

Spiritual Authority in a Modern World



Dr. Sharon Schuetz

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Chapter One

God's Plan for Marriage

nce read a comic strip that said a lot about the world's view of marriage. One character said, "You know, it's odd, but now that I've announced my engagement, I'm starting to feel nervous about getting married!"

"I know what you mean," the other character replied. "It's only natural to be nervous. Marriage is an enormous commitment. A couple of years can be a long time!" It sometimes surprises people to discover that an acquaintance or co-worker's marriage has endured for 10, 15, or 20 years. Years ago, I went to work in the commissary at a California Navy base. They asked us to tell the group something about ourselves during the orientation. After a woman told us of her 15-year marriage, a girl in her early 20s burst out, "To the same man?" As the divorce rate rises among Christians, we can almost hear the marriage vows change from "Till death do us part" to "Till something better comes along."

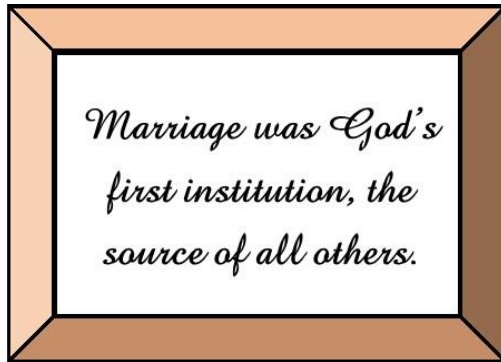
Marriage was God's first institution, the source of all others. Though important, all men's relationships, including our in-laws, children, and friends, are second to marriage. We must think of marriage as a lifetime partnership. Doing so engenders a more robust understanding of our mate and wedding vows, creating a more significant commitment to both.

MARRIAGE: Everyone Has an Opinion.

If you ask ten people what marriage is, you get ten different answers. The 16-year-old girl sees marriage as a way out from under parental authority. A widow may define marriage as companionship. To the childhood sweethearts who have always been in love, marriage fulfills a dream. We each have our own definition of marriage.

Webster's Dictionary defines marriage as "The legal union of a man and woman for life." It further explains marriage as the act that unites two parties. Matrimony is the state into which they enter. Notice the definition includes the word life. When a

man and woman commit to marriage, it's a union that lasts until one or the other dies.



In this book, the term life-partner refers to both spouses. Each partner has a stake in the continuation and growth of the union.

God uses the institution of marriage to accomplish many essential works in His plan. Through it, He perpetuates humanity. Without the commitment of marriage, we are no different

from the beasts. There would be no civilization. He sanctifies and sets homes apart for service in His plan. He entrusted children like Moses, Samson, and Jesus to godly parents to bring them up to recognize and fulfill their calling.

God established the institution of marriage to serve several purposes. Every Christian marriage should strive to reflect these. His first purpose for marriage is to provide companionship for both partners. True camaraderie grows out of the oneness of spirit. Oneness of spirit results when both partners focus their hearts and minds upon Jesus Christ first. Partners who strive to serve and please God will: *"leave their father and mother and cleave unto each other, as they become one flesh"* (Genesis 2:24).

This cleaving together is more than the gratification of physical desires. God's principle for marriage includes three fundamental aspects. The first is **leaving**. This is the legal act in which the couple makes a public commitment of loyalty and lifelong devotion to one another, above all others, even parents. The second is the **joining** or **cleaving**. This involves the personal aspect of tender love and faithful responsibility that becomes permanent and binding. The third aspect is **becoming one flesh**. This includes the physical and sexual union that creates the union of souls and the spiritual and psychological intertwining of persons.

"Leave" and "cleave" are terms associated with covenant promises. We can interpret marriage as a new relationship bound by mutual oath. In becoming one flesh, sexual intimacy is the expression of the union of husband and wife.

All these aspects are necessary. The sexual union, however, by itself is not enough to fulfill the biblical concept of marriage. Many marriages fail because only one point, the sexual union, is all the couple has in common. Cleaving together is a spiritual oneness stemming from the unity between two hearts, two minds, two personalities, and all the desires of each channeled into one common goal. Our heart's longing must be to have our lives, homes, and ministries reflect God's love for us as individuals, to each other as marriage partners, and to others as His children when you agree in this area of your life, you will find much in common in other areas. Conversation flows more freely. You are comfortable sharing your feelings and immediately know each other's thoughts, even across a crowded room. Your home becomes a place of peace and harmony, making you look forward to spending time together. As close friends, you'll find you prefer each other's company over any other.

Disagreement won't devastate your relationship when the relationship is grounded in God. Even when you can't find a way to agree, you will develop a system of dealing with conflict that inflicts as little hurt as possible. You will choose words carefully, not wanting to hurt one another. Remember that you can never unsay words once they are spoken. Although necessary, apologies can only medicate unnecessary wounds. "I'm sorry" can never remove hurt nor erase the scars of harsh, accusing, thoughtless words.

One method of dealing with anger is for neither person to say anything for a few minutes. After you cool off, sit down, think, pray, and talk. If you feel too angry to pray together, say a prayer silently to yourself. Get God involved right away.

Some psychologists advise people to release their anger by hitting each other with soft bats or clubs or by yelling. This might momentarily ease the tension, but it has limited clinical value. After all the blows and angry, harsh words, you will still have to find a solution. You must find a way to deal with the issue that caused the anger in the first place. Life partners must learn to relate their feelings to their partners in healthy, productive ways.

In 23 years of marriage, Mark and Sue have developed a method of dealing with disagreement that works for them. Anger is their rate signal of what they are doing and where they are going. When one of them reaches the point of yelling, they both know that it is time to stop talking for a few minutes. They take the Scripture seriously about not going to bed angry (Ephesians 4:26). There have even been a few nights they have laid beside each other for what seemed like an eternity, hoping the other would speak first. Eventually, one of them slides their hand over and squeezes the other's hand. This opens the door for productive communication.

Because they both want God's will, they are willing to understand the other's point of view, even though it may not change their opinions. They have decided that if the issue is important enough to the other to take a stand or to make an appeal, the question deserves both of their unprejudiced attention.



They have always been able to reach a solution they could both live with.

After half a lifetime of living as best friends, neither prioritize getting their way. They strive, instead, to find the right solution. It wasn't always this way. At first, they both fought to get their own way. Through the years, they have developed the most painless method of dealing with disagreement they could find. Because they love each

other, they don't want to hurt each other. As simple as it sounds, this must be the central focal point in a marriage, especially in times of disagreement.

They love each other, and neither wants to jeopardize what they're working to build. They get angry, but even in their fury, they know they must remember what is most important. Never call each other names. Don't dwell on faults or make accusations about each other. Focus only on the issue.

No matter the argument, don't get distracted from finding a solution. Insulting each other is a distraction, and doing so slowly chops away at the roots of the friendship that makes relationships stable. The argument will end, and its reason will likely be forgotten. But the memory of the insults and accusations can last for years. The disagreement is never worth the pain of cutting each other with vicious words.

Who is right really doesn't matter. Finding a solution to the problem is what matters. Both spouses may feel right, and both usually are, from their perspective. Sometimes, which has a better solution for the partnership must be worked out and accepted.

At some point, we must look at where we want to go and find the hidden costs. Although both opinions are probably workable, only one can be adopted unless there is a compromise where parts of both are incorporated into the solution. This is generally the best overall solution. Nevertheless, there are times when an impasse is reached, and someone must make the final choice. One partner must agree to accept whatever the other chooses.

Both partners have an equally important opinion, although much discussion may be needed to understand each other's point of view. It is essential to keep talking until each understands the other's perspective. Don't argue needlessly. If disagreement continues, one doesn't see the whole picture. Both must strive to find the best solution by rationally talking without hurting each other and without having to live with regret.

The human mind repetitively replays negative thought patterns over and over. For most of us, our minds must be trained in positive thinking. Be wary of anger. In it, we will see others' weaknesses, not the bigger picture: protecting the home and family from unnecessary wounds.

Sometimes anger comes because someone perceives the wrong meaning in the words or motives of others. Avoid this by discussing issues honestly from each side. Weigh thoughts against the other's feelings before you speak. In doing so, you will find that disagreement can be a productive learning tool, helping you to understand each other better.

One of the purposes God has for marriage is just pure enjoyment. An essential principle behind enjoyment is self-control. In AD 56, Paul taught and preached in Ephesus during his third missionary journey. He received reports from the household of Chloe concerning quarrels in the church at Corinth. (1 Cor. 1:1). The church sent a delegation of three men, who brought a letter that requested Paul's judgment on specific issues (1 Cor. 7:1). Paul wrote the Epistle to the Corinthians, answering the questions and problems of the Corinthian Church.

One point he answered was fornication in the church. Fornication is the act of having sexual relations before marriage. Paul told the Corinthians " . . . to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband." He continues, "I say therefore to the unmarried and widows, It's good for them if they abide even as I. But if they cannot contain, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn." (1 Cor. 7:2,7,8). "But I speak this by permission, and not of commandment." (1 Cor. 7:6). Paul told the Corinthians that these were their only choice. If they didn't feel called by God to a life of celibacy or singleness, then they should get married. God only provides for the fulfillment of our sexual gratification through marriage.

Life-partners sharing in each other's company in true Biblical companionship will express the usual result of that bond. This expression is the pleasure produced by the intimacy shared by only the two participants of the partnership. This physical union is a natural outflow experienced between two people who already have their lives in tune with God and each other. *"Marriage is honorable [of great worth] in all, and the bed [kept] undefiled . . . "* (Hebrews 13:4). Couples can only understand the enjoyment that both receive from the unique union of intimacy as they grow into a harmonious, loving relationship with each other.

Few people know what they are in for when they get married. Many couples struggle with false ideas picked up from friends or faulty teaching by uninformed or biased sex education teachers. Any discussion of sex in the church at all is usually taboo and considered evil and worldly. This leaves young couples on their own to learn the barest basics of human sexuality.

The District Youth President for a large denomination recalls how he wasn't allowed to mention the word "s-e-x" anywhere in the ten years he served, especially from the pulpit. Yet, the very same teenagers he was working with were watching films in sex education classes in their public high school, showing and teaching positions and values that Christians abhor. Where is the educational balance in this all-too-common situation?

When a man and woman marry, they will learn and respond to each other's needs. Although the sexual part of the relationship isn't the most important, it is a considerable part of the whole. If the sexual component is the only area of compatibility, the marriage is already on shaky ground. But the opposite is also true. If sex isn't satisfying and fulfilling to one or both partners, there will be problems. By working toward having their relationship firmly based on the Word of God and by concentrating on pleasing each other sexually, a couple can weather any storm together.

Completeness is another critical purpose of marriage. God designed women to complete what was lacking in man's life; the same is true of men. We all have flaws and shortcomings, as much as we hate to admit it. Nobody is the best at everything. Opposites do attract. Most couples include one partner who is an extrovert while the other is an introvert. Inherent character weaknesses and strengths exist in every person's God-given temperament. A person deficient in certain areas often has a strong mate in those areas. In this way, each life partner can strengthen and complete the other.

