of Christ for His church.

If a wife does not realize how the church is to be subject to Christ and does not enjoy her blessed relationship to Christ as part of His bride, she will fail in this happy relationship to her husband and in subjection to him. This is likewise true in the relationship of parents and children.

In this light then, let us consider the most important and most intimate of all family relationships — that of husband and wife.

It is the basic relationship of the home, upon which all other relationships depend. It is the first human relationship that God gave mankind and is most blessed and sacred.

Turning to that wonderful epistle to the Ephesians, where our heavenly and corresponding earthly relationships are so fully expounded, we read the divine, comprehensive instructions as to this blessed relationship of husband and wife. After the truth of Christ and His church is beautifully elucidated, and practical exhortations given as to walking worthy of our heavenly calling, this relationship is taken up in chapter 5:22–33 under the wonderful type of Christ and the church:

> 'Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her ... So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church ... Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.' (Eph. 5:22–33)

Keys to a happy marriage

The verses above do not give the sum total of matrimonial injunctions, but that which husband and wife are most prone to forget and fail in. The essential characteristics of their relationship to each other are taken up and insisted upon for the true maintenance of the God-given union according to the thoughts and purposes of God.

That which should characterize the relationship of the wife to her husband is submission to her God-given head, while love should mark the husband's care for his wife.

These two things

—

the husband loving his wife, and the wife reverencing and submitting to her husband

—

are the two essential pillars upon which true matrimonial peace and happiness depend.

God, who knows the human heart perfectly, knew what husbands and wives would fail most in, and what is contrary to our natural inclinations. Therefore, in divine wisdom and in wonderfully concise sentences He has given just what each partner in this blessed union needs to cultivate most.

Wives

It is natural for a woman to love — affection is deeply and strongly implanted in her bosom — therefore, she does not need to be especially told to love her husband. However, she is apt to forget to be submissive to him as unto the Lord and seek to rule instead. Like Eve, she is liable to forget her place and take the lead, and fall into sin and disobedience. Thus, it is imperative that she be reminded to reverence her husband, and consult and submit to him as her head.

Submission as unto the Lord

This submission of the wife unto her husband is to be 'as to the Lord'.

The Lord is brought in as the one from whom her husband's authority is derived. She is to recognize the Lord behind her husband as the directing, governing authority in family life, and to remember that, as 'the head of the woman is man', so the 'head of every man is Christ' (1 Cor. 11:3). Thus, the godly decisions of the husband will express the will of the Lord for her, and to these she should render cheerful and willing submission.

Her submission is not to be measured by the character of the husband. However trying her position may be, if united to a weak, unreasonable, or ungodly husband, her duty is not to be measured by the worth or wisdom of the man, but by the will of the Lord. Whatever the man may be, he is her husband, and she submits to him 'as to the Lord'. But this phrase also marks the limits of her submission. Whenever submission to her husband conflicts with the higher authority of the Lord and His expressed will in His Word, it must cease. The Lord must be obeyed rather than man, though it may result in suffering as a consequence.

In our modern world, feminine submission is unpopular and unfashionable. Women demand liberty and equal rights with men, yet the subjection of the wife to her husband is the express command of God, and the Christian wife is exhorted to practice it. Without subjection, there can be no true home-life of joy and blessing. When God's order is violated, sorrow and chaos result, as is seen in many homes today.

It is not a question of man's superiority or woman's inferiority, but of God's order and will. A woman who assumes the headship of the house, to the contempt of her husband, is unhappy and wretched. She will undoubtedly reap the bitter fruits of her own rebellion in the lawlessness of her children brought up in such disorder.

Finally, the wife is to remember that in her submission unto her husband she is a type and reflection of the church's subjection unto Christ, its Head. How this should stir up the heart to shine more for the Lord in the daily sphere of domestic life.

Husbands

The thing which the Holy Spirit has recorded as the most needful duty of the husband in maintaining a happy home-life is to love, nourish and cherish his wife as Christ loves, nourishes and cherishes the church. The wonderful love of Christ for the church — in its past, present and future activities — is to be the model for the husband's relation to his wife and the character of his affectionate care for her.

Man's nature is not in general as tender and loving as woman's, and as he may be more exposed to the roughness and coldness of an evil world in his daily employment, the husband is liable to be harsh and ungracious and forget to act in loving grace towards his wife and family. Therefore, he must be constantly careful to cultivate this affectionate love towards his wife, and to remember that he is to reflect thus the love of Christ to the church. For this there is available the abundant power of the Holy Spirit, which can lift one above the failures and tendencies of fallen nature.

Exercising authority in love

Husbands may think and make much of their position and rights as the head of the household and the wife, and act with authority, forgetting that love should characterize the matrimonial circle. While authority in matters pertaining to the marriage circle is invested in the husband,

he must ever remember that he is to exercise that authority in loving grace.

He should give expression to his judgments in terms of love and endearment suited to one who is a channel of the divine will. The real unity of married life will thus be manifested in a blending of authority and affection. The authority of the husband will then be shown in love, and the obedience of the wife will be spurred on by her affection and reverence for him.

To quote the fine words of another: 'He helps her, first of all, in her spiritual life, in the exercise of worship and prayer and service. He lightens her labors in the home, shoulders her burdens of responsibility, shields her from anxieties and fears, comforts her in hours of sorrow, and ministers help to her weakness without telling her so. Neither will he forget to note her acts of devotion to himself in response to his love, nor to praise her many excellencies, as the Scripture enjoins' (see Prov. 31:28–29).

Of course, every devoted wife will also realize that she is given to her husband to be his 'helpmeet' and to labor for his interests, as he also cares for her welfare. She will seek to 'please her husband' (1 Cor. 7:34) and be a true companion and help to him, especially in the Lord's interests. Love delights to serve, while self likes to be served.

Happy is the home where love both rules and obeys!

Christ's two-fold love is the model

The passage in Ephesians 5 sets before the husband the love of Christ for the church in a two-fold way. Firstly, Christ gave Himself for the church, and secondly, He devotedly cares for His bride, as manifested in His present service of sanctifying and cleansing her with the washing of water by the Word. Guided by this lofty standard of Christ's self-sacrificing love and devoted care, the conscientious and godly husband will seek to practice the love of entire self-surrender in order to secure his wife's highest welfare. He will be concerned in everyday matters how he may please his wife rather than himself and manifest a continual care for the wellbeing of his wife. The happiness of the one who has confided her earthly all to him should be the husband's chief concern, in submission to the Lord.

In true mutual love, self-rights are forgotten; each one thinks of the other.

Given to be with man

Adam recognized that Eve was given to him, not as a slave, servant or helper, but 'to be with him' (Gen. 3:12) as a 'helpmeet'. As has often been remarked, God did not make Eve out of Adam's foot that she should be trampled upon by him or be inferior to him, neither did He make her from Adam's head that she should be above him and rule. Rather, He made her from his side, indicating that she was to be on an equality with him, under his arm to be protected by him, and near his heart to be loved by him.

Furthermore, when God created man, 'male and female He created them', His expressed purpose was, 'Let them have dominion' over all creation (Gen. 1:26–28). It was God's mind that Eve should be associated with Adam in this place of dominion, and every true husband will act accordingly and think of his wife as one with him in whatever rank or position he enjoys. He will also desire her presence with him whenever possible. Likewise, she will be considered worthy of admittance to all the counsels and secrets of his heart.

'That your prayers be not hindered'

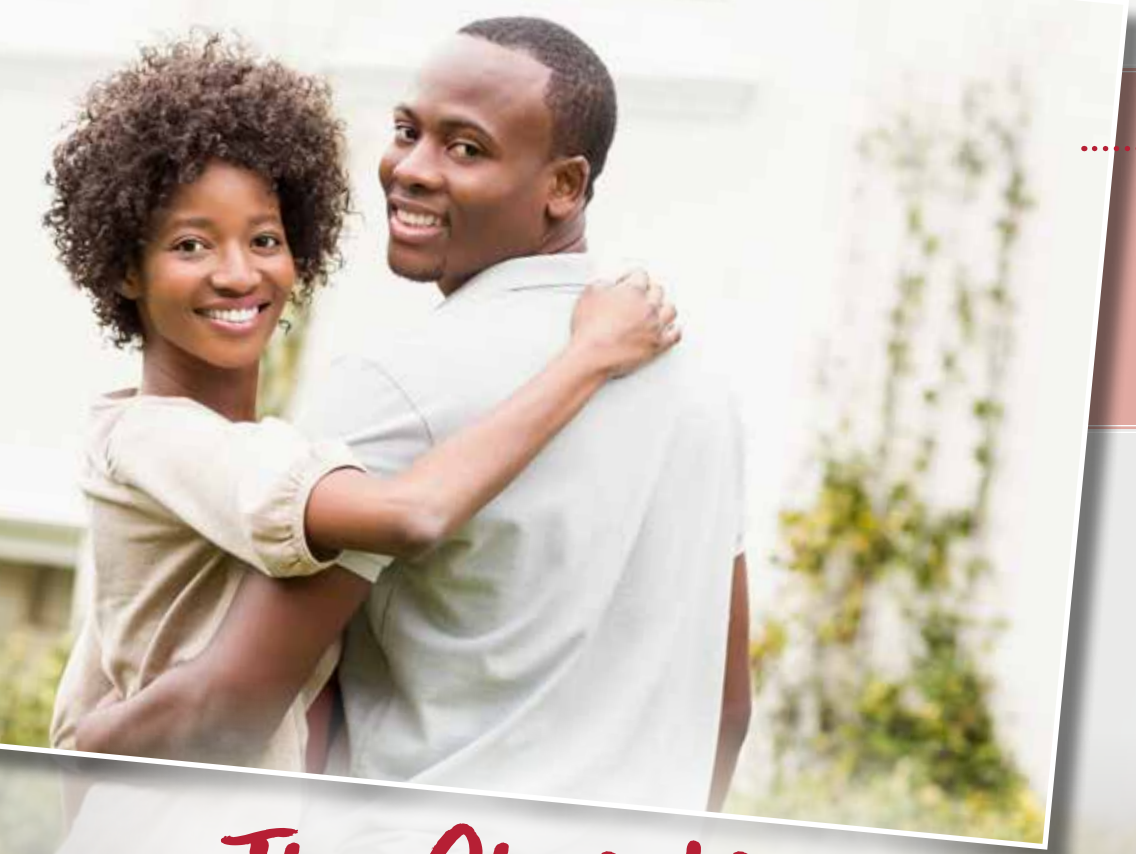
In 1 Peter 3:7 husbands are exhorted to dwell with their wives 'with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered.' Happy relationships between husband and wife are not only necessary for domestic joy and peace, but also for effective, joint prayers of the united couple, which are so essential for a happy married life and the maintenance of a bright Christian home for the Lord. When unhappy feelings exist between husband and wife, the Spirit is grieved, their joint prayer life is hindered, and heaven's blessings are withheld, to their great loss.

In closing this article, we would give to each husband and wife the following motto:

'Each for the other and both for God'

Give the Lord the whole place in the heart and each other the place which the Word of God assigns and live unitedly for the Lord's glory and His interests, and all will be well.

R K Campbell



The Christian at Home

Ephesians 5:22–6:9

The family is especially dealt with in the epistles which treat of the church. Those epistles which take up church order and rule take up also the order and rule of the family; and those epistles which show the church as the body of Christ show also how this relationship, and the principles it involves, affect the family life.

Family relationships were instituted by God in Eden, and confirmed after the fall. Christianity does not change their outward character but infuses into them new and divine principles. The husband is the responsible head of the house, and the mutual obligation subsisting between him and his wife, his children, and others who may also be part of it is the subject of the portion now before us. The question is not one of rights on either side, but rather of the way in which each, as having the life of Christ, should exhibit this in his conduct towards the other.

'Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything.' (Eph. 5:22–24)

Part of the curse pronounced on the woman at the fall was:

'Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.' (Gen. 3:16)

Christianity confirms this order, but so remodels it that all trace of the curse disappears. The subjection of the believer to the Lord, or of the church to Christ, is no curse or bondage, and these are now the models of wifely subjection; for she is to be subject unto her own husband 'as to the Lord', and 'as the church is subject to Christ'. How beautiful to see a human relationship, and one too which derives a part of its character from the fall, thus transformed into a type of the mystery in which God displays His 'manifold wisdom' unto 'the principalities and powers in the heavenly places' (Eph. 3:10).

Here, though natural affection is owned, a far higher order of love is brought in so that the earthly relationship is re-cast, as it were, in a heavenly mould. The past, present, and future love of Christ to the church are all made to bear on the duty of the husband to his wife. And how beautiful the unfolding of this love is!

The subject is expanded in dealing with the other side.

'Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.' (Eph. 5:25–27)

Christ loved the church — not only saints, but the church — and gave Himself for it.

It was the 'pearl of great price' (Matt. 13:46) for which He sold all that He had. Now He watches over it, cleansing it from defilement by the application of His Word. Soon He will present it to Himself in His own beauty, 'prepared as a bride adorned for her husband' (Rev. 21:2), the object of His own eternal delight.

And here the order of creation is brought in, and made to blend, as it were, with that love of Christ of which it furnishes so beautiful a type.

'So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church. For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh."' (Eph. 5:28–31)

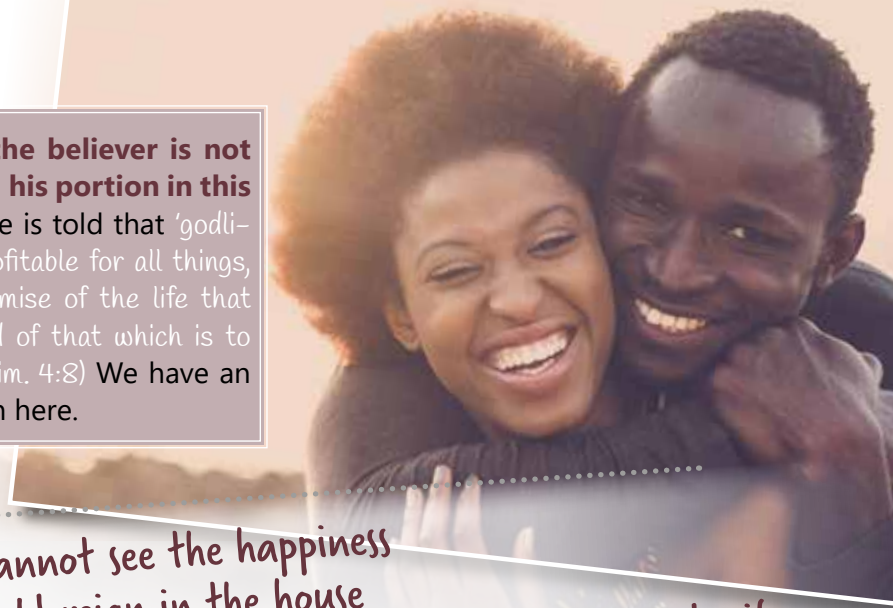
The peculiar mode of Eve's creation out of Adam both gives marriage a special sanctity, so that the wife is to be cherished as a part of the husband's own being, and furnishes an exquisite type of Christ's relationship with the church.

As Adam was not complete without Eve, so Christ, though Head over all, is not complete without the church, 'the fulness [or completion] of Him who fills all in all' (Eph. 1:23). As Adam fell into a deep sleep, so Christ went into death. As Eve was formed out of Adam, so the church is quickened with Christ, and has His own life. As Adam acknowledged Eve to be bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh, so does Christ acknowledge the church. As Adam was bound to care for and cleave to the woman thus formed out of himself, so Christ delights in nourishing and cherishing the church, which is His own body. How wonderfully all, that belongs to this divinely instituted relationship, is raised by being thus linked up with the tender, watchful love of Christ over the church!

This, of course, is the grand subject, and therefore the apostle writes: 'This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church.' Still the relationship of husband and wife is also in his view, so he adds,

> 'Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.' (Eph. 5:32–33)

Though the believer is not promised his portion in this life, yet he is told that 'godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come.' (1 Tim. 4:8) We have an illustration here.



Who cannot see the happiness
that would reign in the house
where the relationship of husband and wife
was formed on the godly model here furnished?

The subjection of children to their parents is part of God's order as seen in nature; and under the law a special blessing was attached to the observance of the commandment in which this duty was enjoined. Christianity takes up the obligation but transplants it from natural to divine ground.

> 'Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. "Honor your father and mother," which is the first commandment with promise: "that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth."' (Eph. 6:1–3)

Thus, the obligation of children, as of wives, is connected with 'the Lord'. It is not merely the dictate of nature, though perfectly right, but the acknowledgment of the Lord's claims as represented in the parents. The blessed Lord Himself, who 'learned obedience' (Heb. 5:8), was the beautiful example of this. Of Him in His lifetime it is recorded that He went with His parents 'to Nazareth, and was subject to them' (Luke 2:51).

The law is not here introduced as showing that believers are under it, but as proving the special value which God attached to this duty, so as even to depart from the ordinary character of law, by coupling it with a promise which makes known the connection between this duty and earthly blessing.

But the duty is not one-sided. The apostle adds, 'And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.' (Eph. 6:4)

Both parents are to be obeyed, but this admonition is addressed only to the fathers. This may be partly because fathers are more likely to err in the provoking of their children to wrath than mothers; but the principal reason is that the father, as the head of the house, is responsible to God for the bringing up of the children, and he is treated on the ground of this responsibility.

This principle, as seen in Eli's case, runs throughout Scripture. It is all the more solemn because under Christianity the children are already holy, as belonging to the house of God; and the obligation is therefore the greater to 'bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.' The Israelites were holy by birth — not personally, but as belonging to a nation set apart to God — and therefore the fathers were to instruct the children in the law, their then link with God.

So Christian parents are to instruct their children as to what becomes the holy character which attaches to them as members of a Christian family.

T B Baines

A New Family, A New Household

'Therefore a man shall **leave** his father and mother and **be joined to his wife'**
(Gen. 2:24)

Children, as opposed to adults, are instructed: 'obey your parents in the Lord' (Eph. 6:1), but in marriage such obedience is past. Although there never is a time when we are not to 'honor' our parents (v. 2), marriage brings an end to their daily influence and control over our lives.

On the part of either partner in the new marriage, there is to be no 'running home to Mama or Papa'. We surely can and ought to seek their advice, for they love their children and have had years of wisdom through often hard experience, which we can profit from. But the meddling mother-in-law would not be such a joke in this world if it were not so true. Christian parents need to realize that God intends them to let go of their married children.

Those children are no longer part of the parents' household. A new household, a new family unit has begun.

This does not necessarily mean a geographical leaving. There might be no more physical distance than the next block, the next house or the next apartment. But however near or far the physical separation is, there must be a mental separation that allows the new family unit to function independently of the original parental family units.

A very important point in all this discussion of a new household being formed is that it requires a certain level of both maturity and resources on the part of the young couple to really be a new family unit on a long-term basis. 'Love' does not solve all the problems of that new household, especially when one or both new partners are not mature enough to function successfully without their parents, or when they find that because of lack of education or not having learned a trade, a decent, reasonably paying job is not available and they can hardly afford to eat. Two cannot live as cheaply as one!

Many marriages are seriously crippled right at this point, whereas a few years' wait for a little more maturity and sufficient education and/or training, so there would be a good prospect for a decent job, would have greatly strengthened the long-term outlook for a happy marriage. As society becomes more technologically advanced, the need for training and schooling is increasing rapidly! And the need for a reasonably paying job becomes even more critical when children arrive. We certainly need the Lord's daily direction in these things, and the time to be thinking about them is long before we say, 'I do'.

'Trust in the LORD with all your heart,
and lean not on your own understanding;
in all your ways acknowledge Him,
and He shall direct your paths.' (Prov. 3:5–6)

Each new partner of that new family unit needs to realize that his/her mate comes absolutely first over any parent, relative or friend, and even children, although neither partner will want to neglect the children in any way.

Only the Lord should have a greater place. The husband and wife relationship is the primary human relationship established by God.

However, if things are right spiritually in the life of each partner — something that needs to be known before marriage — then each will want to put God first and the new family unit will work together towards that end.

In relation to honoring our father and mother, young families have to be careful not to desert their parents or to fail to care for them in their need, just as those parents cared for them in their many needs of childhood. The ideal situation for parents and married children is to have mutual and practical love, care and respect, with each helping the other, but with all seeking to carefully maintain the independency of each family unit. There is a big difference between meddling parents and mutual care and concern for each other.

Inseparable

The child-parent unit is temporary, but the husband-wife unit is as long as both shall live (see Rom. 7:2–3). The words translated in the verses above as 'cleave', 'joined' and 'united' have the idea of adhered or glued together. Those who formerly were two are now seen as one, like the various layers of exterior plywood which are permanently glued together to form one strong, permanent whole. Just as the sheet of plywood is much stronger than the sum of its individual layers.

'... and shall be joined [cleave/cling] to his wife, and they shall become one flesh' (Gen. 2:24). '... and shall be joined [or united] to his wife' (Eph. 5:31). 'So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate' (Matt. 19:6).

So the two partners
in a godly marriage are to act as one unit
with each partner strengthening the other.
Each is to be the other's counterpart —
physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually —
to fill the needs of, and to round out the other (see Gen. 2:18).

When Genesis 2:24 says 'they shall become one flesh', many believe this only speaks of the sexual union of the new husband and wife. I think not. The sexual union is called becoming 'one body' (1 Cor. 6:16). Rather 'one flesh' is the same as saying 'one person'.

The two are to become as one. This takes effort and time because for many years previously the two new partners looked out mainly for themselves. He had his money, she had hers; he had his goals, she had hers; he had his interests, she had hers; etc. Then came marriage. Suddenly, the thoughts, motives, actions, resources and feelings of the new husband and wife need to be directed towards the mutual good of the new family unit. In God's plan it is no longer my interests and your interests, my money which I earn and your money which you earn, but our interests and our money. To easily make this all-important transition, there needs to be considerable mental training before marriage as well as hard work after marriage, to work towards the goal of a true one-flesh relationship.

We are spirit, soul and body. When we become one with our spouse, these three parts unite. When there is spiritual unity, the emotional unity will follow. And in marriage the one-body sexual union will express the fullness of being one flesh, one person. How can there be divorce when the two have become one? God says He counts them as one, so 'what God has joined together, let not man' — not even the couple themselves — 'separate'. In practice this one-flesh relationship calls for carefully maintaining God's roles for the sexes. Otherwise, friction can easily result, creating heat, which can cause the 'glue' holding the plywood together to lose its adhesiveness. God-dishonoring results could easily follow.

God's order for the sexes

'Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.' (Gen. 3:16)

God's order for the sexes is partly due to the fall in the garden of Eden (Gen. 3:1–7). Sin brought in the present position of the man as the loving but God-given ruler over his wife, the one ultimately in charge and answerable to God for the spiritual and physical condition of the family. But His order for the sexes and their respective roles is also based on some beautiful pictures, which God considers very important. He wants the truth of those pictures maintained.

Even though there are dominant male and female features — physically, mentally, emotionally, spiritually — that make the husband and wife each other's counterpart, there is absolutely nothing in Scripture about the male or female being superior or inferior. Neither would be complete without the other (except in rare cases where God has a different plan for the person concerned). But in God's wisdom and to fulfil His pictures of His order in creation, and of marriage in relation to Christ and His church, He has ordained certain roles for each partner. The two pictures can be summarised as follows:

» husband is a picture of Christ; wife is a picture of the church (Eph. 5)

» husband being God's image[1] and glory; wife created as man's helper, the man's glory (1 Cor. 11:7–9; Gen. 2:18).

1 Image has the thought of representation. The man was and is to be God's representative on earth.

The husband's role

'The husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church' (Eph. 5:23). 'I want you to know that ... the head of woman is man' (1 Cor. 11:3).

The husband has the God-given role of headship in the new family unit. Headship involves direction, control and sustenance. Each husband is responsible before God to lovingly control the family unit, to give it godly direction and to sustain it by meeting its needs. He will need the maturity, education, job, Biblical training and right Scriptural practice to do this properly.

The wife's role

Wives are told: 'submit [or subordinate] to your own husbands, as to the Lord ... Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything.' (Eph. 5:22–24; Col. 3:18; 1 Pet. 3:1)

The wife is a picture of the church. The church submits to Christ; it does not presume to teach or usurp authority over Him.

'I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence [or quietness].' (1 Tim. 2:12)

She is never to be loud and abusive to her husband or to other men. This includes in the local gathering.

> But the wife is to 'manage [or rule] the house' (1 Tim. 5:14).

Under the ultimate headship of her husband, she is to be in charge of the house. The house all through Scripture (in spite of the disdain of many so-called 'women's movements') is the wife's special, God-given sphere of operation, and God holds her responsible for it. The husband is to recognize this and generally abide by her decisions in her special sphere. Today, if a wife stays at home and cares for her home, children and husband's interests, she is looked down on as a relic from a past era, one who is unfulfilled.

But in God's eyes,
it is no disgrace
to be a housewife.
In fact,
the opposite is true:
it meets His
highest approval.

There would be far fewer juvenile delinquents if there were not so many latchkey children and so many parental delinquents — delinquent in their care for their children.