I have counseled many couples where a Melancholy (quiet, deep thinker, and creative) and Sanguine (positive, scatter-brained, fun-loving, and outgoing) temperaments are attracted to each other. These couples must develop a working relationship as they learn about each other. As they both learn to exchange ideas, they can strengthen the partnership by allowing each additional space to grow and function in their areas of strength.

God's first command in Scripture is, ". . . *Be fruitful [Hebrew phara, make increase after your kind], and multiply [Hebrew rabah, increase with exceeding abundance of children], and replenish the earth [Hebrew male, fill up the world to overflowing] . . .*" This is also another vital purpose for marriage. Continuing the human race is to be done through marriage. God can do many miracles in His plan of redemption through a loving home, and parents committed to Christ.

God wanted Moses to lead the Children of Israel to the Promised Land. In 400 years, Israel grew from Jacob's 70 descendants into millions. It would take a remarkable man to do this job. From his birth, God prepared Moses for serious leadership. He chose the Egyptian monarchy as a training place for His future prophet. As a son of the Pharaoh's daughter, Moses would learn the disciplines of warfare, obedience, and all the skills necessary to guide a nation as large as Israel. God had every detail arranged for his adoption into this powerful royal family.

Moses was born to Jewish parents during terrible persecution and national stress. As a male baby, he was marked for death by a decree from Pharaoh, who ordered the midwives to kill all male babies born to the Jews. They disobeyed, however, and Moses lived. His mother hid him until it was too dangerous to hide him any longer. The Pharaoh's daughter found him floating in a basket in the river, adopted him, and hired his mother to nurse him until he was old enough to wean. Hebrew women usually weaned a child from birth to age three to six.

Moses' mother never missed an opportunity to tell him about God. She saturated his young mind in the truth of God's Word. While he was at her breast, she sang to him. She instilled a sense of destiny into his heart. Outwardly, Moses was an Egyptian, but in his heart, he was a Jew. God would spend 80 years preparing this man for the overwhelming responsibility ahead. For 40 years, he would live in the court of Pharaoh. For the next 40 years, he lived in the desert's solitude, learning to know and trust God. Nevertheless, some of the most critical years of preparation in Moses' life were those first few, cradled in the arms of his loving mother.

Protection is also one of God's purposes designed for marriage. This comes as both partners understand their responsibilities to the union. Each partner must commit to their role. The husband protects the wife by laying down his life for her (See Ephesians 5:25). He recognizes his role as a provider and watches over his family's spiritual and physical condition. The wife protects the home (See Titus 2:4,5). She usually spends more time with the children and knows their needs. She is aware of toxic relationships and destructive influences. Parents protect their children to raise a godly seed (See Malachi 2:15; Psalm 112:1,2). These will be covered in more detail in another chapter.

Marriage represents Christ and the Church. It is a human object lesson of the relationship between Christ and believers (See Ephesians 5:31-33). We can

understand and relate to God through a right relationship with our partner. It also reveals to us (through personal experience) God's relationship with Israel.

It was only after ten years of marriage that Debbie understood who Jesus was, and it came through her relationship with her husband, John. For years, John stood by patiently while she often wasted their last few dollars on drugs, alcohol, or cigarettes. As they struggled to serve God and her addictions, John continually loved her, never losing his patience nor condemning her. Debbie's understanding of God came as she began to relate her life and marriage to being part of the Bride of Christ and His unconditional love. She did this because she could understand it through being John's bride.

Once she met Christ with this understanding, Debbie developed a personal relationship with Him. She had seen Him, and His love lived out in a vivid real-life illustration in her home. As God intended, marriage illustrates His unconditional love to our limited human understanding.

We must see an idea illustrated to understand the whole picture. Christ came to show spiritually blinded man God the Father's nature and His true personality by living it in a human body. His life is an illustration. When you meet and get to know Jesus, you can identify and understand the One who sent Him. A critical way God wants us to understand Him is through the institution of marriage. As a husband loves, cherishes, and protects his wife with unconditional love, and the wife reverences her husband, they can learn how to relate to and know God and how He feels toward us.

God wants us to understand the seriousness of our marriage vows as He determines them. Not only does Scripture compare marriage to God's relationship with Israel, but it also illustrates Christ's relationship with the church.

Divorce is not an alternative solution to problems in a marriage. It is heart-rending to see a family torn apart, especially when there are children in the union. It hurts God each time it happens. Divorce is, at times, inevitable. Some situations won't change

because people don't want to change. God has provided for the salvation of every soul. Not every soul, however, chooses God's way.

In the same way, a marriage partner can refuse God's grace for marriage. Life is a series of choices, and our lives result from our selected preferences. God offers options to the partners in a marriage that can transform their relationship into the beautiful experience of becoming one and a union in Christ. But it is up to each partner whether to accept or reject God's options.

In *What's Wrong with the World*, G.K. Chesterton wrote, "If Americans can divorce for incompatibility, I cannot conceive why they are not all divorced. I have known many happy marriages, but never a compatible one. The whole aim of marriage is to fight through and survive the instant when incompatibility becomes unquestionable. For man and woman are incompatible." Someone once said, "Marriage is the art of two incompatible people learning to live compatibly."

The world refuses to accept this wisdom today. But we can't accept the lie that incompatibility is a suitable reason to end our partnership. God never ended His relationship with Israel. He still plans to redeem her. Can you imagine Christ saying to the Church, "I give up? You will never be spotless! We are hopelessly incompatible!" Never!

Couples can't learn how to build a robust and dynamic marriage from a few book chapters. However, by learning and incorporating some essential principles, partners can choose to work together through each step. Principles are spiritual laws that give victory in every area of life when applied to every circumstance. God ordained them, and we can use them to our advantage. Choosing not to learn and apply them because of our nature will work against us.

Chapter Two

God's Compatibility Plan

The decade of the Sixties introduced many new ideas into American thought. Within a few short years, we witnessed the Age of Aquarius, the end of Camelot, and the rise of the Beatles, flower children, and hippies. The Sexual Revolution started the "Battle of the Sexes" at a time when politicians were outlawing prayer in our schools. In a single decade, the goddess Ashtoreth caused America to explode from quiet rural communities with slowly shifting standards to the shock of sweeping changes.



Cultural change brings positive and negative results. That decade opened the door to demonic influences and the eventual takeover and replacement of our morals and values. Premarital sex, which the Bible calls fornication, is now the norm. Educators encourage free activity. They teach our children about "safe sex" instead of abstinence to prevent diseases and emotional and physical damage. Now, they are confusing them by teaching them that they can be any gender they want to be just by choosing one of the many gender choices available.

The erosion of values has resulted in the world's most civilized nations' spiritual, moral, and economic decline. America is now ruled by the same gods of the pagan cultures condemned in the Bible for their ungodliness. The revolutionary ideas introduced in the sixties come directly from these same pagan cultures. The Age of Aquarius, or the New Age Movement, is shamanism or witchcraft.

The Sexual Revolution comes from Ashtaroth, the heathen goddess of fertility, who specialized in sex and war. The pagan cultures surrounding Israel worshiped her.

She went by several names; some were Ashtaroth, Ashtoreth, Aneth, Astarte, and Asherah. Her temples were centers of legalized vice and corruption. Today, her temple can be a theater, an adult bookstore, a street corner, or even an unsupervised child's bedroom. She looks for victims to draw into her network of lust and deceit.

The Battle of the Sexes, unparalleled in its destructive changes, is a direct result of the fall of Eden. God told Eve, "...Thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee." (Genesis 3:16). These thirteen words are at the heart of worldwide controversy and the source of arguments for generations. Many interpretations come from them. Three of the most common explanations include 1) she will want her husband physically; 2) she will want to please her husband; 3) she will want her husband to protect her. The actual text of Genesis 3:16 introduces a fourth desire that conflicts with these three.

A woman's fourth desire is to control her husband. Scripture uses this term for desire only three times. The proper root in Arabic would be "to urge, drive on, or impel." Strong's Exhaustive Concordance says it is a longing, as in to run after or pursue. Each case refers to one having authority over the other. The Lord said to Cain, "...And unto thee shall be his [sin's] desire, and thou shalt rule over him [sin]" (Genesis 4:7). This means "what sin desired is what Cain would carry out." God told Cain to rule over sin. Cain did not; instead, sin ruled over Cain.

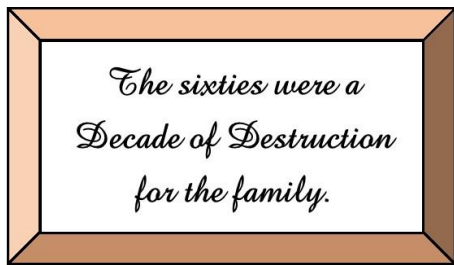
The two clauses of Genesis 3:16 contrast each other: "Thy desire shall be to thy husband" and "he shall rule over thee." Scripture explains the power struggle between the husband and wife. Paraphrased, this Scripture would read: "You shall want to rule over your husband. He shall rule over you."

One of the results of Adam and Eve's sin was the destruction of their marriage unity. A tug-of-war has existed between man and woman over "who's the boss" ever since. The Battle of the Sexes began in the Garden of Eden.

MAY THE BEST MAN WIN

One reason for the popularity of the Women's Movement, which spawned the National Organization of Women, is gender-based discrimination. A woman must often do the same job as a man, or better, to keep a job. Yet, promotions, raises, and opportunities bypass them because they are female. The reason heard most often is that the man must support a family and needs the job more than his female colleagues.

A woman's position is lower than men in many cultures. Some places still make a woman walk several paces behind a man. It shames the Middle Eastern family for a woman to be in public with her face uncovered. Honor killing is common in some cultures and happens here in America.



Many women who fight this view give up and become hopelessly frustrated and angry. Women's responses to this inequality are the cause of extremist groups like the National Organization for Women. Many of these women are bitter, angry, and hardened against society, and they hate Christian women who obey God.

God doesn't intend for women to be abused and mistreated. We get our actual status as His daughters. We can discover how justly God treats women in the Old Testament. He declared women's value long before championing women's issues became fashionable. We find an example of God's justice in Numbers. "Then came the daughters of Zelophehad. Saying, "Our father died in the wilderness...and had no sons. Why should the name of our father be done away from among his family because he hath no sons? Give us, therefore, a possession among the brethren of our father." The Lord responded, "The daughters of Zelophehad speak right: thou shalt surely give them a possession of an inheritance among their father's brethren. . ." (Numbers 27:1, 3, 4, 7).

Historically, the Christian community has favored women more than anywhere else. "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus...There is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:26, 28). Jesus cared about the woman at the well when He and His disciples traveled through Samaria. Two of His closest friends were women, Mary and Martha. He didn't look down on women. He saw them as equal to men and treated them with honor.

Women have complained about our lot-in-life for a long time, causing irreparable damage to real women's issues. We can't legislate rights. To do so causes us to disregard the rights of others. To enable legislators to grant rights to one group, they must take them from someone else. This becomes a vicious, never-ending cycle.



WHAT RIGHTS?

The idea of women's rights is ridiculous. Scripture gives no grounds for women's rights. Neither does it give men rights. All of our rights belong to God. He decides our station, whether we are male or female. How can we complain because God made us the wrong gender? He made us how He wanted us. He has a plan for our lives.

We don't need rights. We become God's property when we're born again. Thus, we can learn to be content and rest in freedom and peace as we live out and work out His plan.

Following God's Spiritual Principles for the family gives us the freedom to serve Him wherever He sends us. He calls all Christians to service. Women deserve the opportunity to fulfill this call. It makes no difference if she is a homemaker, teacher, pastor, evangelist, doctor, lawyer, secretary, nurse, or engineer; God places few limits on how and where she can serve Him.

A woman's happiness isn't determined by whether she works outside the home. Some women leave careers they love to become homemakers. Homemaking is a delightful, fulfilling career. A woman is a homemaker, regardless of what she does during her daytime hours. She is a homemaker whether she has a husband and children, shares an apartment with a roommate, or lives alone. The home and family are her first calling.

Many women enjoy the corporate world and the office routine. They make excellent leaders and workers for God. If income isn't their priority, they make outstanding volunteers. If God has given her a cause, she can effectively organize others. Many successful humanitarian works of God started in a woman's heart. Women should strive to live our life calling, wherever that may take us.

God called me into the full-time ministry years ago. I worked for a company that owned the state's largest franchisee for a large insurance company, fourteen popular fast-food restaurants, and several other businesses in West Virginia. After leaving my job, incredible doors began opening in my life. I served Him for years after that without receiving a salary. My family didn't miss my income because God ensured my husband, Michael, had a decent job and could provide a comfortable living.

In one church, He sent a woman who had a kidney transplant to help us in the church office. She attended college and planned to graduate with a degree in business, yet she knew she could never hold a full-time job or support herself. She was disabled and on social security, making her financially secure. She was an excellent assistant and helped me around the office. She, in turn, kept her own hours and even stayed home if she didn't feel well. This was her ministry. I could never pay her what she was worth, but she never asked for anything except to please God. As a result, she fulfilled much of her ministry call and lifted my hefty load.

God can use women anywhere. The work does not matter. What matters is that Christ shines through her. The key to her finding fulfillment in ministry is a strong

relationship with God first, with her husband next, and then with her children. Harmony at home sets her free to serve God. There is no reason for a woman to be unfulfilled in her ministry when God is everything. Using the calling of a pastor as an example, we can see how God intends for a husband and wife to work together in one mind to complete His calling for them both. God calls a man's wife when he calls a man to serve Him. She is an equal partner in their ministry. He never calls a couple into a full-time ministry without bringing both partners into harmony with His plan. The unity of purpose is the only way to fully fellowship with Him. Balance in our life calling produces stable homes and ministries that will stand the test of time and the pressures of life.

Jerry and Lilly know if God moves their family to a field of ministry, He will lead them and their teenage children. Matthew and Monica are an essential part of the family ministry. They support their parents in the church. Without harmony, they can severely limit what God can achieve through their family. They decided that, as a family ministry, they must all agree or wait for God to show them the next step. They trust one another's judgment. They value their children's concerns. They can focus on God's plans for the family through unity and agreement.

God sometimes calls one partner into ministry before calling the other one. In Jean's family, He called her to preach two years before He called Larry. Yet, He spoke to Larry first when He called them into full-time ministry. Jean was the pastor of their first church, while Larry had a full-time engineering job. This cramped them for a while, but they didn't depend on the church for support, which allowed them to serve in a financially distressed community.

God sometimes calls one partner before He calls the other to remove obstacles or wrong attitudes. He can use one to pray for and move the other if they're not listening. This pressure point reveals weaknesses in the home. When both partners are honest with God and each other, they will eventually agree on God's plan. God doesn't cause confusion. Confusion only arises when one spouse is not listening.

God spoke to Larry first when He called them into full-time ministry. Larry saw part of the plan nearly three months before the circumstances and economic pressure forced them to change direction. Jean tells us, "We had those three months from the Lord to prepare for the immense financial change we would experience. Life in the ministry wasn't very tough when we had an income ten times greater than now." Although Jean had difficulty mustering excitement over what was ahead, she knew God was in charge and accepted the change as it happened.

Jean commented, "If I could return to life as before the change, I wouldn't consider it. The only place I can call home is the center of God's will."

Sometimes, Christians get excited and hear God telling them to sell their belongings, go to China, and become missionaries. As much as God wants missionaries in China, he won't cause conflict in the home. He will, instead, call both the man and wife if they listen. The cooperation of both spouses is necessary



for the success of the ministry's progress. Christian couples who fail to communicate can carelessly let a calling pull their marriage apart.

God doesn't always lead a couple through the husband. Each marriage is different. God gives us our own identity while we're still in the womb. A quiet, thoughtful man will often marry a robust and dynamic woman. Together, they form a strong relationship with opposite personalities. Sometimes, a robust and powerful man will marry a soft, introverted, shy woman who perfectly complements his ministry. Both combinations can accomplish a lot in God's kingdom.

God sometimes uses women to step out first in the ministry. This can be a blessing to a woman whose husband is confident in himself, his masculinity, and his relationship with Christ. He can let his wife take the lead in working God's plan.

THY DESIRE SHALL BE TO THY HUSBAND

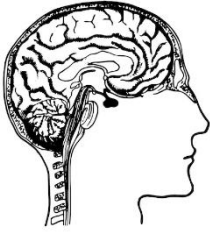
A woman is still subject to her husband even when she leads the ministry. "Thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee" must be a way of life, even if the woman is the pastor. When a couple has a strong relationship with God and one another, God's word will be their center.

Scripture tells us, "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the Savior of the body. Therefore, as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything" (Ephesians 5:22-24). Yes, God expects us to do this, even today. How can women read this and still make excuses for disobedience?

An uneasy silence settles over the room when we read Ephesians Chapter Five. The controlling husband smugly looks at 'the little woman' with a smirk. The henpecked husband is squirming in the back row. He knows his life is out of control. His domineering wife crosses her arms and rolls her eyes, wishing someone would end this tedious conversation.

Submission means "To be subordinate to another." It doesn't put the woman in a lesser role. It simply means that when a couple must make a decision and can't agree on a direction, the final decision usually rests with the husband.

A woman gets a delightful sense of freedom in biblical submission. Not only does authority stay with him, but so does the responsibility for the results of his decisions. A submissive wife who gives her husband the ability to make decisions will find the pressure off her when he makes a bad one.



Some women who read this think, "That sounds good, but you don't know my husband." True, but as you continue to read and understand how this principle works, you will find all men have similar and basic needs. As a wife fulfills these scriptural needs, her husband becomes more reliable, and her confidence in him and his spiritual guidance increases.

Conflict is rarely harmful when we build our homes on spiritual principles. Actual biblical submission frees a woman so she can become the beautiful creature God designed. Subordination to our husband's godly leadership is for our safety and security. A woman is more flexible and content in a marriage built on this foundation. Life is happier for her than the woman who demands her rights from a frail, mousy, broken husband.

In the deep recess of a woman's heart is an intense desire for protection, not only from outside dangers but from emotional and psychological damage, as well. Our society has made women afraid to express this need. They usually don't realize or know how to describe it, but it's there.

Why did God put the man in charge? Scripturally, men and women are alike in God's sight; however, there are some differences we do not always see.

The "wiring schematics" of men and women are different. The world operates through two kinds of power: the power of position and influence. Empires rise and fall based on who has the position and who has the influence. God gave man the power of position and woman the power of influence. That's not to say women shouldn't be in positions of authority, and men do influence people and situations. It means that inherent in a woman is the ability to influence or persuade the one with the position. This is especially true of her husband.

Some of the world's most influential leaders had average intelligence, no natural appeal, or practical leadership abilities. Their significance depended upon the company they kept or who influenced them.

As the submissive wife of the king, Queen Esther influenced him when it came to choosing what to do with her people. She never lost her identity as the queen. If she had not been the woman she was, the Holocaust might have happened nearly twenty-five hundred years earlier.

Most men operate through logic and reason, while women generally work through emotions. Because of this, women sometimes respond to the Gospel easier than men do. The feelings of a woman are quicker to get the message of salvation than the logic of a man. This is why God sometimes uses women to move out into ministry first.

A Spirit-filled, Spirit-led couple working together in God, in harmony with one another, are an unbeatable team. Satan trembles at the mention of the name of couples who harness the power of man's position and logic and woman's influence and emotion and work together in harmony with God.

CHAPTER THREE

STRUCTURES OF AUTHORITY

An Eleventh-Century German king, King Henry III, grew tired of court life and the pressures of being a monarch. After much thought, he applied to a monastery to accept a life of contemplation. "Your Majesty," Prior Richard, the religious superior of the monastery, carefully asked, "Do you understand that the pledge here is one of obedience? That will be hard because you have been a king."

"I understand," Henry replied. "The rest of my life, I will obey you as Christ leads you."

"Then I will tell you what to do," Prior Richard wisely responded. "Go back to your throne and serve faithfully in the place where God has placed you."

When Henry III died, a friend wrote of him: "The King learned to rule by being obedient." Like King Henry, we often tire of our role and responsibility. We, too, need a reminder that God has placed us in a particular place of faithful service. King Henry learned a valuable lesson in human relationships from his response to Prior Richard. God can only use us effectively to fulfill our life calling as we obey Him and those He placed in authority over us. Although King Henry had absolute rule over the human government, he recognized and submitted it to spiritual power.



Sadly, the word authority has taken on a negative meaning today. When someone mentions "authority," we think of tyrants usurping or grabbing for power. Authority gives you the right, ability, position, freedom, or jurisdiction to have influence or to decide the outcome in a particular situation. Most people want the authority of a position, title, or job, but only some are willing to pay a high price for it.

An employer will listen to a person with a college degree and years of experience quicker than he will to a new club. A pastor usually takes suggestions from a faithful, supportive, and involved member. He won't trust one who skirts around or changes the rules or system without regard for Scripture or the needs of others.

Paul warned, *"Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves"* (Romans 13:2). In this text, he referred to the authority God has placed over us. In the previous verse, he had just finished saying that every soul should *"submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. God has established the authorities that exist"* (Romans 13:1).

THREE PURPOSES FOR AUTHORITY:

There are three primary purposes for authority as ordained by God. The first is to grow in wisdom and character. The Bible only gives us one peek at Christ's life between the ages of 2 and 30. This was a discussion with His parents that involved authority. It occurred when He was 12 years old. Should He follow His spiritual calling and be about His Father's business (Luke 2:49), or should He become subject to His parents and leave His ministry at the temple? He did the latter. The following verse reports, *"And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men "* (Luke 2:52).