Read how the 'woman of worth' of Proverbs 31:10–31 guides and cares for her household and promotes her husband's interests:

> 'Her worth is far above rubies. The heart of her husband safely trusts her; so he will have no lack of gain. She does him good and not evil, all the days of her life … Her children rise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her.' (Prov. 31:10–31)

Note that although her sphere is the home, she is not trapped there. She is free to get out and do the business that promotes the interest of that home, husband and children. It is an exalted position which too few women want today.

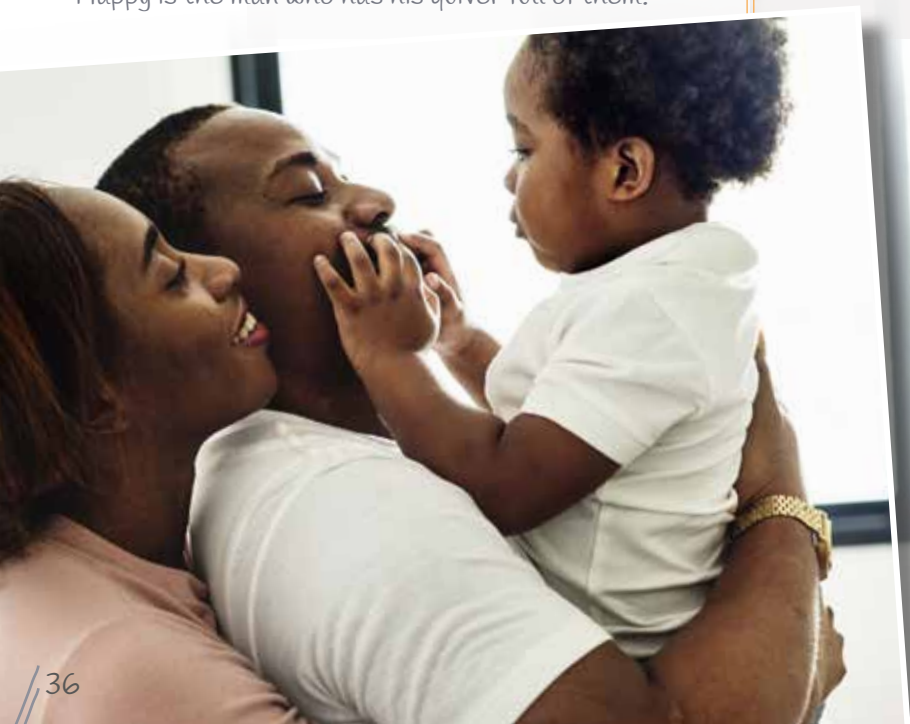
Role reversal

Christian marriage experts say that not sex, not money, but role reversal is the number one cause of Christian families getting into trouble and breaking up. By role reversal, I mean Christian husbands not taking their God-given place as head of their household and/or domineering wives wrongly taking that place of headship, often by refusing to submit to their husbands. So, the God-given roles for husband and wife are a serious matter not to be taken lightly.

'Be fruitful and multiply' (Gen. 1:28)

God's clear intention from the verse above, stated shortly after the creation of Adam and Eve, is that most married couples should have children.

Psalm 127:3–5 says: 'Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD, the fruit of the womb is a reward ... Happy is the man who has his quiver full of them.'



All would agree that bringing up children in the 'training and admonition of the Lord' (Eph. 6:4) is hard work, especially in this evil day, but children, whether the Lord leads to one or a dozen, are a responsibility of marriage — part of that needed maturity.

God says:
'Train up a child in the way he should go ...' (Prov. 22:6).

Training implies being an expert oneself in the way that is proper to go. This means we need to be committed to knowing and practising God's pathway ourselves, and also to be very sure the one who will become our future partner also has that commitment to please God, cost what it may. Now is the time for young unmarried believers to begin their personal training so that they can train their children.

If they do not see a good example in their parents of the way they should go, how can we expect them to go right? They will likely follow our footsteps. Where will those footsteps lead them?

As the old saying goes:

'I can't hear what you say because your actions are speaking so loudly.'

Roger P Daniel

Let the Children Come to Me

The Lord Jesus and our children

'Then they brought little children to Him, that He might touch them; but the disciples rebuked those who brought them. But when Jesus saw it, He was greatly displeased and said to them, "Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God. Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it." And He took them up in His arms, laid His hands on them, and blessed them.' (Mark 10:13–16)

These well-known verses show clearly the high value children have in the eyes of the Lord Jesus. It is His will that our children come to Him, and that we as their parents or grandparents do not hinder them from doing so. There is more than one practical lesson to learn from this.

Well balanced

There are two great dangers for our children, particularly if they are little. We risk highlighting only one and neglecting the other, and consequently drawing wrong conclusions about what is best for them and taking the wrong action to achieve this. One danger is that we neglect our children because we are so absorbed with our own interests that we do not have enough time and concern for them. This might be the greater of the two dangers. The other one, of course, is that we 'worship' our children, and spoil and pamper them so much that our own life is centered on them. We need to be well balanced.

The perfect example

Our children are important, and we should show them affection and have enough time and interest for them (even when they are in their teenage years).

He never rejects them. This should be our attitude towards our children too.

This is clearly seen in the passage from Mark's gospel quoted at the beginning of this article where the Lord Jesus sets the perfect example. We should have His attitude toward our children. We do not know exactly when the children in this incident were brought to Him and why the disciples rebuked those who did so. Maybe it was at the end of a busy day or because the Lord Jesus (the perfect man) was tired. If so, there is a clear instruction for us.

We may also have busy days and perhaps get home late in the afternoon (or evening) and try to get some relaxation before spending time with our children and occupying ourselves with their concerns. The Lord Jesus says, 'Let the little children come to Me'. He loves them and wants them in His presence.

There is a well-known verse in Ezekiel 34:11: 'For thus says the Lord God: "Indeed I Myself will search for My sheep and seek them out.' This is a threefold promise of the good shepherd.

First: 'Indeed I Myself'. In other words, **He promises His presence.** He is near at hand. He is always available, particularly when we need Him. Now, as parents we cannot always be close to our children (we are limited in time and space), but we should at least be available if and when they need us. It is a sad thing if they often hear us say, 'I'm sorry; I can't spare any time for you.'

Second: 'I will ... search for My sheep'. This indicates a **vital and active interest** in His sheep that should also characterize us. We should be interested in our children and their issues and problems. We should have an opened eye and ear for what concerns them. We should have answers to their questions. If not they may get their answers somewhere else and that could be very dangerous.

Are we ready to support them and give them a helping hand?

Third: 'I will ... seek them out'. This describes the **active help** of our heavenly shepherd whenever we are in need. Again, this can be applied to us as parents. There are times when our children not only need us to be available for them and to show interest in them but our active help on their behalf.

Two sides

But of course, there is more to learn. The appeal the Lord Jesus made to bring the children to Him shows clearly that He wants to have our children for Himself. But there is someone else who also wants to have them. Like Pharaoh in the past, the prince of this world tries everything he can to achieve his end. This conflict never stops. How can we be victorious?

If we read the whole passage in Mark 10, we see that there are two sides to the coin, and while we should distinguish them we should never divide them. We find them throughout the Bible. One is our side, and we call it 'responsibility' (because we have to act). The other is the Lord's side, and we call it 'grace' (because He acts without us deserving it). It was the responsibility of those who were in charge of the children to bring them to the Lord ('they brought little children'). It was the grace of the Lord to let them come to Him and take them in His arms.[1]

Let us consider these two sides in more detail:

1 There is a third aspect: the responsibility of the children. They have to make their own decision, which means they can refuse to come to the Lord Jesus. But this is not the focus of this article.

Responsibility

a) What does it mean for us to bring our children to Him?
Let us look at an Old Testament example: Hannah, the mother of Samuel, who said,

> I will wait 'until the child is weaned; then I will take him, that he may appear before the LORD and remain there forever.' (1 Sam. 1:22).

Here we find a mother who brings her child to the Lord. What is her objective? First, that he should appear before Him; second, that he should abide there forever. This is the great objective of all parenting and the upbringing of our children.

First of all, they should appear before the Lord — in other words they should accept Jesus as their Savior and in doing so get to know Him.

Second, they should abide with Him forever — in other words they should accept Him as their Lord, the one they want to follow and serve.

Of course, we should also teach them the 'life skills' they need as they grow up, especially those to do with the way they relate to other people. But the main point is that they acknowledge Jesus as their Savior and Lord.

b) How do we bring them to Him? There are two main elements. The first is that we set them a good example. Generally speaking, children take notice of our actions much more than our words. If they see us following the Lord Jesus and living in daily communion with Him, we create the right preconditions for them to do the same. If instead they realize the opposite is true, and see us living self-centered and hypocritical lives, we hinder them from coming to Him. The second main element is that we start as early as possible to talk to them about Him, and to pray and sing with them. This is the best seed we can sow in their hearts and it is ever more necessary in this age.

Grace

What is the Lord Jesus doing in His wonderful grace? Will He ever reject someone who comes to Him? Never! He receives those who come to Him — be they adults or children. It is touching to see how He does much more than those who brought the children. They wanted Him to touch them. But what did He do? He took them in His arms, laid His hands on them and blessed them. This is what the Lord Jesus is still doing when children are brought to Him. He does *'exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think'* (Eph. 3:20).

a) He takes them in His arms. The arm not only speaks of might and power but also of nearness and affection. If a child lies in the arms of their father or mother, they will hear and feel their heartbeat and know: 'My father/my mother loves me.' If we bring our children to the Lord, we know we have brought them to the one who loves them with an unchanging love.

If they come to Him,
they will know
that He is the best friend
they could ever have.

b) He lays His hands on them. Doing this not only speaks of identification but in the context especially of His protection. His mighty hand will protect them. Our children should know — as we should — that He is mightier than all other influences and powers in this world. There are dangers and we are aware of them, but at the same time they should know that they have the best protection possible.

c) He blesses them, which means to speak well of them and wish what is best for them. As parents we are supposed to wish our children the very best but sad to say we often make mistakes. The Lord never does this. He wants to bless us and give us all that is beneficial for our children and us.

A final encouragement

We are living in a difficult and dangerous time. The Bible calls it 'the last days' (read 2 Tim. 3:1–5). We may ask ourselves, 'How will our children survive?' We may listen to those who say that it is irresponsible to have children today. However, the answer to all this is clear: 'You … have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.' (1 John 4:4). Take the example of Amram and Jochebed, Moses' parents (Exodus 2). They could have argued that it was too dangerous to have a third child, but their faith was living and effective (Heb. 11:23) and they overcame the threat of Pharaoh.

Parents, let us have faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. Let us not forget this: if we live up to our responsibility (despite all our shortcomings) and bring our children to Him (also in prayer), all can be left in His hands. David once said to Abiathar, who was in the greatest of dangers, 'Stay with me; do not fear. For he who seeks my life seeks your life, but with me you shall be safe.' (1 Sam. 22:23)

His arms are there
to hold our children.
His hands are there
to protect them.
He loves them,
and His blessing
is with them.

Ernst-August Bremicker

You and Your House

The question for the Christian parent's conscience really is,

'Am I counting upon God for my house, and ruling my house for God?'

A solemn question, surely; yet, it is to be feared, very few feel its magnitude and power. And here, perhaps, my reader may feel disposed to demand Scripture proof as to our warrant for counting upon God for our houses. I shall, therefore, proceed with Scripture quotations. I give one from the history of Jacob: 'Then God said to Jacob, "Arise, go up to Bethel"' (Gen. 35:1).

This would seem to have been addressed to Jacob personally; but he never thought, for a moment, of disconnecting himself from his family, either as to privilege or responsibility; wherefore it is immediately added:

'And Jacob said to his household and to all who were with him, "Put away the foreign gods that are among you, purify yourselves, and change your garments. Then let us arise and go up to Bethel" (vs. 2–3).

Here we see that a call to Jacob put Jacob's house under responsibility. He was called to go up to God's house, and the question immediately suggested itself to his conscience whether his own house was in a fit condition to respond to such a call.

We now turn to the opening chapters of Exodus, where we find that one of Pharaoh's four objections to the full deliverance and separation of Israel had specific reference to the 'little ones'.

'So Moses and Aaron were brought again to Pharaoh, and he said to them, "Go, serve the LORD your God. Who are the ones that are going?" And Moses said, "We will go with our young and our old; with our sons and our daughters, with our flocks and our herds we will go, for we must hold a feast to the LORD."' (Ex. 10:8–9).