God teaches us the spiritual lessons, insights, and principles we need to live successfully only when we obey. Disobedience causes a spirit of resistance, resulting in our becoming closed-minded. Staying on the path of rebellion eventually shuts the door of our lives and hearts to God.

The second purpose of authority is to gain protection from temptations. Submission is not "under the domination of authority" but " under the protection of authority." Authority is like an "umbrella of protection." When we get out from under it,

we expose ourselves to temptations too strong to overcome. This is why Scripture compares rebellion to witchcraft. *"Rebellion is like the sin of witchcraft."* (1 Samuel 15:23). Both words have the same underlying meaning, - subjecting us to the realm and power of Satan. Obedience to those in authority protects us from the fiery darts of Satan. Resisting authority closes our spirit to God's voice by ignoring relevant sources He uses to communicate with us.

Obedience brings accountability. Without accountability, we would completely shut God out of our lives. We've all heard that power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely. Without accountability, we would separate ourselves from God and all sense of reality. We would then fall into the trap of making our own rules from situation to situation rather than doing what we know is right to do. Several prominent ministries have failed in recent years due to a lack of accountability. Nobody is immune to this kind of failure. This is the tragic result of what happens when we believe we're not accountable to others.

God's third purpose for authority is to know in what direction to go. Correct decisions come from sincere faith: recognizing what God intends to do or understanding situations from His perspective. *"Whatsoever is not of faith is sin"* (Romans 14:23). An essential element of faith is to realize how God uses those in authority to direct our actions.

After asking Jesus to heal his servant, the centurion recognized that the spiritual kingdom must operate on the same principles of authority as the Roman Army. When Jesus saw that he understood this, He marveled and said to them, *"Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel"* (Matthew 8:10). Our faith increases as we see how God speaks to us through those in authority.

When we go to our pastor, husband, parents, or employer, we can depend on God to show us the direction He wants us to go. Although they may not always have the

answer, God will get our attention through their reaction, attitudes, responses, and prayers if we continue to seek His will with a desire to hear His voice.

FOUR KINDS OF AUTHORITY:

Scripture teaches four different types of authority. The first is the government. God has ordained the secular government. Its magistrates and rulers are His ministers. *"Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God . . . For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil . . . for he is the minister of God to thee for good. Wherefore ye must need be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake. For this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. Render therefore to all their dues . . ."* (Romans 13:1,3-7).

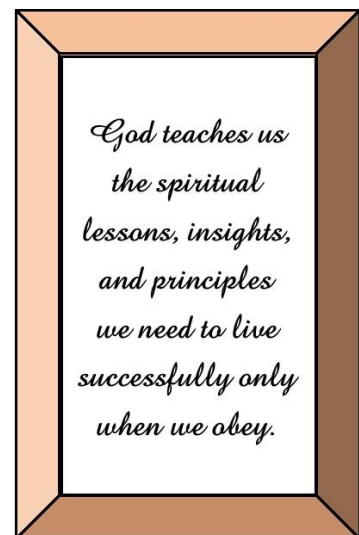
We should submit ourselves " . . . to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake; whether it be the king, as supreme, or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well." (1 Peter 2:13,14). We must obey the governmental authority He placed in charge.

American government begins at the national level, with the President, Supreme Court, Senate, Congress, and various federal courts. From there, it works down to the state level: the Governor, State Supreme Court, and state-level courts. It ends at the local level: the Mayor, City Council, School Board, constable, sheriff, Justice of the Peace, and the local level courts. Each level serves to protect the people at that level.

The late Dr. Francis Schaeffer believed there was a time for civil disobedience. This is when the law requires that we do something immoral or when the commandments of Scripture are outlawed. We are to be just like the disciples when told to do something against our conscience; we are to obey God and not man. There may be a time when we can't obey our government, however, if they follow Scripture, most of us won't need to resort to disobedience.

God provides a way to petition those over us in authority. When done correctly, disobedience is usually unnecessary. This petition can also include the government. We should get involved with the government and work to make changes when we see wrong or injustice. Sometimes, Christians get involved with political movements and become nearly as militant as Hitler's Brown Shirts. This is not God's way. Harsh, abrasive Christians do no good for the kingdom of God. We must be careful what kind of witness our political activity is to others. God provides a way to deal with injustice by petitioning those in authority. (Chapter Four will cover how to make a petition).

The second type of authority taught in Scripture is in the corporate world. *"Servants, obey in all things your master's according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but in singleness of heart, fearing God"* (Colossians 3:22). When a man pays your salary, you have sold yourself to him for an hourly wage. Of course, this doesn't mean that he owns you. While on his payroll, you are to obey and give him a decent hour's work for an honest hour's pay.



People hate the idea that, as employees, they are servants. Anything we do, we must do as unto the Lord. If we see our employer as a tool God uses for our benefit, obeying him would be easier. *"Let as many servants as are under the yoke count their own master's worthy of all honor, that the name of God and His doctrine be not blasphemed."* (1 Timothy 6:1).

The third kind of authority taught in God's Word is that of the church. *"Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially them who labor in the word and doctrine . . . the laborer is worthy of his reward."* (1 Timothy 5:17,18).

God is serious about relationships in the church. He expects us to obey the government and vote for, run for, and pray for those in office. He wants us to do our part to protect and preserve freedom for present and future generations. We must set an example in the workplace. No place needs an outpouring of God's Spirit more than the government and corporate world. Yet, He wants us to realize that the church is the Body of Christ.

Jesus sent His Spirit back to work through the local church. He empowered us to reach out to the lost. We must be free of division, working in unity to complete God's plan for our world. *"And we beseech you brethren, to know them which labor among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you: and to esteem them very highly in love for their works sake."* (1 Thessalonians 5:12,13).

The pastor is responsible to God for the welfare of the flock. He needs a team of elders. These are men and women grounded in the Word, with wisdom, understanding, and experience. The elders pray with him for important decisions affecting the body and share their ideas. Nevertheless, the pastor stands accountable to God for the flock and must be free to do God's will. *"Obey them that have rule (guide) over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as them that must give account, that they may do it with joy and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you."* (Hebrews 13:17).

God knows there will be occasional misunderstandings or disagreements in the church. He wants us to petition those in authority Scripturally. We can solicit through God's Word if asked to do something wrong. This happens in so many of today's churches.

The fourth and final kind of authority is in the family. A healthy family has a father who has a personal relationship with God. He understands his responsibility for the safety and welfare of his family. It has a mother who recognizes her duty to her

husband and God to be a helpmate in managing the family. The children receive guidance, counsel, and correction as needed from both parents.

In Chapter Two, we discussed the wife's submission to the husband. The Christian family must learn the importance of submitting to authority. Wives living under subjection to their husbands teach their children how to submit to God and their fathers. Fathers who submit to their employer, pastor, or authority set an example for their wives and children. As children reach their teen years, they have a foundation of obedience to aid them through these turbulent, traumatic years.

God included a method of petitioning in all four areas of authority. We can make a difference through our quiet, spirited example. Whether we petition the government, our employer, pastor, life-partner, or parents, we have Biblical steps to remove tension and reach a workable solution.

Everyone is under the authority of someone. This is to develop our character into that of Jesus Christ. God uses those in power to chip away that part of us that is not Christ-like. He wants us to learn to work within the guidelines and boundaries of those in authority.

How a teenager responds to his parent's authority will be how he responds to God. This is why we must teach him obedience through our example throughout childhood. God hates rebellion. He told Saul, *"For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry . . ."* (1 Samuel 15:23).

King Saul exemplifies what happens to one who continually rejects authority. He rebelled against God three times. Each had severe and specific results. The first result was that his children lost their heritage. *"...Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, He hath also rejected thee from being kingdom . . . The Lord hath rent the kingdom of Israel from thee this day and hath given it to a neighbor of thine, that is better than thou."* (1 Samuel 15:23). When he lost the throne for himself, he also lost

it for his children. We fail to learn the spiritual insights and character God intended when we rebel; thus, we can't pass these on to our children.

Second, our character and wisdom deficiency from rejecting authority decreases our ministry potential. Saul could have been an excellent King. Because of his rebellion, the good he accomplished dimmed in light of his failures. We will never know what he could have done if he had obeyed God.

Third, rebellion shortened Saul's life. *"Because you did not obey the LORD or carry out his fierce wrath against the Amalekites, the LORD has done this to you today. The LORD will hand over both Israel and you to the Philistines, and tomorrow you and your sons will be with me. The LORD will also hand over the army of Israel to the Philistines" (1 Samuel 28:18, 19).*

Notice the last line in verse 19? From this, we can see how we affect others through disobedience. Moreover means furthermore or in addition to. In addition to all the other losses the Children of Israel suffered, the loss of life, etc., God turned them over to the Philistines. The whole nation suffered for generations because of the disobedience of one man.

Scripture teaches that obedience to God brings a long and healthy life: *"Honor thy father and thy mother ...that thou mayest live long on the earth" (Ephesians 6:1-3). "Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the Lord, and depart from evil. It shall be health to thy navel, and marrow to thy bones" (Proverbs 3:7,8).*

God wants His children to live long and victorious lives. He revealed, *"Though he (Jesus) were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered" (Hebrews 5:8).* God never asks more from us than He asked from His own Son.

It doesn't matter how unfair or brutal dealing with that cantankerous boss is. God holds us responsible for our response to him. He can use even the worst and most irritating person to motivate us to develop mature attitudes.

God is concerned with our response to life's circumstances. He allows us to go through many experiences in our walk with Him. Regardless of what we experience, He wants our attitude to become like that of His Son, Jesus Christ. Jesus subjected himself to the authority of His parents while growing up. *"Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered."* (Hebrew 5:8).



Understanding what those in authority are trying to do is essential, especially when asked to do something against Scripture or our moral convictions. We can see this principle at work in Daniel's life. A godless nation captured him and compelled him to leave everything and everyone he knew and loved. Slavery tried to force him to actions that went against Scripture. *"But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself . . ."* (Daniel 8:1). When he decided to do this, he showed a mature attitude toward those in authority over him.

Because of his attitude, he found favor with the prince of the eunuchs. Later, this prince ordered Daniel and his companions to eat and drink foods that went against Scripture. Daniel wisely discerned that the prince did so not to make him violate Scripture but for his health. As we can see from what happened, a spirit of obedience increases our ability to design creative alternatives, but a spirit of resistance stifles our ability to do this.

When Daniel discerned the ruler's intentions, he worked out an alternate solution that didn't violate his moral convictions. It also allowed those in authority to accomplish what they wanted. Notice his request's respect, creativity, and careful wording: *"Prove thy servants, I beseech thee, ten days; and let them give us pulse to eat, and water to drink. Then let our countenances be looked upon before thee, and the countenance*

of the children that eat of the portion of the king's meat: and as thou seest, deal with thy servants." (Daniel 1:12,13).