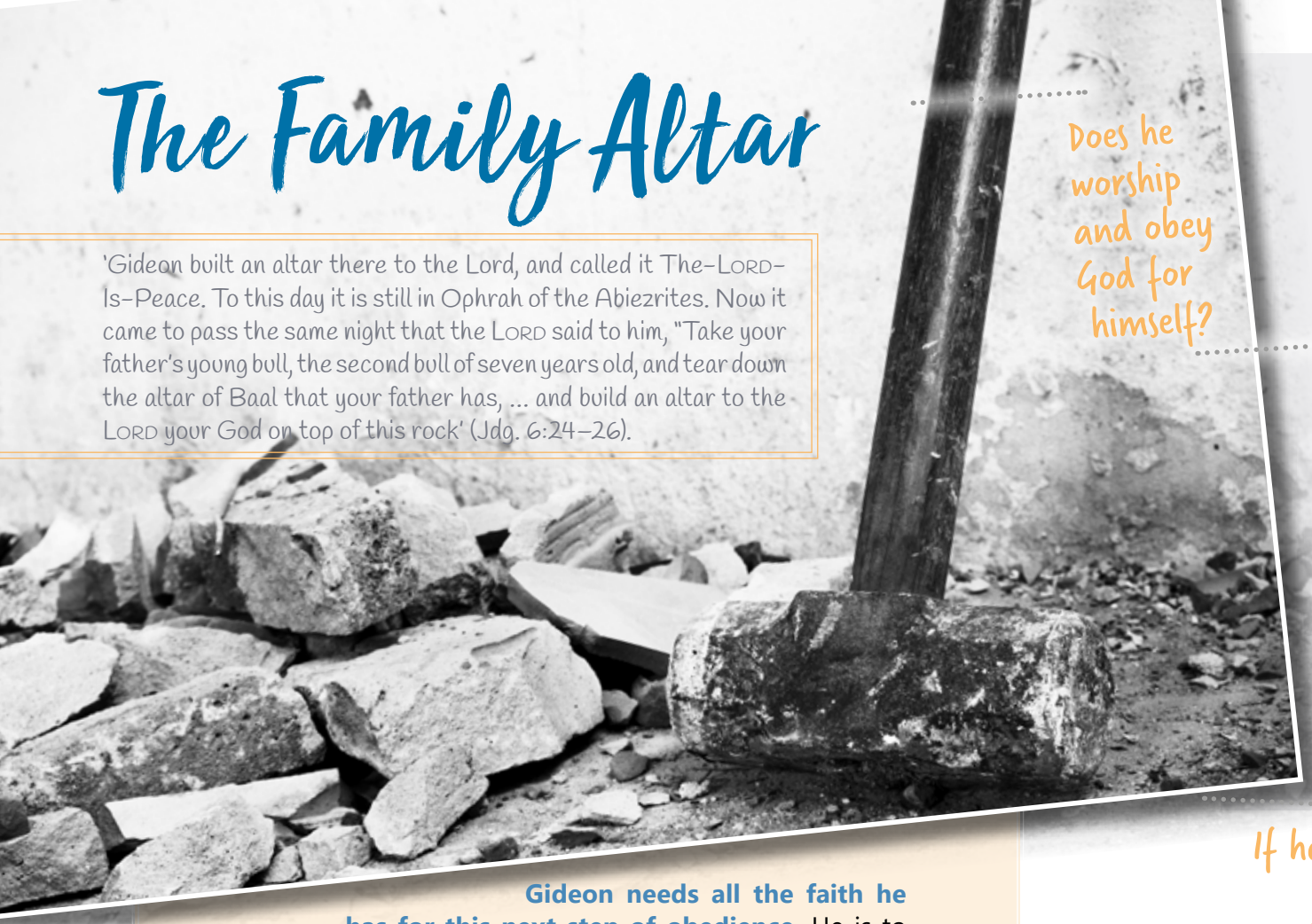
The reason why they should take their little ones and all with them was because they were going to hold a feast unto the Lord. Nature might say, 'Oh! What can these little creatures know about a feast to the Lord? Are you not afraid of making them formalists?' The reply of Moses is simple and decisive: 'We will go with our young ... for we must hold a feast to the LORD.' They had no idea of seeking one thing for themselves and another for their children. They dreamed not of Canaan for themselves and Egypt for their children. How could they taste the manna of the wilderness, or the old corn of the land, while their children were feeding upon the leeks, the onions and the garlic of Egypt? Impossible.

Moses and Aaron understood not such acting. They felt that God's call to them was a call to their little ones; and, moreover, were it not fully carried out, they would no sooner have gone forth from Egypt by one road than their children would draw them back by another. That such would have been the case, Satan was but too well aware, and hence appears the reason of Pharaoh's objection: 'Not so! Go now, you who are men' (v. 11).

C H Mackintosh

The Family Altar

'Gideon built an altar there to the Lord, and called it The-Lord-Is-Peace. To this day it is still in Ophrah of the Abiezrites. Now it came to pass the same night that the Lord said to him, "Take your father's young bull, the second bull of seven years old, and tear down the altar of Baal that your father has, ... and build an altar to the Lord your God on top of this rock' (Jdg. 6:24–26).



Does he worship and obey God for himself?

Gideon needs all the faith he has for this next step of obedience. He is to cast down the altar of Baal belonging to his father, cut down the grove, or column, and offer a bullock upon an altar to the Lord. After all, this is but the natural enlargement of the worship he had just enjoyed (v. 24). God will not share His glory with Baal. One altar or the other must be thrown down. Gideon is to make good his name, 'the cutter down', and to show the vigor of his faith and the reality of his obedience. But what a heart-searching test is applied to him. He is to exalt the Lord in his own home. After his own personal relation with God had been established, we might say, after he had won his victory in private, he is to establish those relations in his own home circle.

Then that same obedience must be claimed for the entire circle of his responsibilities. Is a man going to be a deliverer for all Israel, while his own family is in bondage? Is he to lift up the altar of the Lord for all Israel, and are those who are nearest and dearest to him to bow to Baal?

The circle of divine influence expands from the center.

How many are tempted to invert this order. They may be jealous enough for God's altar for all Israel, and yet have never set it up in their own homes. Apply this very simply to the family altar, as it is called very appropriately. How can one enjoy the privileges of the public altar, in its fulness, who disregards this home altar?

If he is too timid to read the Word of God and pray with his family, how can he expect liberty and blessing in public prayer?

I do not mean to confine it to this one thing, but here, as in many other ways, a single matter shows the general state. But it is no easy matter to erect God's altar on the ruins of Baal's. Many a one who may have boldly confessed Christ in public has shrunk from doing so in the home. But this is the test. It must be done, or there will be no further progress.

Samuel Ridout

The Family
in Psalms 127 and 128

'Unless the LORD builds the house, they labor in vain who build it.' (Ps. 127:1)

Someone who begins a household with the Lord certainly does not build in vain. His children will be 'a heritage from the LORD … a reward' (v. 3). The father will be 'happy' — an expression that is thrice mentioned in these two psalms — insofar as he fears the Lord and walks in His ways.

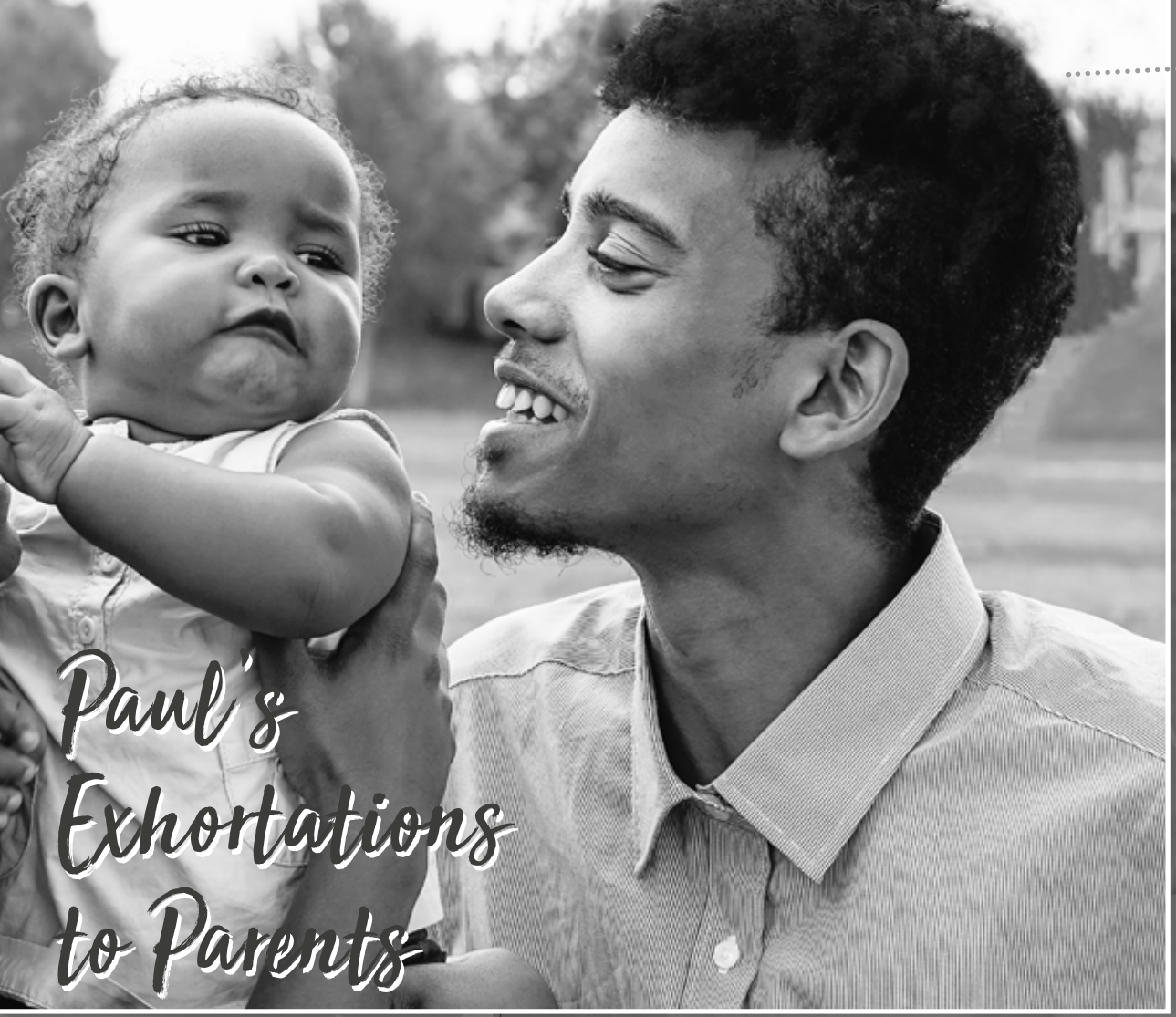
Along with this we read: 'Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine in the very heart of your house; your children like olive plants all around your table.' (Ps. 128:3) Here we have the united family: the wife, the source of joy (the vine); the children like olive trees which produce oil, a picture of the Holy Spirit. God's blessing is there. It comes from Jerusalem (a picture of the assembly). There will be grandchildren there too: 'your children's children' (v. 6). Yes, truly the Lord has built the house here and the father has been a blessing to his entire family.

These psalms emphasize how desirable it is that the family Bible reading be a joy to the children so that they will not, for example, say, 'Can't we just skip it for tonight?' On the contrary, the devotions should be suited to their understanding and thus be interesting so that they happily take part. While the children are still small it is better to limit the devotions to more interesting stories, passing on little by little to more abstract truths, especially those of the New Testament. They can be asked questions appropriate to their age so that they may actively participate. The Old Testament types can lead on to this.

It is not sufficient simply to read a few verses, say a few words, pray, and stop … and the children breathe a sigh of relief! On the contrary, we need to carefully think about what we are doing, even prepare the portion we intend to read, and with the help of the Lord and His Spirit take those thoughts from it that are appropriate for our children, that are for their benefit and joy. How happy is the family that is thus gathered together at the table. The Lord Jesus has said, 'Let the little children come to Me' (Mark 10:14). If we teach them to love the Lord Jesus, they will come to Him. But we can 'hinder' them — not deliberately, of course — by making the Bible reading boring by reading portions or commentaries which at their age they are not yet able to comprehend. And we harm them if we say things that are damaging about some brother, or about their Sunday school teacher, or about a family friend or relative.

Above all, let us awaken the desire in our children to come to the Lord Jesus without setting before them duties that would frighten them off or imposing harsh rules upon them. Let us rather teach them to obey, 'for this is well pleasing to the Lord' (Col. 3:20). In this way, as a child grows up and becomes increasingly responsible, he or she will from the heart want to prove 'what is acceptable to the Lord' (Eph. 5:10).

Georges André



Paul's Exhortations to Parents

Ephesians 6:4 reads: 'And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training [nurture] and admonition of the Lord.'

The Greek word for 'do not provoke' is one that is rarely used (the only other place we find it in the New Testament is in Romans 10:19). The noun formed from it is found in Ephesians 4:26 but nowhere else. There it means 'irritation'; you have been irritated, and the Lord says, 'Let not the sun go down on your irritation.' Perhaps the exhortation to the fathers might be rendered:

'Ye fathers, do not irritate your children.'