CHAPTER FOUR

HOW TO MAKE A PETITION

A man who exercises his freedom to break God's law is like someone who climbs to



the top of a tall building and jumps off. He feels exhilarated for the first several stories. No restraints, restrictions, hang-ups, or anyone to say no. But suppose he changes his mind ten stories from the ground, not wanting to endure the sudden stop at the bottom? Can he reverse the falling process? Can he stop the fall? Of course not. In the last ten stories, he will examine his choices for

freedom and find out, too late, what was wrong with his decision.

Christians sometimes get the idea that God's rules are too demanding or confining. Most people spend more energy looking for ways to skirt around them and avoid absolute obedience when they could expend much less obeying God's Law. They waste valuable mental energy exploring ways to short-circuit God's plan and lose the peace of mind found in fellowship with Him. These efforts become weak stones in the foundation of their Christian life and eventually show up in their relationships with others.

We must learn how God wants us to relate to others and act on that knowledge. When we do, we gain peace with ourselves, God, and the people in our lives. Unfortunately, sometimes, while we're doing everything right, those in authority are out of step with God. This is where many Christians can fail.

Our first response may be to strike out. We say to ourselves (and anyone who will listen), "He has no right to do (say, expect, think) that. It's not fair. I deserve better, after all I do around here. This place would fall apart if I weren't here to do everything."

By ignoring this first natural inclination, we can allow God to move into the situation. By learning to relate to those in authority, God's way, we can have peace of mind and protection from dangerous outside influences. In Chapter Three, we discussed our need to petition those in authority. We will cover this more thoroughly in this chapter. This is an essential principle for successful relationships. It's necessary to learn to do this when dealing with others. These principles are practical, not only when working with those in authority over us, but they will be helpful in all our relationships.

Petitioning those in authority, God's way is the only successful way of dealing with unpleasant people and situations. It is easy to think that we're in God's will and even suffering for Him while disobeying His Word. There are seven necessary steps in a petition. When we do them correctly, God receives glory through the results. If we don't apply each of these steps as outlined in God's Word, we only deceive ourselves.

1. WE MUST BE FREE FROM THE FOLLOWING ATTITUDES:

We can convince ourselves that we're in God's perfect will and that our motives are pure even when they're not. Is our genuine concern for the Scripture God's honor, or is it for our hidden desires, incentives, or agenda? Search your motives by comparing them to the spirit of King David. When he asked God, "*Surely you desire truth in the inner parts; you teach me wisdom in the inmost place. Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean ... Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me*" (Psalms 51:6,10).

a. *An independent spirit is the root of disloyalty.*

A disloyal, independent spirit is "reserving to me the right to make the final choice." Whether in business, church, ministry, or family, an organization's members must function through a chain of command. Those in authority know when our motives and actions are self-serving. It shows through when we display reservations after receiving instructions to do something. We may deceive ourselves into thinking that we are loyal team players when, in reality, we have an independent, disloyal spirit. This is especially evident in those who maneuver to assure benefit, gain, or advancement at the expense of those who work with them.

b. A condemning spirit is the root of self-righteousness.

Self-righteousness is at the heart of condemning, false-finding attitudes. Even when there are faults in those in authority, a mature person will keep a godly spirit by trusting God to handle the problems.

When we detect something wrong with those in authority over us, it signals us to pray for them. Ours may be the only prayer that God is hearing for an impossible boss. God did not say that He would not allow temptation. He told us that He would not allow us more temptation than we can bear (1 Corinthians 10:13). He expects us to have enough of His Spirit to love that employer's soul more than we love the satisfaction derived from blaming him.

c. An ungrateful spirit is the root of pride.

When we do not appreciate the sacrifices and efforts of those in authority, we resent everything they ask us to do. We begin to feel they should owe us for the most minor task. Whether we earn a top dollar or are unpaid volunteers, if we have someone in authority over us, we are to do what they ask.

It's time to check our attitude when we feel the spirit of resistance rising. We must honestly ask ourselves, "Is this pride?" *"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" (Jeremiah 17:9).*

It is easy to convince ourselves of almost anything if we want to believe it badly enough. All that's necessary is some false reasoning to get the ball rolling. Next, if we repeat the deception to ourselves often enough, we will eventually remember it as we said it happened.

We must be aware of our feelings. This doesn't mean we should be overly sensitive. We can, however, learn to recognize our reactions and how we feel when hurt, embarrassed, praised, etc. Our body will give a measurable response. We can use our feelings to gauge our authentic self, deeper than the conscious mind.

Twenty-one-year-old Debbie wants to leave the Victorian-era morals of her parents behind her. She has a car, an apartment, friends, and an excellent job as an adult. Her body reacts when she tries to act cool with the girls on Monday mornings. When it was her turn to "tell all," her face got warm, she turned red, and her eyes filled with angry tears. Outwardly, she refuses to accept her parents' standards, but from her physical reaction, it is easy to recognize that the moral roots run deep. The battle taking place in her mind causes Debbie's physical response.

d. A lazy spirit is the root of dishonesty and poverty.

People often associate poverty with laziness, but laziness isn't always the cause. Many hard-working people are poor. They work from morning to night with little to show for their efforts. However, laziness often results in poverty. You will seldom see a wealthy person (one who has earned one's wealth himself) who is lazy. A lazy person won't keep anything long. A lazy spirit won't develop the attitudes necessary for a successful Christian walk.

Dishonesty is another result of laziness. A lazy person takes shortcuts or looks for easy solutions. Many will lie, cheat, steal, and deceive to avoid the necessary effort to achieve their desires.

e. A bitter spirit is the root of selfishness.

We all know people with small, bitter spirits. They're a challenge to be around. We only associate with them because we must. Bitterness produces selfishness. An angry person will block out thoughts of the needs of others. Bitterness results from hurt feelings and harbored grudges. God tells us to forgive those who wrong us. Forgiving helps the relationship and brings glory to God. It's necessary for our healing and cleansing.

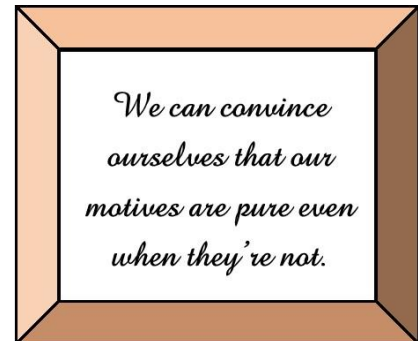
By remaining bitter, we only hurt ourselves. The person who has wronged us has forgotten us and has moved on with his life. Notice the use of the word "remain" in the first sentence of this paragraph. We all fight the root of bitterness. None of us are above it. It is only failure if we don't fight it and allow it to affect our relationships with God and others.

Look *"diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled"* (Hebrew 12:15). The writer of Hebrews is telling us that bitterness is an attitude that we can and should get rid of before it sinks its roots into our hearts and lives. The failure of the grace of God is allowing a seed of bitterness to take root, smothering out our lives and destroying us.

f. An impure spirit is the root of self-indulgence.

A person with an impure spirit is secretive and sneaky. Jesus says, *"As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he."* A wicked heart causes the failure of many men and women of God.

Sometimes, we can accomplish works for God even when we're not victorious in certain areas. We can sometimes push our way through, regardless of whether we entirely overcome an independent or condemning spirit. We may hide ungratefulness for a short time. One minister I knew had a successful mission program but was lazy. Although he had a friendly, winning way about him that made others want to help him, it caught up with him. People were tired of it, and eventually, the ministry collapsed.



God works with people who want to grow. An impure spirit, however, always produces failure. If you would be ashamed to do something in God's presence, you'd better give it serious thought. God won't tolerate an impure spirit for long.

2. WE MUST CLEAR OUR CONSCIENCE

People with a guilty conscience build walls. We must take every step necessary to remove the causes of guilt because it results from our awareness of wrongdoing. Once we know we're wrong, we must begin taking steps to remove the guilt and the desire to blame others: the result of unresolved guilt.

a. Correct offending attitudes.

If you discover that you have had an offensive attitude toward those in authority, you should take steps to correct them. It is not always easy to accept the assessment of ourselves, especially when the Holy Spirit shows us how God sees us.

We can't expect to make any headway if we feel guilty about our attitude or actions. We must work to change attitudes and habits that are offensive to others. If we've been independent, we must learn to be team players. If we've been finding fault, we must turn it over to God. If we've been lazy, bitter, ungrateful, or have had mixed

feelings or actions, we must seek God's forgiveness; then, we must take the necessary steps to clear our conscience and change our behavior.

b. Fulfill the wishes and unfinished objectives of those in authority.

The second step to gaining a clear conscience is to find out where we may have been negligent in fulfilling the directions or expectations of those in authority. Many leave unfinished tasks because they're not enthusiastic about them, get sidetracked, or don't know what to do.

David's mother was expecting a guest. She asked him to pick up the baby's toys in the living room. He told her that he would be glad to. A few minutes later, as he was going out the back door, she asked him to remove the garbage and put the dishes away. He told her, "No problem." When her guest arrived, she invited him into the living room. When she walked in, she saw that David had touched nothing. She later found that he had not removed the garbage or put away the dishes. He had been with his friends.

After her guest left, David asked his mother if he could go to the movies with a friend. She was furious. She told him she had depended on him, and he had let her down. He couldn't understand why his mother was angry. After all, he reasoned, it was only a few stupid toys on the floor, a small bag of garbage, and a couple of dishes. Big deal. It was no reason for her to refuse to let him go to the movies tonight. She was unreasonable.

c. Acknowledge to the person that we were wrong and ask forgiveness.

If David had been smart, he would have realized what he had done and asked his mother to forgive him. Unfortunately, he did not. It never occurred to him that she had a legitimate reason for her feelings.

Forgiveness is more than saying, "I'm sorry." Those words have such a hollow, empty ring. They are often the first words out of the mouth of an abusive husband or parent after losing their temper. Seeking forgiveness is an effort that, when done correctly, frees not only the one who asked for forgiveness but also gives freedom to the one who forgives. It encourages a repentant change in attitude.

If you have difficulty seeking forgiveness, maybe you can use the list method to help. Take a blank sheet of paper and draw a line down the middle. Then draw a line across the top and label the left-side "All the Things I Have Against _____ (you fill in the blank)." Now, list all the awful sins that he has committed against you. Don't forget anything. After all, you deserve this moment. Enjoy it.

When you've completed the left-side, label the right side of your paper "All the Things _____ (again, you fill in the blank) Has Against Me." Now, with the help of the Holy Spirit (and an honest friend), list all the sins (real or imagined) that he has against you. This list is a little more complicated to start. If you are honest with yourself, you will quickly discover that he's not the only one at fault. Usually, a person who is sincere in this exercise will have two long lists.

Tear the list in half from top to bottom. Take the left side, the one with his faults, and give it to God through prayer. Now burn it. Throw it away. You don't need it or its reminders. Take the right side, the one with your faults, and pray over it. Sincerely ask God to forgive you and help you to seek forgiveness from this person. He will.

Scripture admonishes us to *"Be kindly affectionate one to another with brotherly love; in honor, preferring one another."* (Romans 12:10). This means we are to consider how others feel. How will what I am doing affect their relationship with God? We must be willing to put off gratifying our desires,



meeting our needs, or satisfying our personal preferences. God will always make allowances for our needs if we consider the feelings of others first.

3. WE MUST RECOGNIZE THEIR BASIC INTENTIONS

Sometimes, the actions or responses of those in power don't make sense. However, if you ask, you will often find a good reason for everything they do.

a. Ask them what their goals and wishes are.

We need to talk to those in authority with a humble spirit. We need to find out what they want. After all, this is why we're there. Every employer, pastor, parent, or leader has an agenda. He has some overall goals for the organization. It could be no more than a father who wants his kids to become good, law-abiding citizens and have a nest egg at retirement. Or he dreams of building the biggest church in America or running for President. Whatever his intentions and wishes, try to understand them and find out how you can help him to achieve them.

b. Find out what their frame of reference is regarding the command.

What were his intentions when he asked you to work late? Didn't he "know" it was your church night? Was he persecuting you by asking you to stay late on Wednesday? Could it be that he is paying you an off-hand compliment? What if you are the only person he trusts with a project as important as the one you're working on? Give him a chance. Find out what he thought before you get offended.

One method of dealing with people is to understand perception. We often assume another person's intentions based on what they perceive to be their motives. (Was that a look of anger, or did he have something else on his mind?) Explain what it sounded like he meant. Assure him that you know that's not what he meant. Human nature, being what it is, keeps the thought going through your mind. Explain how you

were feeling. Allow him to tell you what he really felt or said. Most importantly, reveal your feelings in a way that won't leave him feeling accused. This method has saved and strengthened many fragile friendships into life-long relationships.

c. Ask him to point out any of your blind spots.

Criticism is difficult to accept from others. It's okay if our critic is an expert, but it is hard to receive an evaluation from those in authority. Most people are like a cat with hair standing straight up on its back, ready for a fight. "What do you mean? That is not true! How dare you say that about me?"

God gives those in authority unique insight into the character of those He placed in their charge. Your peers may not recognize some of your character weaknesses. Your wife or children may not see certain ones. Yet, you can be sure your pastor or employer will see them, especially if they have depended on you in areas of your weakness. We must mature to a point where we can go to our employer, pastor, or husband and ask them to point out to us any blind spots of which we are not aware. He can see character deficiencies that we would never see ourselves.

d. Recognize bigger goals God may have designed to accomplish through the situation.

We sometimes walk around with blinders on. We fuss, sputter, and stew about little inconveniences. God wants us to understand that He has a plan higher than us. Everyone who wants a place in this plan has it. Often, our authority sees the bigger picture, or at least a more substantial portion than we do. He's always seeking someone with a more in-depth insight into what's happening. He needs to surround himself with people who understand God's mind about the organization and its place in His plan.

4. WE MUST DESIGN CREATIVE ALTERNATIVES

Daniel is an excellent example of a man who used wisdom in an unfriendly land where he was enslaved. The prince of the eunuchs wanted Daniel and the others to be healthy and to look good. He insisted that Daniel eat the king's meats and wines, none of which God allowed. Daniel discerned that his motives weren't evil but good. Therefore, he suggested an alternative to the prince. He asked him to let them eat pulp and water for ten days. They would submit to the king's diet if he didn't see they were healthy. He humbly presented his case and his alternate solution. The prince accepted this, and the rest is history.

a. Remove any unyielding spirit to be creative.

Disobedience creates a rebellious, unyielding spirit. To remove a rebellious spirit, we must become obedient. Obedience is an act of our will. We won't always like what we must do, nor will we always like the one we must do it for. We must, however, synchronize our hearts in obedience to God's Word and to the directions of those in authority.

Creativity comes through when our mind is free from grudges, bitterness, guilt, and ingratitude. When we sincerely seek an answer and work within the guidelines of God's Word to bring it about, our mind becomes sharp and active in its pursuit of creative solutions. ("I need to be at church Wednesday night, but if it is ok with you, I will be glad to come in early Thursday to finish.")

b. Use difficult situations to see the bigger picture.

God never allows anything into the lives of His children without a purpose. Stressful situations can be tools to chip away at our rough edges and help us become like Jesus in all that we do. Childhood significantly limits our frame of reference to our

immediate surroundings. Most of our memories come from our own family experiences. Our frame of reference should become much broader as we age, mature, and grow in Christ. We must learn to see circumstances as more than "What's happening to me?" If we allow it, God will show us how He will use our circumstances to improve the world around us. He will reveal Himself in all of life's events.

c. Gain insights for difficult situations from Proverbs.

The Book of Proverbs is the Book of Wisdom. Each day of the month, read and study the corresponding chapter of Proverbs early in the morning. Doing so allows God to give you tremendous insight into all the daily circumstances that enter your life. On the first day of the month, read Chapter One; on the fifteenth day, read Chapter Fifteen; on the thirty-first, read Chapter Thirty-one, etc.

5. THEN WE CAN PETITION THOSE IN AUTHORITY

You will not be ready to take step five until you've completed steps one through four. You will fail if you go to your authority without a changed attitude and a spirit of humility. He won't be ready to hear what you have to say, and you won't be prepared to say what you want. It will amaze you what you can do by approaching him in the right spirit. God can work wonders, even with the most challenging people, through your genuine desire to have a godly relationship, your efforts, and the power of the Holy Spirit.

a. Have the spirit of a learner and a servant.

A learner's attitude with a teachable spirit is the first and most crucial attitude we must have. If you've ever known someone who thought he knew everything, you've seen the dangers of an unteachable spirit. Anyone who stays open and yields to the Holy Spirit can learn even from a child. We can hear God's voice in something as

simple as the lyrics of a song or soft rain washing the roof. Those who work to keep a learner's spirit can hear and recognize God's voice.

There has never been a human with all knowledge and wisdom besides Jesus himself. We are all prone to error. When we go to those in authority with the humble spirit of a learner, willing to listen, it will touch something inside him. We may not see it, but it will happen. It will move him.

He must see in us an earnest learner's spirit. Only then will he see our servant's heart. A servant's spirit naturally follows when we take the necessary time to discover his goals and motives. We will want to help him achieve his goals. A man or woman who works to make their employer, pastor, spouse, etc., successful is always welcome and appreciated in any organization. They are also successful as a result.

b. Explain personal convictions without condemnation.

When you do everything by the Scripture, you can explain your convictions. If you do this without a spirit of condemnation, he will be more likely to understand. Too many Christians act become smug and superior. We can accomplish much more with a gentle heart of humility and understanding than with haughtiness.

c. Present a creative alternative.

Typically, there are real reasons we are asked to do things, but there is often an alternate solution resulting in the same end. Search for an alternative solution if the request is to do something against your conscience. Then, present this solution with humility.

My husband, Michael, worked for a large engineering firm in Houston. He loved the Lord and served Him in every way possible. When someone left the company, they celebrated with a drag-up party. They held these at local clubs that catered to the drinking crowds. Of course, Michael never attended them. He ate lunch in his

office these days. One day, the company vice-president came to see him and told him they were planning a party and expected him to attend. Michael thanked him for the invitation, then explained that he understood the importance of his being there, but because of the party's location, he couldn't attend. He offered to say goodbye at the office and give a gift to the party recipient. Dan said this in a humble spirit, not haughty self-righteousness. Although he was upset, His boss said nothing. He just turned and walked away. Michel stayed in his office as usual on the day of the party.

A year later, Michael left the company for another job. They told him that they wanted to give him a drag-up party. He politely refused. When they explained that it would be in a local restaurant that didn't serve alcohol, he accepted. When Dan arrived, he saw many people there whom he barely knew. All the secretaries, his bosses, people he'd prayed for, and many he had helped were there. He saw some he knew only from greeting in the elevator. It was the largest and most enjoyable drag-up party they had ever remembered. The restaurant was packed with a standing-room-only crowd. Michael maintained a godly attitude through it all, exposing God to the entire company.

d. Show him how it will reach his goal.

The goals of every organization involve people. This means getting them to work together to accomplish the organization's aims, and can only be done as we learn godly compromise.

As a Christian, in most organizations, you are often responsible for revealing God's character and nature to your colleagues. By petitioning those who set the organization's direction, you can strongly influence the methods used to achieve the organizational goals. If you're asked to do something against Scripture, provide an alternative and show how it can help achieve the same purpose. If you have

developed the learner's spirit and approached others as a servant, you will be surprised to see how agreeable they can be.

e. Leave the final decision up to him.

After humbly presenting your points in your petition, leave the final decision to him. There's nothing else you can do. Anything more would be nagging, which could turn the judgment against you. Stop and wait for God.

6. GIVE GOD TIME TO CHANGE HIS MIND

You have laid a base for God to build upon. Give God time to work on his heart and mind. If you do your homework and lay a solid foundation, God will move situations in and out of his life that you could never arrange.

a. Expect God to bring outside pressure on him.

While his heart incubates, God will bring situations into his life to bring to remembrance all that you have said and done. Your humble approach will constantly be before him to remind him that you deserve a fair hearing. God will arrange circumstances: good and evil.

b. Expect him to respond with extra pressure on you.

When God starts His program of applying pressure to those in authority, he (your authority) will, in turn, apply pressure to you. After all, he will reason you are "the cause of all the trouble." Be patient, even if he treats you harshly or accuses you of actions you didn't do. If you react angrily or incorrectly, you could do more damage for Christ than any good you might otherwise have done. Hang in there. God will make everything right.

c. Realize that God will use his pressure for our benefit.

Meekness is the opposite of anger and harshness. A person who keeps a meek and quiet spirit understands that God will vindicate him. Everything that happens will be for His benefit. This includes the pressure that those in authority apply while God works on them.

d. Build the correct responses to be a basis for his changed decision.

As God puts pressure on your authority, and he (your authority) puts pressure on you, he will watch to see how you respond. He will want to see if what you have said is true. Are you sincere in your convictions? Will you get angry and react if he pushes you? Your consistent, meek response will change his heart. If you don't change, even when he does, God will move him.

Only when we have fully applied the above six steps are we Scripturally ready for step number seven. Most people never go this far.



7. SUFFER FOR NOT DOING WHAT IS WRONG

a. The disciples were to be willing to accept rejection rather than deny Christ (Matthew 10:32-39). Being a Christian in the first century was a total commitment to everything. The disciple's commitment eventually cost them their families, reputations, and lives. Yet, they were willing to suffer for a season for what was right rather than enjoy the world's comfort.

b. The disciples were to proclaim the Gospel even when forbidden by government officials and religious leaders (Acts 4:19). Imprisonment and whipping only made the

disciples more determined to proclaim the Gospel of Christ. They couldn't obey man's laws in contradiction to those of God. Neither can we.

c. Daniel was willing to die rather than cease his worship of God and worship the king (Daniel 6:12-16). When forbidden to pray to any god but King Darius, Daniel had to disobey and pray to God alone. He didn't shake his fist in the king's face. Instead, Daniel humbly bowed as he did every day and prayed. He knew that they would put him to death, but he also knew that he had to obey God.