How easy it is to irritate them. The word is not as strong as to make them angry. Perhaps it includes the teasing that so often we are tempted to indulge in towards our children. Perhaps we think we have a right to do this, and that it is good for them. On the contrary, it is direct disobedience to the Word of God, and will most surely bring a harvest of sorrow.

We are to 'bring them up'. The word translated in this way is used again in Ephesians 5:29 where we read that Christ 'nourishes' the church. We are not to 'drive' the children but 'bring' them; and what a difference! We are to 'bring them up' in the 'nurture ... of the Lord'. This word translated 'nurture' literally means 'the rearing of a child'. We find it again in 2 Timothy 3:16 where it is translated 'instruction'. There it is the Word of God, the Scriptures, which 'nurture' or instruct us. In Hebrews 12:5, 7, 8 and 11 we find it again, translated this time as 'chastening' or 'chastisement'. This includes the disciplinary actions and other punishments that we are responsible to give our children, and the Scripture tells us that at the time this does not seem to be 'joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.' (Heb. 12:11)

We are disobeying the Lord when we do not chastise our children, as we find when looking at Eli and his sons. But let us bear in mind that to bring our children up in the nurture of the Lord, chastisement is included. This word also includes training, learning, instruction, discipline — each one is most important for the child in its own way, and all included in 'nurture'.

But there is another word. We are to bring them up in the 'nurture and admonition of the Lord'. The word 'admonition' literally means 'putting in mind'. Perhaps most children are forgetful, and part of their training is to put them in mind. What patience is needed for this. Maybe the word includes teaching, exhortation, and warning, but surely not threatening. All these we must have but all are to be 'of the Lord'. And let us remember, we are never to irritate them.

We get another little word for the fathers in Colossians 3:21. It is only one line in my Greek Testament but how much is found in that one line! 'Fathers, do not provoke (stir up) your children, lest they become discouraged.' The word for 'stir up' (or 'provoke') is found also in 2 Corinthians 9:2; not elsewhere in the New Testament. God our Father is the God of all encouragement, and we are not to do anything that will dishearten, or discourage, our children.

Our character towards them is to be the same
as our Father's character towards us: encouragement.
May the Lord Himself teach us
how to do this according to His will:
to imitate (literally: mimic) Him (see Eph. 5:1).

Some of us, with whom the opportunity to heed these admonitions is passed, look back with bitter regret on times we have failed to give heed to them. May the dear ones for whom these lines were penned forgive these failures toward them, and may they never have such regrets, as they grow older.

Though there does not seem to be any special admonition to the mothers, there is a most important message to the young women and it is clear this message includes the young mothers. The apostle is telling Titus of the duties of the older women, and part of this duty is to 'teach' or 'admonish' the young women (Titus 2:4). It is a remarkable word, used only here in the New Testament. It literally means to 'recall one to his senses'. Very similar words are used in three other places in this chapter and translated 'discreet' or 'sober'. Well, the older women are to 'admonish [or teach] the young women to love [or to be attached] to their husbands, to love [or to be attached] to their children, to be discreet, chaste [or pure, undefiled], homemakers [literally: keepers/workers at home – a very much needed word today when there is a special temptation to work away from home], good, obidient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed.' (vs. 4–5).

G C Willis

Wanting the Best for our Children

'Then Naomi her mother-in-law said to her, "My daughter, shall I not seek security [rest] for you, that it may be well with you?' (Ruth 3:1)

In wishing for rest for her daughter-in-law, Naomi sets parents a commendable example. In the turmoil and uncertainty of present day life our children need to be made aware of the security of faith in Christ. All too often Christian parents seek their children's security only in earthly things such as success in this world, and neglect what is spiritual. Yet everything on earth that does not concur with God's mind is insecure, however convinced man may be of supposedly stable conditions here below. Young people's faith must be progressively fortified from their earliest years into adulthood, when they become responsible for their own life, so that they learn to rely fully on the Lord and His guidance. That alone ensures perfect rest.

Brian Charles Price

The Christian Family

Some of us have been brought up in a **Christian family,** but have we realized this is a **great blessing?** Believers who have not had this privilege know something of the difficulties and disadvantages that flow from living in a family that does not follow God's Word.

Characteristics that should mark a Christian family

Firstly, a Christian family should be a home. Are our families homes for the parents and the children? Do we look forward to going home? Do we like being there? There are some people who never seem to be at home. Is it because it is characterized by trouble and strife and they cannot wait to get away?

The Lord said in John 14:1–3: 'Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.'

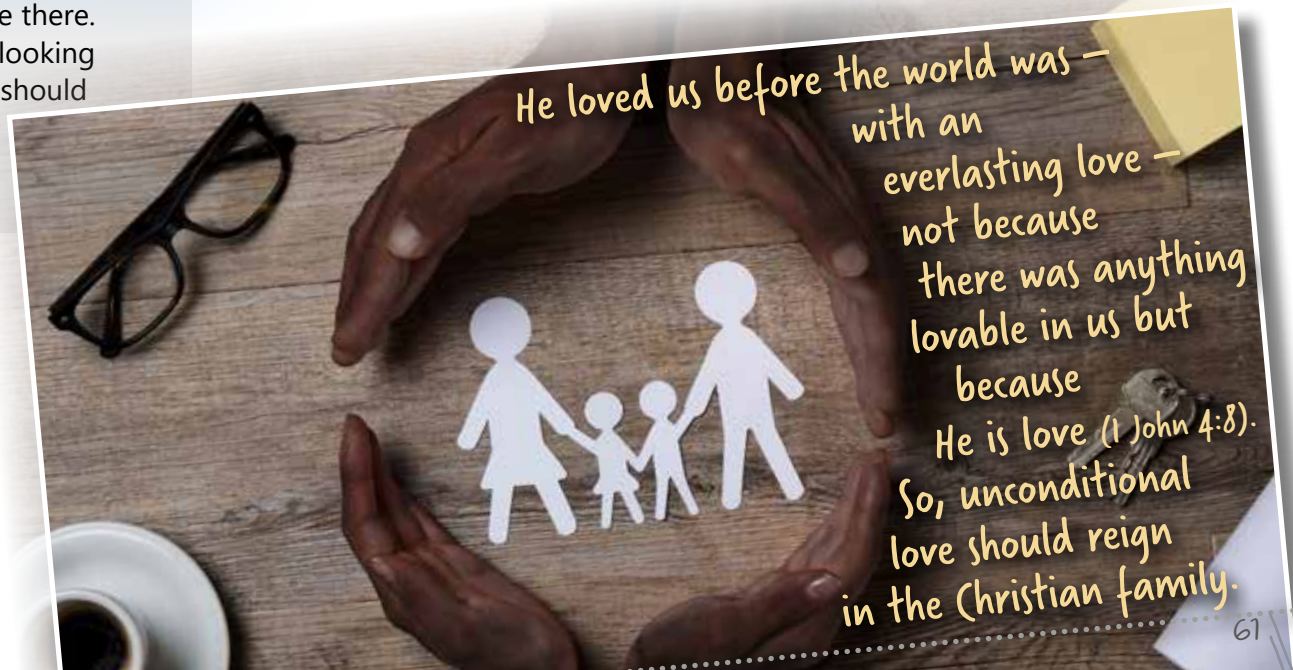
We are strangers and pilgrims in this world — we have no 'continuing city' here (Heb. 13:14) — but once we get to heaven we shall be at home. Why? Because the Father and the Lord Jesus are there. That is what will make it home for us. Are you looking forward to that? This shows us what our families should be now: a home. But if the parents are hardly ever there, will it be home to the children? This is a serious matter to consider.

Secondly, a Christian family should be a place of security and shelter from the world. Or are our homes open to let everything in? It is so easy for the world to come right inside, into our living rooms through the TV, internet ... And if we allow our children to do whatever they like with their mobile phones and other devices we should not be surprised if they take the whole world into their rooms.

Young people, you know what is out there. That is why your parents are responsible to provide you a place of security and shelter. You are exposed enough to all sorts of things in the world, but when you come home you should be secure and sheltered from it. Satan and his world have no access to the Father's house — it is eternally secure.

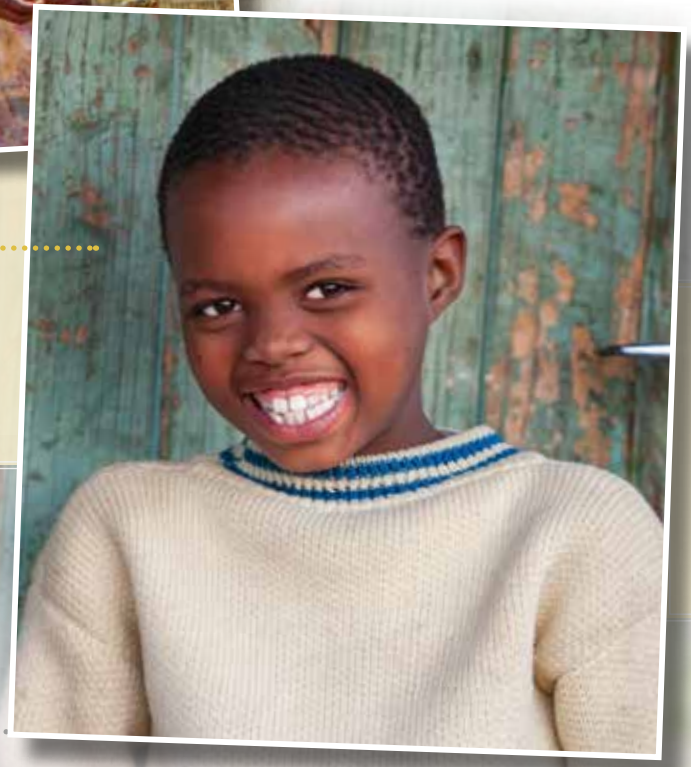
Thirdly, we read in 1 John 3:1: 'Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!' **A Christian family should be a place where unconditional love reigns.** Parents, how do you relate to your children? Do you prefer one over the others because he or she always obeys you? Do you love him or her more than the others? Children sense this kind of difference very quickly. Think of the family in Genesis where the father had a special love for one child and the mother favoured the other (Genesis 25:28). What was the result? Big trouble. Why do you love your children? Because they are well behaved? No, because they are your children.

Why does the Father love you and me?
Because we are His children.



A word for the children

God wants to speak to children personally. So the question is, even for those who are young:



'Do you realize that God can talk to you directly from His Word, the Bible?'

Start reading it early. But He has only one thing to say to you about the family: 'Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right' (Eph. 6:1). We should obey them in three ways:

1. voluntarily
2. immediately, and
3. fully.

It is always very touching to read the story of Joseph. What an example he is for us. He had a very difficult mission. His father said to him, '"Are not your brothers feeding the flock in Shechem? Come, I will send you to them." So he said to him, "Here I am."' (Gen. 37:13)

He knew what his brothers were like — they hated him — but he willingly obeyed his father, just as Abraham obeyed God when He asked him to offer Isaac as a burnt offering and he 'rose early in the morning' to do this (Gen. 22:3). Joseph obeyed immediately and completely. He could have said, 'I went to Shechem but my brothers were not there so I came home.' No, he looked around for them until he found them. He did the whole job, which is what God wants us to do.

The best example of all is the Lord Jesus, the Son of God, who became man. Though perfect, He was 'subject to' His parents, Mary and Joseph, despite their imperfections (Luke 2:51). This is your choice, dear children: you can follow this way of blessing or one that will bring your parents much sorrow.

A word for the parents

In Luke 1:6 we find the wonderful example of Zacharias and Elizabeth: 'they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.' They were a united couple. Firstly, they did what was right in the sight of the Lord. When do we start doing this? Surely, we should do it now, even when we are young. This is not the righteousness of God believers have in the Lord Jesus in virtue of His work on the cross, which we often speak about, but practical righteousness. Do we do what is right in the sight of the Lord on a daily basis? Learning to do so will lead us to become a good example to our children if God grants them to us.

Secondly, Zacharias and Elizabeth walked according to Scripture in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord. To do this, we need to know God's Word as a whole — not just a few favorite verses — and apply it to our lives. We also have to start this early. We cannot leave it until we have children because they will take up our time then.

But as young unmarried people
we are likely to have the time now to study it
so that we are prepared should we have a family.

Thirdly, Zacharias and Elizabeth walked in the fear of the Lord, blameless. That is, they were afraid of doing anything that was displeasing to God. What an example! They did not talk much; they did not have a long sermon prepared for John, their son, to read. No, they walked, which speaks of the life they led, so it is no wonder God selected them to be the parents of the child He had promised so long before.