Disobedience must be a last resort. God doesn't take rebellion lightly. We reveal His nature to those around us while learning about Him through our obedience to those in authority.

Wives help assure peace in their homes and instill the foundation of obedience into their children through the example of submission to their husbands. Fathers teach the principle of obedience through their response to their pastor, employer, and others in authority. When we understand this fundamental principle, our homes, churches, businesses, clubs, and organizations will harmonize with man and God.

CHAPTER FIVE

LEVELS OF FRIENDSHIP

A young soldier asked his commanding officer if he could go out between the trenches into "No-man's-land" in World War I to bring in a friend who lay severely wounded.

"You can go," said the officer, "but it's not worth it. Your friend is probably dead, and



you will throw your life away." But he went.

Somehow, he managed to get to his friend,

hoist him onto his shoulder, and bring him

back to the trench. The two of them

tumbled in together and lay in the trench

bottom. The officer looked tenderly at the

would-be rescuer and said, "I told you it

wouldn't be worth it. Your friend is dead, and you're now dying yourself."

"It was worth it, though, sir," he said.

"How do we mean, worth it? I tell you, your friend is dead."

"Yes, sir," the boy answered. "But it was worth it because he was still alive when I got to him. And he told me, Jim, I knew you'd come."

Jesus said, "*Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.*" (John 15:13). Genuine friendships, eternal, soul relationships, don't happen quickly, neither do they happen by accident. We build these relationships with care, time, understanding, and patience. America has lost the art of developing genuine friendships.

Relationships go through several stages or levels. Many people fail to have enduring friendships because they lack a clear understanding of these levels. Each level has specific distinguishing characteristics and responsibilities inherent within.

This chapter will discuss these levels and explain their characteristics and responsibilities.

Eric bought gasoline at a local convenience store every morning for years. Eric bought gasoline at a local convenience store. Because he was a regular customer, the clerk knew that he would go directly to the coffee pot. She tried to keep a fresh pot. She knew he was always good for a warm smile, a friendly joke, and a positive attitude. She liked him a lot. If we asked them, they would both say they were friends. Yet, they were only acquaintances, which is one level of friendship. There was no more of a relationship than a clerk to a customer.

All relationships begin at this first Acquaintance Level. We must become acquainted with each other before developing a deeper connection. This level bases friendship on occasional contacts. Most people we meet will never go beyond this level. This can include the checkout girl at the grocery store or the man selling newspapers on the corner. It could be bank employees, people we do business with daily, or anyone we interact with. Every relationship level begins at this stage. We're only ready to go to the next level when we've succeeded at this one.

Acquaintances are free to ask general questions from public knowledge. Questions are to friendship what food is to the living. We should take time to design quality questions ahead of time to use when we meet new people. By doing this, we gain a more significant measure of self-confidence, and we can listen more carefully to what the other person is saying. Asking questions and allowing the other person to answer them shows that our interest in him and his needs are sincere.

There are four areas we consider public knowledge that make a great starting point for our questions. Public knowledge is information we can find anywhere because 'everyone' knows it. These four areas are family, school or work, church, and interest (hobbies, sports, etc.).

QUESTIONS COULD INCLUDE:

FAMILY:

- * How many brothers and sisters do you have?
- * What number child are you in your family?
- * What type of work does your spouse (father, parents) do?
- * Have you lived in many different places?
- * Do you know much about your family heritage?

SCHOOL OR WORK:

- * What school do (did) you attend?
- * What was (is) your major?
- * Where do you work?
- * Do you have to drive a long way to work?

CHURCH:

- * What church do you attend?
- * How long have you been a member of this church?
- * Does your whole family belong to this church?

INTEREST:

- * What sports do you enjoy?
- * What are some of your hobbies?
- * Do you play any musical instruments?
- * To what organizations do you belong?

These are just a few sample questions considered public knowledge. When asking questions, we allow the person to give his answer and share what's on his mind. You will learn much about him if you show interest without peppering him with questions. Ask the question, then listen. Look into his eyes and nod in agreement. Let him know that your interest in him is sincere. Most people only appear to listen to another person while he is planning what he will say next. Plan the questions and ask them at the appropriate time. Some people are protective of their privacy. Be sensitive to the person we are talking to. If he withdraws, don't push. If you do, you will never get past this first level.

Along with the general questions, another responsibility accompanies the Acquaintance Level. We must view each acquaintance as a 'divine appointment.' A divine appointment involves two individuals God created and loves who meet each other with potential benefit to each other. We can be confident that God created and loves everyone we will meet. He has a purpose for the paths His children cross. We may never know why God had our paths cross those of others, but we can be sure He has a reason.

We build or destroy many friendships at the first meeting. This is because each person is aware of the attitudes the other is projecting. We can project Fear: "Will he accept me?" We also can project Selfishness: "How will I gain from this friendship?" People we meet will only be comfortable when we project the proper attitudes. Examples are Worth: "He is important to God;" Interest: "I want to learn from this friendship;" and Acceptance: "I want to help him reach God's potential for his life." He may not discern what our genuine attitude is, but he will know whether it's a right or a wrong one.

To have the right attitude toward everyone we meet, keep the following questions in mind:

- 1) *What are God's purposes in his life?*
- 2) *What responsibilities and opportunities does God give to him?*
- 3) *How far has he come? Has he done what he could have?*
- 4) *What has hindered God? Bitterness, temporal values, or moral impurity?*
- 5) *How can I help God? Can I picture achievement for him and help him?*
- 6) *What can I learn from him?*

We can only go to the second level of friendship after we've found that we enjoy his company and have the right attitude about him. The second level in our study is Casual Friendship. It, too, has distinguishing characteristics. We base Casual friendship on shared interests, activities, and concerns. Many such relationships are found in churches, civic organizations, PTA meetings, political meetings, etc. When we reach this level, we're no longer passing acquaintances. We now have something in common. We have something we both can relate to. After getting acquainted with a person, we can ask general questions. We can learn how open he is by his responses. We will know whether we can go to the next level of friendship and ask more specific questions. These questions can include opinions, ideas, wishes, and goals.

QUESTIONS COULD INCLUDE:

FAMILY:

- * What do you look back to as your happiest childhood memory?
- * What is the most critical factor in having a happy family? (Or marriage)
- * Did your parents have any special wishes for your life?
- * What were your parents' childhood goals for their lives?

- * How did your parents come to choose the name they gave you?

FUTURE:

- * What are some goals you have for your life?
- * What is most important in life to you?
- * How did you happen to get interested in your present work? (If employed)
- * What would it be if you could have one wish right now?

FAITH:

- * What do you think God's purpose was in making you?
- * What were the events that led up to your becoming a Christian?
- * Have you ever dedicated your life to God's will?
- * What do you see as difficulty in living the Christian life?

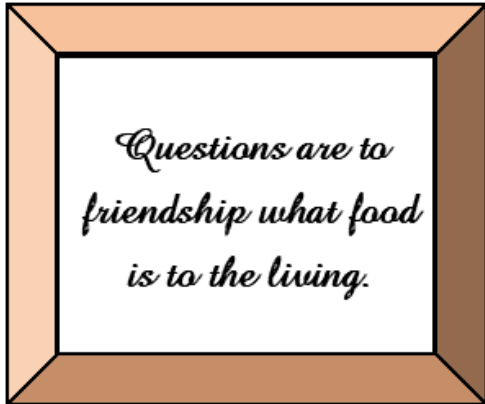
As with the Acquaintance level, the Casual Friendship level has specific responsibilities. Besides the questions, we must learn to identify and praise or encourage positive qualities. At this level of friendship, we know enough about him to recognize some of these qualities in him.

Through your positive, noncondemning, loving example, we can help him develop those qualities necessary for success, as much as any casual friend will allow. Every negative trait is a positive quality misused. A person who is careless with money is abusing the quality of generosity. A person who is critical and judgmental is misusing the quality of discernment.

We will establish close friendships and fellowship when we reach the third level. This level takes time to achieve. Our culture wants to reach it much too quickly. We cannot be close friends in a few days or weeks; it takes months or even years. We

build relationships at the Close Friendship and Fellowship level on trust and experience.

This level of friendship also has unique distinguishing characteristics. First, we base it on mutual life goals. Both parties must want the same end to have mutual life goals. These goals must be compatible, whether to serve Christ, preach the Gospel,



or help their employers as godly Christians. It doesn't mean we must both feel the call to preach. It means that one can't sell out to God while the other sells out to Satan. These are incompatible lifestyles, with the end of each being wholly different but predictable.

One responsibility of the close friendship level is to picture achievement in each other's life. We must also discern and develop appropriate projects to reach this achievement. Here, we're free to suggest mutual projects toward achieving life goals. As close friends, we know each other well. Therefore, we can learn to picture character achievement for each other. This means we help him set goals to develop the necessary character qualities to reach the potential God has for him. There are four essential steps in this process.

1. OVERCOMING FEAR OF FAILURE

Most people struggle with fear of failure. This is often from painful childhood memories of rejection. Regardless of its source, we must help our friends overcome these destructive thoughts. We can help them prepare to step out and do something different. This could include the 18-year-old facing adult decisions, a new job, or a new school. It could be the middle-aged executive making career changes or the senior citizen facing lonely retirement years. Many situations cause us to dredge up old, hidden fears. We must encourage each other to trust God and move forward.

2. PICTURE VOCATIONAL DIRECTION

Many people choose their vocation because of the influence of one or two individuals. There are times when God wants to change our direction. We must be alert to Him and direct each other into a greater depth of His will for our vocation and ministries.

3. INSTILLING A SENSE OF DESTINY

An essential job of a parent or friend is to instill a sense of value and responsibility for the plan of God in our loved ones' lives. God made each of us for His purpose. It is wise to encourage a sense of destiny in others. A remark made by John Wesley's mother did this for him when he lived through a fire as a child. "Thou art a brand plucked from the burning. God must have some special purpose for us to perform."

4. PICTURE CHARACTER ACHIEVEMENT

More important than picturing vocational direction is the ability to encourage character development. One way to do this is to know the meaning of his name. People like it when we see the meaning of their name and can translate it into character. For example, Amanda means "Worthy of Love." Michael means "God-Like." After we picture character achievement, we can design projects to help them develop their character. These projects must be practical, measurable, and achievable. We should create them to strengthen character qualities. Examples can be challenging him to memorize Scripture, plan a trip to the Holy Land, or schedule a track invasion to help him develop confidence in witnessing.