He would have us learn from this so that our children can live and grow up in a home where both parents walk according to the Scriptures, do what is right before Him, and fear the Lord.

Parents have another very important task. We find a picture of this in Hebrews 11:23: 'By faith Moses, being born, was hid three months by his parents, because they saw the child beautiful; and they did not fear the injunction of the king.' Like Moses' parents, we should make it as difficult as possible for the world to get hold of our children. They realized that if Pharaoh knew about Moses' birth, he would be killed. What did they do? They hid him, but this was not enough. They also had to care for him or he would have started to cry, and this would have been heard. It is one thing to hide our children from the world, but we should also care for them and feed them by bringing them up in the discipline and admonition of the Lord.

There are some parents who cannot wait to get their children out of the home and into the nursery — long before they have to go to school. But this is to expose them to things in this world that are not necessary, and may even be dangerous, for them. However, a day came when Moses' parents could no longer keep him at home, and this is the same for us: our children eventually have to go into the world of education or work. Moses' parents prepared a basket and put him in it, which is a type of the Lord Jesus to whom we can commit our children. He is able to keep them, but do not give them voluntarily to the world. There are many who have done this to their great regret.

A word for the fathers

'And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.' (Eph. 6:4)

Ephesians 6:4 says that we should 'not provoke' our children 'to wrath'. There are three things that can contribute to this.

Firstly, a selfish attitude. If we constantly demand things from our children by saying, 'Do this quickly' or 'Bring me that now', we virtually treat them as slaves. Such selfish behavior can provoke and discourage them, as well as lead them to give up trying to please us.

Secondly, an uncontrolled temper. If, after a hard day at work when everything seems to have gone wrong, our little boy does something silly at home and we explode, he does not know what has hit him. Why? Because he senses when he should be punished but in this case he asks himself, 'What did I do wrong?' He cannot understand why we reacted in this way. We should be mature enough to control our tempers.

God our Father is our perfect example: 'And if you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay here in fear' (1 Pet. 1:17). Fathers should be characterized by two things.

Firstly, they should obtain rather than demand the respect of their families. If we tell our children how they should behave but fail to do this ourselves, we will lose their respect. They will say, 'You do not practice what you preach.'

So, on the one hand there should be respect but on the other there should be trust and confidence.

But this verse also speaks of invoking or calling on the name of the Father, which is to do with the second aspect of the relationship fathers should have with their children. We should maintain an atmosphere of trust and confidence so that they know they can come to us if they have a problem and talk about it. There are fathers who are very rigid so that their children are almost afraid of them — if they make a mistake they know that they are going to be in big trouble. If this is the atmosphere we maintain, they will never come to us because they will be afraid of our reaction.

Thirdly, unreasonable expectations. We cannot expect a two-year-old to do what is normal for a five-year-old. She may try to do it but without success, which will lead her to become frustrated and provoke her to anger. In 1 John 2:12–28 we find three stages of spiritual growth among the children of God: fathers, young men and little children. John addresses them in different ways according to their maturity and experience. So let us be wise and bring up our children according to their age and ability.

Ephesians 6:4 also tells us that it is the responsibility of fathers to bring up their children in the 'training [or discipline] and admonition' of the Lord. Some fathers leave the whole burden of this to their wives, but this is not according to Scripture. We have read the words 'you fathers', so the challenge is:

Be a father and take responsibility for bringing up your children.

There are two elements to this. Firstly, discipline[1]**,** which means to recognize a child's wrongdoing and stop it. There are cases where fathers see their children doing something wrong and do nothing about it (an example of this is in 1 Kings 1:6). Of course, different children have different personalities and we need to adjust our methods to take account of this, using the wisdom the Lord gives us.

1 The King James Version translates the original Greek word as 'nurture'.

Secondly, admonition or exhortation, a completely different matter, which means showing our children the right and good way to act and helping them follow it. We need a balanced approach: some fathers emphasize discipline and forget admonition, while others only admonish and never act. But we also read that these things should be done in 'the Lord'. He is our help, so we need to be dependent on Him.

A word for the mothers

Some women feel they have nothing to do at home — they would rather go out to work — but this list shows how much can be done from home. In the case of a widow who had to bring up her children without the help of her husband and their father, she might do the other things listed as well. No woman should think that she is worthless if she stays at home with her children. Her service for the Lord can be very wide-ranging and a rich blessing for her family as well as the saints.

1 Timothy 5:10 lists some of the qualities of a Christian widow: 'well reported for good works: if she has brought up children, if she has lodged strangers, if she has washed the saints' feet, if she has relieved the afflicted, if she has diligently followed every good work.' What a list!

If we do not see things this way, perhaps we should consider Paul's words to Titus when he tells him to encourage 'the older women' to 'admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed.' (Titus 2:3–5).

Having gone through life and brought up a family, older women have a lot of experience. Do those of us who are older take our responsibility seriously to talk over matters with the younger generation? Perhaps younger sisters might not want older sisters to speak to them in this way, but why repeat the mistakes that others have made in the past? Would it not be wiser to listen to the advice that older women can give us in a godly way?

Notice it says of love that the older women should teach the younger ones to be attached to their husbands first. This order is important because it is never good for the children to occupy such an important place in our affections that they come between wife and husband. No,

it is love to the husband that should come first, and then love to the children

— **it is the same, of course, for the husbands** in respect of loving their wives and their children. But then this scripture says that the younger women should be 'homemakers'. Many women say, 'This does not satisfy me. Why should I stay at home? My career is out there. Why should I give up all the things the world offers me?' This is the spirit of those amongst whom we live. Is the woman's responsibility in the home an old-fashioned thing that only applied in the past or a principle of God that still applies today?

Genesis, the book of beginnings, gives us an example in chapter 18:6 where we read of Abraham's three visitors. We find him outside the tent when they visit, but Sarah is inside because that was her place.

And in Proverbs 31:27, the virtuous woman 'watches over the ways of her household'. How can wives and mothers do this if most of the time they are away from the home? Looking after our children at home involves four things:

Firstly, using our eyes to see what is going on. Why, for example, do the children come home at 6 pm when school ends at 4 pm? If we are not at home ourselves, we may not even know that this is happening. And who are they bringing home with them? What type of friends do they have? If we are at home, we will see these things.

Secondly, using our ears. If we are at home we can hear the language they use and, if necessary, say: 'That kind of language stays outside. You may hear it all day at school or on the street, but we are not going to tolerate it in our home.' And have we ever been in our son or daughter's bedroom and listened to the music they play there? Is that their own business? No, we are responsible for what goes on in our homes. Do we know what music they are downloading? They put on their headphones and we cannot hear a thing. They say, 'I can't do my homework without music', but it would be good to listen to what they are playing and be able to say, if necessary, 'You should not be listening to that kind of music.'

Thirdly, our own conduct is very important. It speaks much louder than all our words. The youngest children follow us everywhere with their eyes and see what we are doing. This means mothers are a tremendous influence on them for good or bad.

Fourthly, by prayer.

What do we do if our children come home in tears because they have had a bad day at school? As we listen to them, we can say, 'Well, let us pray about it together.' In doing this we teach them in a very practical way that they can bring everything to the Lord by prayer and supplication. We show them by our own behavior how they can resolve life's problems. And as we pray with them they will discover what a difference it makes to the problem. But if mothers are never at home, they cannot do any of these things. Someone else might do it, or not do it.

So, looking after the home is not an old-fashioned thing but something God has told us to do for the blessing of our children.

It is not easy to bring up children in a godly way. When those of us who are older parents look back on our lives, we often feel that we have been too hard or too soft with our children. We know that we all make many mistakes, which is why we encourage our younger brethren to learn these principles now rather than leave it to later when they encounter the difficulties we have described but have children already and maybe many other responsibilities to manage. Let us remember that a Christian family should be a home, and a place of security and shelter where unconditional love reigns. As such it is a bulwark against Satan and the world. May the Lord, who is our helper (Heb. 13:6), bless us and our families.

Hansruedi Graf

God's Order in the Home

It should not be forgotten that a large part of our lives is spent in our homes, and that the household therefore is the chief scene of our testimony. In the incessant questioning as to what is the testimony, it might be well to remember that one part of it should certainly be the expression of Christ in the household — Christ in all the various relationships of the household. 'For to me, to live is Christ' (Phil. 1:21). This is the testimony indeed, whether at home, in the church, or in the world.

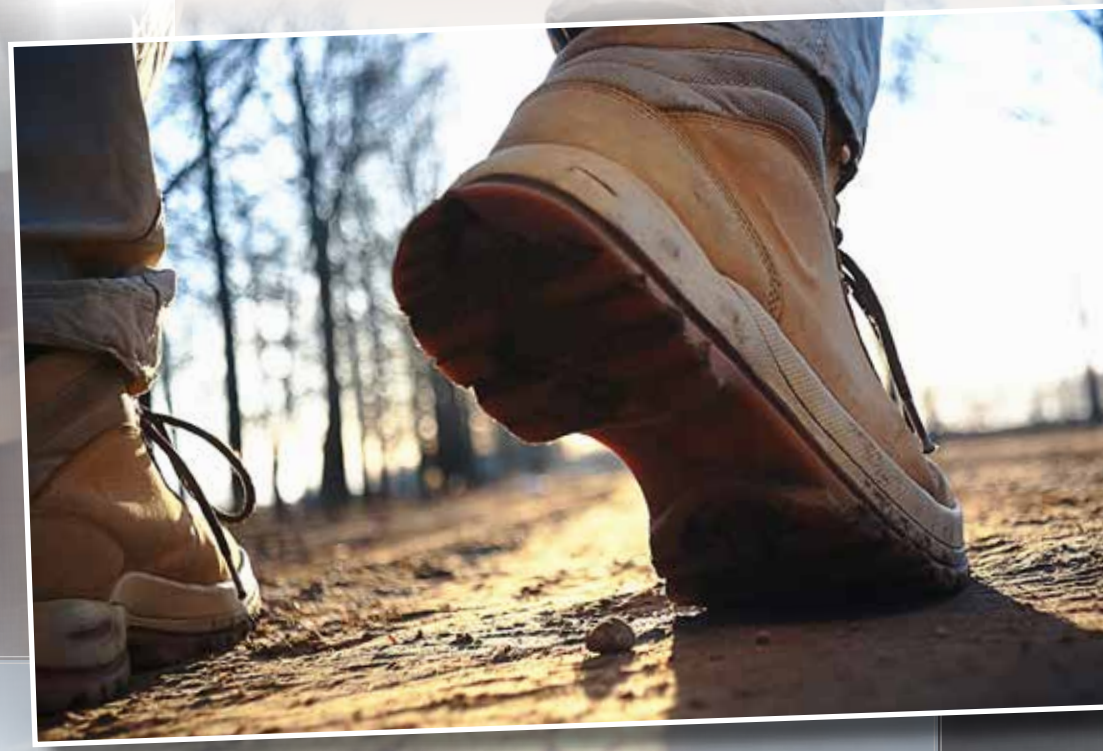
Edward Dennett

Homes and Families in Scripture

Most of us are familiar with the verse of Christian wall art that says: 'Christ is the head of this house, the unseen guest at every meal, the silent listener to every conversation.'

We read: 'The head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man' (1 Cor. 11:3) and: 'Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing to the Lord' (Col. 3:20). This is a sobering matter for every Christian man with a household: whatever the world says, God holds him responsible for what he allows in his home.[1]

1 This was true under the law: see Numbers 30:2–15.



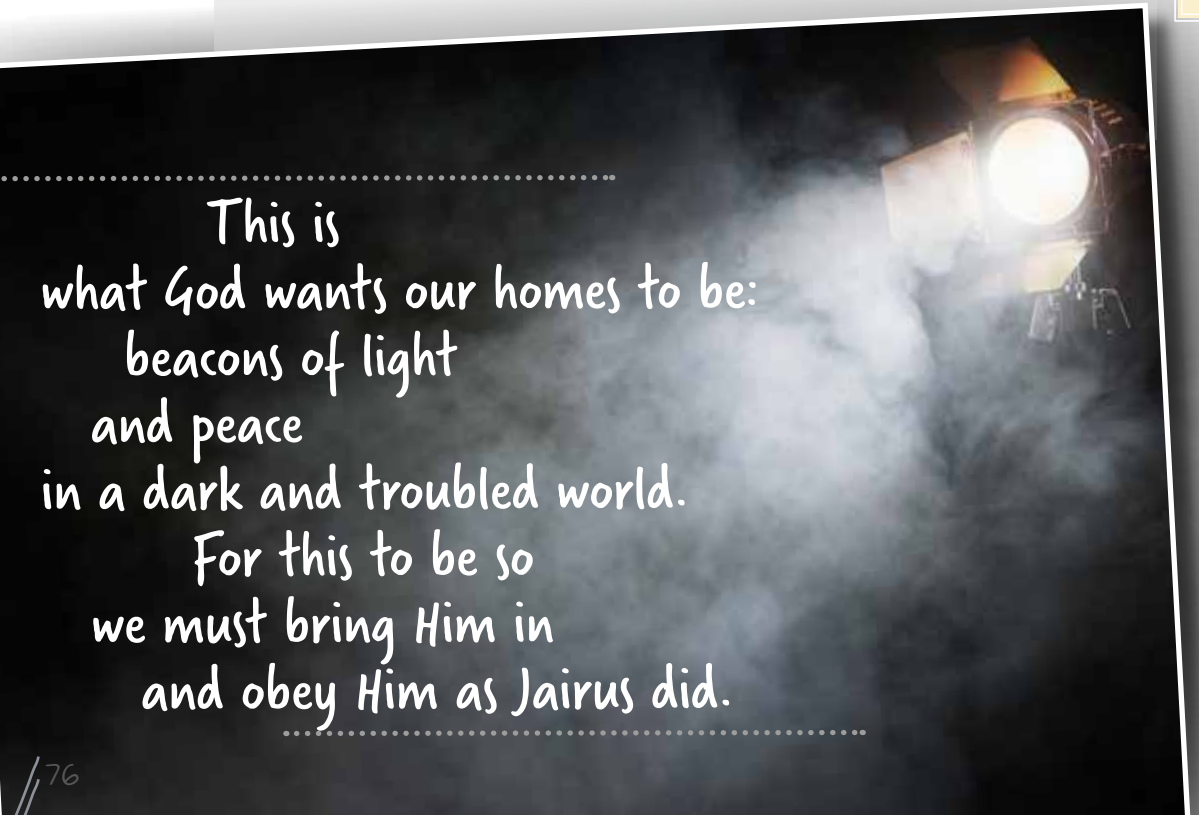
Bringing the Lord Jesus into our homes

And yet it is an immense privilege to lead a Christian home and a wonderful blessing to be part of a family whose parents love and

seek to follow the Lord.

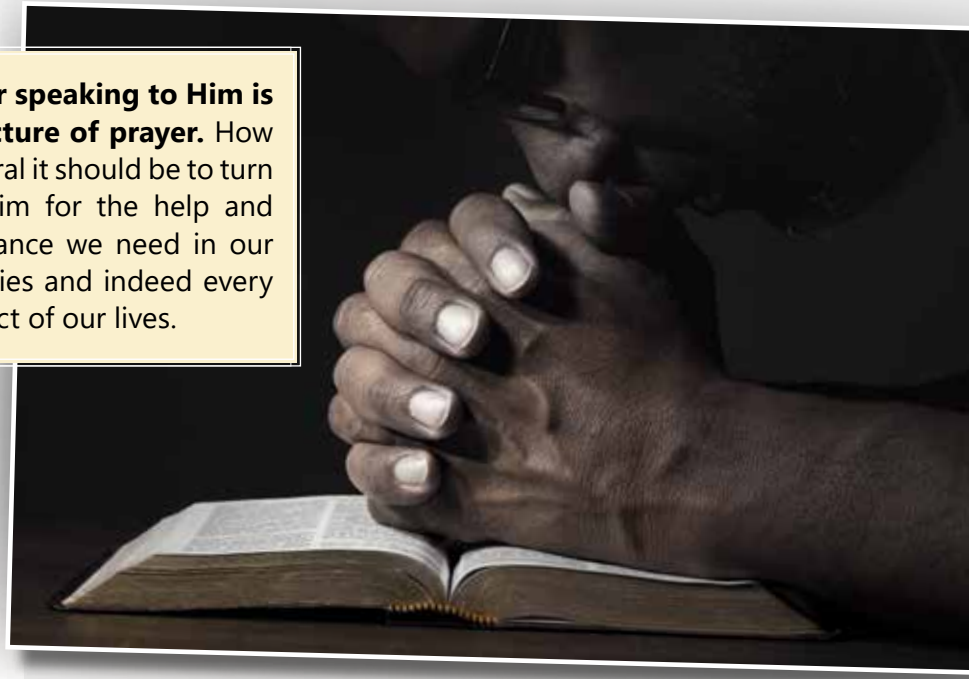
What an advantage we have that we know the one who designed the family unit and can help us put it into practice. Even the best-provided homes in the world around us fall to pieces like Jairus' when something goes wrong.

When the Lord Jesus arrived there to raise his daughter from the dead, He 'saw the flute players and the noisy crowd wailing' (Matt. 9:23). No doubt this was customary in those days, but it was a scene of pandemonium. So many people, things and influences have invaded families today that are alien to what God intends. Certainly, those in Jairus' home derided the Lord for what He said but the ruler of the synagogue was desperate enough to follow His instructions. When the crowd was put out and the Lord went in and took his daughter's hand, she rose up and 'the report of this went out into all that land' (v. 26).



The atmosphere was altogether different in Simon and Andrew's home. When the Lord Jesus arrived from the synagogue to find Simon's mother-in-law lying in a fever, straightway they spoke to Him about her and 'He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up, and immediately the fever left her. And she served them' (Mark 1:30–31). There was urgency but not desperation because the occupants of the home knew the Lord already and confided in Him.

Their speaking to Him is a picture of prayer. How natural it should be to turn to Him for the help and guidance we need in our families and indeed every aspect of our lives.



Many scenes in Luke's gospel are set in homes. The first belongs to Zacharias and Elizabeth and teaches us that a home does not consist in the number of its rooms or the quality of its furnishings but the character of the persons who live there. This couple 'were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless' (Luke 1:6). This meant it was fit to receive the most illustrious guest to ever cross its threshold — before He was born (vs. 39–43). We should note two things in particular:

First, Zacharias and Elizabeth shared the qualities the Holy Spirit enunciates in verse 6 — they were united in their faith in God and their desire to please Him in their lives. **Second,** 'they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and they were both well advanced in years' (v. 7). They had lived with this natural disappointment for a long time and yet their home was still one God could use. May this encourage readers who have not been blessed with children of their own.

Think of other cases in this gospel when people brought the Lord into their homes. 'Levi gave Him a great feast in his own house. And there were a great number of tax collectors and others who sat down with them' (Luke 5:29). This reminds us of the joy that should mark our homes. 'Martha welcomed Him into her house' (Luke 10:38). What blessing this let in for herself, Mary and Lazarus — and the Lord when He was in Bethany. Cleopas and his companion — perhaps his wife — 'constrained Him, saying, "Abide with us"' (Luke 24:29). What a sight they got of the risen Lord at their dinner table in Emmaus! They went back to Jerusalem that evening to share it with the other disciples. Changed people, changed homes.

Later in the gospel we read that Simon the Pharisee begged the Lord Jesus ' to eat with him' (Luke 7:36). The Lord read his thoughts in connection with the woman of the city who ventured inside and stood at His feet. He said to Him, 'Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave Me no water for My feet, but she has washed My feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head. You gave Me no kiss, but this woman has not ceased to kiss My feet since the time I came in. You did not anoint My head with oil, but this woman has anointed My feet with fragrant oil.' (vs 44–47)

He knew Zacchaeus' thoughts too before He looked up and saw him in the sycamore tree but how different the words He spoke to him: 'make haste and come down, for today I must stay at your house.' Zacchaeus' welcome was different too: 'he made haste and came down, and received Him joyfully' (Luke 19:5–6). Here was a seeking sinner, and that made all the difference: Simon's home was still a cold and critical place when the Lord departed; Zacchaeus was filled with warmth and joy by His abiding presence. There is no mention of Zacchaeus having a family; he might have had a wife and children, but Scripture does not say so. This means his story can be read as an encouragement to those of us who are single.[1]

1 See also in this connection the case of John to whom the Lord Jesus committed the care of His mother (John 19:25–27).

We cannot close this part of our meditation without emphasizing the importance of the Word of God in all this. The Lord Himself said of the Scriptures: 'these are they which testify of Me' (John 5:39). When He drew near to Cleopas and his companion on the road to Emmaus, 'He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself' (Luke 24:27). It should be second nature in our homes to read and speak about them on a daily basis. As we do this we get spiritual 'light in [our] dwellings' as was the case with Israel, physically speaking, in Egypt (see Ex. 10:23). To use the Lord's words again, we put it 'on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house' (Matt. 5:15).

Our children

The psalmist declares, 'Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD' (Ps. 127:3). Naturally we love and care for their physical, mental and personal development, but what of their spiritual welfare? Timothy's grandmother Lois and mother Eunice evidently encouraged him to make the Scriptures his own (see 2 Tim. 1:5; 3:15). This was especially important in his case if, as it seems, his father was an unbeliever.

Generally, mothers and fathers have different though complementary roles in bringing up their children.

Paul alludes to this in 1 Thessalonians 2. He writes of himself, Silas and Timothy as being 'gentle among you, just as a nursing mother cherishes her own children. So, affectionately longing for you, we were well pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God, but also our own lives, because you had become dear to us' (vs. 7–8). **This is the character of the mother's part in bringing up children.**

Then he writes, 'we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father does his own children, that you would walk worthy of God' (1 Thess 2:11–12).

This is the father's responsibility. Comparing Hebrews 11:23 and Acts 7:20, we find that parents should support each other in their respective roles: 'By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden three months by his parents, because they saw he was a beautiful child; and they were not afraid of the king's command.' and he 'was brought up in his father's house for three months'. **Let us not fear** the 'king' of gender neutrality as he seeks to overturn God's creation order in western countries **but rather celebrate the different attributes He has given men and women** to enable them to fulfil their roles in creation for His glory and the blessing of our children. And let us never undermine each other in the roles God has given us.

Of course, we must acknowledge there are children who prove very difficult to bring up for all sorts of reasons — some psychological, some physical and some a combination of both. These and the financial problems that confront parents who find it a constant challenge to make ends meet demand our prayers and care. The world has changed, and this has affected children and circumstances so that often family life is hardly recognizable from what it was a few decades ago.

We need to look out for families with young children among the Lord's people, and if necessary be ready and willing to help them in ways that do not condemn them but rather promote their welfare, dignity and spiritual blessing (the need for such practical help may account for the number of references to nurses and maidservants in the Bible). It may be that we can also give advice but let us be sure that it is from the Lord and that we have the necessary information and practical insight to do so, especially when it comes to helping with the relational problems that some families suffer. This surely demands prayer first. May the Lord Jesus give us grace for such service.[1]

1 We should add that the thoughts in this paragraph also apply in cases of difficulty that arise from the care of older relatives (see 1 Tim. 5:3–8).

How good it is when our children turn to the Lord Jesus as their Savior and follow Him as their Lord.

Devoted households

We gladly attribute it to God's grace and yet we as parents do have a responsibility to teach them the terms of the gospel. Noah is an example to every believing father today: 'moved with godly fear' he 'prepared an ark for the saving of his household' (Heb. 11:7). His family not only learned the truth he preached but saw him practice it, and this had a profound effect on them. When no one else in the world took his warnings of judgment seriously, his wife, his sons and their wives accompanied him into the ark and were saved.

In Acts we read that 'Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue' in Corinth 'believed on the Lord with all his household' (Acts 18:8). God loves to save families, as we find several times in Acts (see 16:31). But it is especially encouraging to read the references to households of believers who treasured the things of the Lord and devoted themselves to the interests of His people. Take 'those of Chloe's household' (1 Cor. 1:11) who were so grieved at the divisions in Corinth, they informed the Apostle Paul as the only one they knew who could help resolve the situation. That took some courage because he had to name them in his letter.

Then there is 'the household of Stephanas … the firstfruits of Achaia' who 'devoted themselves to the ministry of the saints. Paul exhorts the Corinthians to be 'submit to such' (1 Cor. 16:15–16). Why? Because they were addicted to the welfare of an even more wonderful family of whom we are all part:

God's family.

In 2 Timothy 1:16–17 the apostle seeks mercy for the 'household of Onesiphorus'. How many times had this family spared its head so he could stay in Rome to refresh Paul? One too many because it seems he was now in trouble for not being 'ashamed of [Paul's] chain' and seeking him out 'very zealously'. Onesiphorus' family had been doing this kind of thing for years because, reading on, we discover he had rendered much service in the past, in Ephesus (v. 18). Now it looked as if they were going to make the supreme sacrifice.

The saints also used their houses for the Lord to great effect. Acts 9:43 tells us that Peter 'stayed many days in Joppa with Simon, a tanner'. Given his host's business it may not have been the most pleasant place to stay but it gave the apostle plenty of opportunity to pray while he enjoyed his brother's hospitality. It was there God sent him the vision of the vessel from heaven filled with creatures of every kind, challenging him to slay and eat. This prepared him for his mission to Cornelius and the preaching of the gospel to the Gentiles (see Acts 10).

Later, when he was in prison in Jerusalem awaiting execution, 'many were gathered together praying' for him in 'the house of Mary, the mother of John whose surname was Mark' (Acts 12:12). That was dangerous work especially when the angel had set him free (see v. 19). No wonder, when he got to the house where they were praying he made a sign 'to them with his hand to keep silent' (v. 17). The last time Paul travelled to Jerusalem, he stayed in 'the house of Philip'. This was hospitality again, but the fact Philip is called 'the evangelist' here may indicate he was using his house as a base for continuing gospel work. Certainly, the Word of God was valued there because he 'had four virgin daughters who prophesied' (Acts 21:8–10).[1]

1 Gaius is another example of a saint who used his home to offer hospitality to the Lord's people and help on the work of the gospel (3 John 5–7). However, we should also note the apostle lays responsibility on the lady in 2 John 10–11 not to receive a false teacher 'into the house nor greet him; for he who greets him shares in his evil deeds'.

Our thoughts also turn to Priscilla and Aquila who made their home in Corinth and then in Rome available to the local assembly for its regular meetings (1 Cor. 16:19; Rom. 16:3–5).[2] Others did the same (Col. 4:15; Philem. 1–2), and surely all these homes were filled with the odor of the incense of worship as the house in Bethany had been 'filled with the fragrance of the oil' when she 'anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair' (John 12:3). Of course, we do not have to lend our homes to the brethren for meetings for this to happen — it can be the case when the family joins together in praise, thanks and worship to the Father and the Son (Eph. 5:18–21).

2 It seems that when they lived in Ephesus and Apollos arrived there they became like parents to him, and in the warmth of their household circumstances 'explained to him the way of God more accurately' (Acts 18:26). Note the scripture refers to Aquila first, indicating he took the lead in this and Priscilla supported him without teaching herself (see 1 Tim. 2:12).

Closing thoughts

Abraham had his tent and altar throughout his life. He was a pilgrim and a worshipper, but homes have to be ordered according to God for this to be the case. God could say of him, 'I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the LORD, to do righteousness and justice.' (Gen. 18:19)

What a contrast to Lot in Sodom who had no moral authority over his daughters and sons-in-law. As we consider the histories of those two households we cannot avoid the conclusion that to arm our children with Scripture and to 'bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord' (Eph. 6:4) are both essential if they are to be faithful to God in their lives, especially at school, college and work. Paul writes of one who aspires to look over the spiritual welfare of his brethren, 'if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?' (1 Tim. 3:5). Such faithfulness may bring its own brand of difficulty to our homes as it did to Jason's in Thessalonica and no doubt Justus' in Corinth (Acts 17:5; 18:7).

But
homes built
on the rock
will not fall
even if
the rain
descends,
the floods come
and
the winds blow
(see Matthew 7:24).

Whatever their circumstances, Christian families can happily count on the 'the Father of mercies and God of all comfort' (2 Cor. 1:3) whose house is ready, prepared for each and every one of His children by His Son, our Savior (John 14:1–4).

Simon Attwood

Train Up a Child …

'Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it' (Prov. 22:6).

Some Christian parents torture themselves with this verse if a child grows up rejecting the Lord Jesus. They think it means they are to blame, but it is not to do with that but rather an exhortation and encouragement to commit our children to the Lord as Hannah did Samuel (1 Sam. 1–2).

It means we prepare them for life as early as possible by instructing and guiding them from God's Word.

Of course, we may not have taken this responsibility sufficiently seriously when God gave us children. Perhaps we indulged them as David did his sons instead of warning them about sin (see 1 Ki. 1:6), or left it too late like Eli in 1 Samuel 2:22–25. Or maybe we were too hard on them and provoked them to the point of revolt (Eph. 6:4). How much parents need to tap the wisdom 'from above' (Jas. 3:17)!

But the phrase 'he will not depart from it' (Prov. 22:6) supposes the words said and the example set by the parents have had a moral effect on the child. There may have been weakness and failure, but with God's help he or she has heard and seen something of Him in them as Ruth did in Naomi (Ruth 1:15–18). No doubt, in our Christian day, this leads them to turn to the Lord Jesus in true repentance and faith.

What joy it brings us when a child takes this step — we gladly ascribe it to God's grace, not our own efforts. But neither negates the child's own responsibility, which increases with age. It is a privilege to grow up in a Christian home, a tragedy to turn the back on God in spite of this. As long as children do the latter they cannot start to live His way but rather risk becoming gospel-hardened.

God will hold them to account at the great white throne where they will not be able to blame anyone but themselves. Of course, there is no comfort in this for us but a spur instead to keep praying for them as long as we can. There may be nothing else we can do but it is the spirit of the father who watched and waited for his son to retrace his steps and saw him 'when he was still a great way off' (Luke 15:20).

Proverbs 22:6 should not crush us but encourage us to confess our failures and trust 'the God of all grace' (1 Pet. 5:10).

Simon Attwood

Our Dwellings

'And you shall count for yourselves from the day after the Sabbath, from the day that you brought the sheaf of the wave offering: seven Sabbaths shall be completed. Count fifty days to the day after the seventh Sabbath; then you shall offer a new grain offering to the LORD.' (Lev. 23:15–16).

We arrive here at the well-known feast of Pentecost — fifty days as the word means. This feast of the 'new meat offering' (or oblation) springs out of the sheaf of first-fruits. The 'day after the Sabbath' is the wonderful morning of the resurrection and here is where we start to count for this feast. The new oblation then has a direct link with Christ, dating from the morning of His resurrection. If we turn to the fulfilment of this feast as given in Acts 2, we learn at once what that direct link is. It is association by the Spirit with a risen and glorified Christ. Now again we ask, Why is this? It is that there might be reproduced in this world the features of Christ. He was the 'oblation'. By the Spirit we are the 'new oblation'. God has worked to reproduce the features of Christ in a company in this world, linked up by the Spirit with Him in the place to which He has gone.

'From your dwellings' (Lev. 23:17). This is where the new meal offering is to be produced. Not in the convocation but in the dwellings.

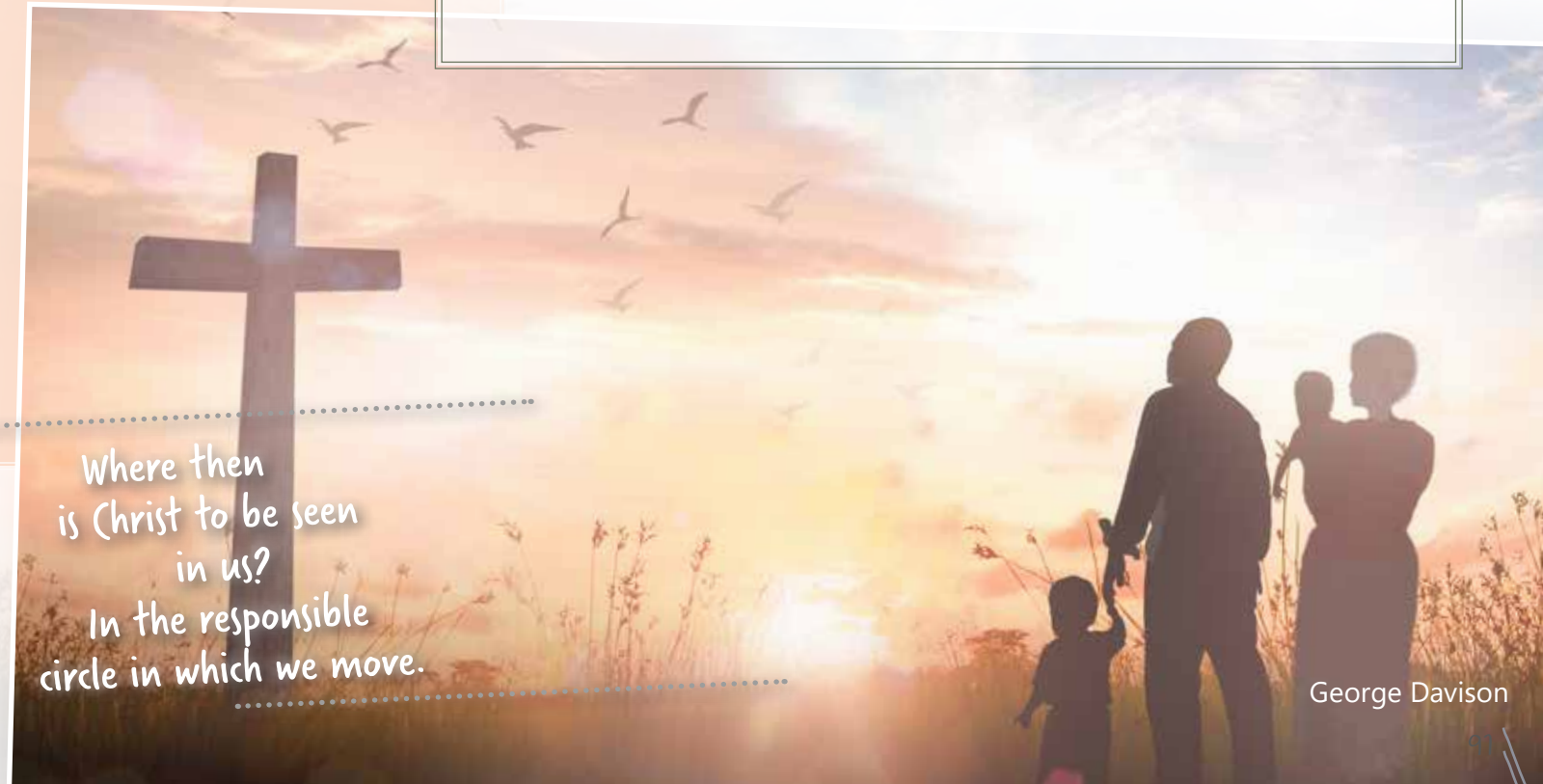
It is so easy to do right things and say right things when we meet collectively, but it is in our dwellings where the test of these things really comes in. If we turn to Colossians 3 we will see how the features of Christ come out in the three great circles in which we all find our life. In verses 18–21 we have the family circle, that which answers to the 'dwellings'. Now, how can we apply these various relationships to Christ is a question often asked here. We know that He never entered into relationships such as wife, husband and father.

How then can His life in this world be an example to us here?

In this way:

> 'Wives, submit to your own husbands'.	**Submission was seen in Christ.**
> 'Husbands, love your wives'.	**Love was seen in Christ.**
> 'Children, obey your parents'.	**Obedience was seen in Christ.**
> 'Fathers, do not provoke your children'.	**Grace was seen in Christ.**

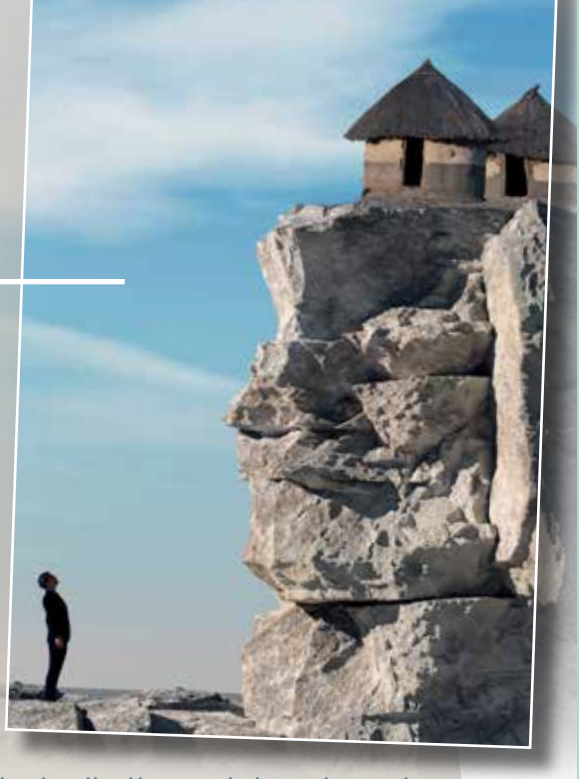
These are the marks of the new meal offering, seen in the family circle.



Where then is Christ to be seen in us? In the responsible circle in which we move.

George Davison

Family



When we hear the word 'family', we tend to think of a father, mother and children.

Not every family has both parents, and some include other relatives, but the image is one of relationship, love and care, and evokes a sense of intimacy, happiness, order and stability.

The basic relationship for a family is that of husband and wife. It is the one upon which all other relationships depend. It is the first human relationship that God gave mankind and is most blessed and sacred.

When God has given this relationship and the family, then not without reason. But what does God's Word tell us about the family? What are His thoughts about it? Is the biblical view and the roles of husband, wife and children in a family still up to date?

Many Bible verses point to our Lord Jesus as a perfect example. But how then can His life in this world be an example to us here?

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