The fourth and final level of friendship is Intimate Friendship and Fellowship. We can only reach this level by taking steps from Acquaintances to Casual Friends. From Casual Friends, we must become Close Friends who share common interests and

goals. This fourth level is one of "soul relationships." Life-partners should always be at this level. Unfortunately, not all are here, but this is the goal for which we should strive.

We base intimate friendship on the commitment to developing each other's character. This includes the freedom to correct each other. We can only do this if we



have the close bonds intimacy requires. This is the only level that allows for the gratification of our sexual desires, and then only through marriage. Too often, people meet and go to this level as casual friends. This is dangerous. Not only is it unsafe and spiritually destructive, but it also destroys the

relationship before it has a chance to develop.

When we break the barriers between friendship levels before it's too early, we break a trust. Nineteen years old, Rick had just begun his preaching ministry. He loved God and looked forward to becoming a pastor someday. While at a church picnic, Rick met 17-year-old Faye. She was visiting her cousin Sarah. Rick and Faye liked each other. She was small and fragile, someone Rick could see himself spending his life with. Faye thought Rick was fantastic: godly, gentle, and kind. They arranged to go out the following Friday night. Rick was the perfect gentleman. After a month of dating, he bought her a promise ring. It was beautiful. It had a tiny diamond chip. This was it! She was his!

Rick went to Faye's house the following Saturday while her parents were out of town. They knew they were wrong, but after all, they were practically engaged. Five weeks after they met, they went from casual to intimate friends at level four before building the necessary foundation. Once they broke the barriers in their minds, there was no protection.

Three days later, Faye mailed Rick's promise ring back. She couldn't face him. In breaking the trust, each had lost respect for the other. Rick blamed Faye because she gave in, and Faye felt Rick would have waited if he loved her. This is common even in our sexually confused culture. The cultural rules may change, but the inherent nature God gave man won't. When we do wrong, our hearts will tell us.

Jane and Sue met at their apartment's laundry mat. They found that they had much in common. Their husbands worked for the same company. Both had two children the same age. They liked the same music, television shows, and restaurants. This newfound friendship excited them.

They rose early in the morning to get their chores done so they could have more time together. After the first week, Sue noticed that Jane was harsher with her children than her own. This wasn't too bad until Jane told Sue how to raise her children. This bothered Sue. Sue got annoyed with her when she took it upon herself to tell Sue that she should be a better wife. Then, she proceeded to tell her how to improve. Sue couldn't take it anymore. She told Jane to find another friend. She would run her own life, thank you. Jane crossed from the Casual Friendship level to the privileges of Close Friendship without building the necessary foundation. We invite trouble when we skip a relationship level.

We don't always have to know our level in our relationships. But we must understand that we can't move too fast. If we do, we'll regret it. Many Christians become disillusioned and bitter because they've trusted people they didn't know well.

We need to make one point in any discussion on relationships. The art of developing healthy relationships is not always knowing how to develop relationships. Understanding how to detect and end harmful friendships is often necessary. When we find, after meeting someone, that they pull us away from God, we might need to consider what kind of influence this person has over us. No friend is worth losing God

for. If we're honest with ourselves and God, we'll recognize and avoid unhealthy, dangerous relationships.

If we want God's will, we'll sharpen our awareness of our relationships with others. A friend of mine has a son, Mark, who learned this the hard way. Fortunately, he realized what was happening to him before it destroyed his life and ministry potential. Last summer, when he was 16, the week before youth camp, they had a lock-in with about 40 teenagers at their church. There were several older girls there that nobody knew very well. They knew some of the local church's young people. One of these girls, Debbie, was wild. She was two years older than Mark. She decided that she wanted to date him and started putting on the moves. She went to youth camp with them the following week, and Mark and Debbie got close.

Debbie wanted to be a good Christian. She wanted God in her life; she just hadn't developed the strength of character to combat her loosened drives. She had been in some heavy relationships in her past, and she wasn't ready to settle down just yet. She struggled with her search for God. By now, Mark had made critical choices in his relationship with God and wanted to enter the ministry.

However, when he met Debbie, he forgot many things, including the ministry. All he cared about was having fun with her. He knew she was wrong for him, but at 16, it's easy to let your hormones think for you. He made some potentially destructive choices. God was merciful and helped him to see what was happening in his life. He only dated Debbie for a few weeks, but it became an important lesson he had to learn.

Mark is 20 and has answered God's call to the ministry today. He knows God has someone for him when the time is right, and he's waiting for her. One of the lessons he learned was that associating with the wrong people could cause serious harm to your spirit, especially if it's someone who has a strong influence over you. Even Christians can fall into this trap. The Bible promises, *"Discretion will protect you, and understanding will guard you. It will save we also from the adulteress, from the*

wayward wife with her seductive words, who has left the partner of her youth and ignored the covenant she made before God." (Proverbs 2:11, 16-17).

CHAPTER SIX

WHAT'S IN A GENDER

God placed specific needs within the natures of men and women. As much as our modern age wants to break down the gender barriers and advance unisex, it is impossible. Although some will fall for it, those who know God won't be deceived. As we follow the principles for marriage and relationships in Scripture, we understand that men and women are different. There are many differences. A man need not live with a woman very long to see this. This is the natural part to recognize. Unfortunately, few will go on to discover just what those differences are. Once understood, we can learn to build and structure our relationship with each other's basic inherent needs.

The old couple illustrates a relationship based on needs. Although married for many, many years, they were still in love. A woman must receive love to flourish. As Thielicke stated, "It was not because she was a cheerful and pleasant person that her husband loved her all those years. It was the other way around." Because he loved her, she became the cheerful, pleasant person in his illustration.

In this chapter, we will examine the wife's seven basic needs and the husband's seven basic needs. If we can come to understand them and learn to work within the framework they set in marriage, we will fill our homes with the joy and harmony God intended.

SEVEN BASIC NEEDS OF A WIFE

1. She needs the stability and direction of a spiritual leader.

Only a strong spiritual leader can fill Many women's needs. Spiritual leadership is more than an indicator of a man's spiritual condition. It shows the direction he's going. When a husband fails to be the home's spiritual leader, the wife aches for his

leadership. Women shouldn't be forced to take on the pressure of being the family's spiritual leader. When a husband is not spiritual where he needs to be, he leaves his wife under pressure that is not meant for her. She feels her life is out of control. An unexplainable fear smothers her with a feeling of helplessness. Even as a Christian, a husband who is not the leader of the family forces her to make choices she should never have to make. This leaves her alone to accept the results of her decision and often the blame from her husband.

I often remind women (either dating or contemplating marriage) that in our culture, a woman takes more than the man's name. She also takes his identity. The doctor's wife lives according to her husband's ability to provide and status in the community. The plumber's wife, the butcher's wife, the preacher's wife, the drunkard's wife, and the beggar's wife all share one crucial truth: they follow that husband physically, financially, emotionally, and spiritually wherever he leads. Even in our liberal feminist culture, whether we admit it or not, we follow our husband's lead based on his professional and spiritual choices. Thus, in essence, we become an extension of our husband. This is hard to accept, but if you stop and think about the couples you know in your own life, you will agree.

There are four areas of leadership a wife wants in her husband:

A. He must have an earnest desire to seek the Lord.

A woman needs to know that her husband loves the Lord and is getting his direction from Him. This comes from a consistent, growing relationship with God. Husbands should list the evidence that shows a desire to seek the Lord.

- a. Regular times in God's Word
- b. Consistent memorization of Scripture
- c. Faithfulness in prayer
- d. Regular church attendance

- e. Reading Christian books
- f. Fellowship with sincere Christians
- g. Discussions of spiritual matters
- h. Regularly paying tithes

B. He must base his convictions on Scripture.

Seeing her husband living God's standards motivates a woman to submit to his leadership and set similar standards. These convictions should include loving God by loving his wife, children, and others (1 John 4:20) and avoiding actions or activities that might cause her or others to stumble (Romans 14). Another conviction could include making their homes a center of Godly learning and living (Psalms 101).

Many years ago, I desperately wanted a stable, Christian home. My husband wasn't that strong in his relationship with God. I was somewhat skeptical when he finally decided to make essential changes in his life. Nevertheless, after he had been consistent for some time, through God's leading, I started following him in his spiritual choices for our home. Making the right choices was much easier when I knew he was setting the standard for our home as its leader.

C. He must determine to follow the convictions.

Consistent obedience to Scriptural standards provides the strength and example a wife needs to obey God and to follow her husband. Husbands should list the obstacles preventing them from consistently obeying God's Word. Then, determine steps to overcome them:

- a. Influence of and attention to TV
- b. Influence of wrong friends
- c. Losing temper

- d. Wrong priorities
- e. Guilt from past failures
- f. Lack of wisdom
- g. Bondage to enslaving habits
- h. Pride and willfulness

D. *He must show love in whatever he does.*

Exhibiting the fruit of the Spirit in all his actions is evidence of God's Spirit leading and motivating. The first fruit is love. How are you showing love to your wife? Ask her to explain which ones do or do not express love to her and why. Don't be disappointed if she tells you that some cherished habit bothers her. You want her to be honest in her appraisal. When you do this, however, you must be prepared to accept what she says and assure her of your sincerity. Then prove it by acting on what she tells you.

2. *She needs to know that she is meeting essential needs in his life and work that no other woman can meet.*

A wife wants to know and feel she is unique to her husband. God made her to be man's "helpmate." The needs she meets in your life must be relevant to you. The more important they are, the more you should complement and appreciate them.

Men tend not to share their real needs with their wives. They want them to admire them as successes. Before you have her honor, you must show her humility. You will receive and hold her love more quickly by sharing your failures than by sharing only your successes with her. You must explain your needs and help her understand exactly what she can do to help meet them.

- * List needs that your wife is now meeting that no other woman can meet.

- a. She is the basis of your most important message, illustrating how Christ loves the church.
- b. She provides the potential for power in your prayers (1 Peter 3:7).
- c. She is an "alarm system" against other women with wrong motives.
- d. She is a mirror of your present spiritual condition.
- e. She can give you the joy of a physical relationship without guilt (Proverbs 5:19,20).
- f. She is a safeguard for your hasty decisions because of her need for security and consistency.
- g. She instills godly attitudes in the children.
- h. She discerns the real needs of the children.

3. ***She needs to see and hear that he cherishes her and delights in her as a person.***

A woman needs to know that her husband cherishes her. Most men need help understanding what this means and how to do it. To cherish her means that you see much value in her, protect her, and compliment her to others. Your wife must know that she is an integral part of your world. She also must know that your love for her goes beyond what she does for you.

She must know that you love her for her sake and long to be with her. She wants to know that the qualities in her that you fell in love with are still important to you. You need to repeat expressions of your love to her often. The proof that a husband cherishes his wife is his ability to take unchangeable experiences, physical features, and personality characteristics that she has a hard time accepting and turn them into praiseworthy attributes in her.



While a man gets much of his self-worth and approval through his profession and work, a woman gets most of her value affirmation from her husband. Even successful professional women get limited satisfaction from these pursuits. If married, they need to receive much of their positive affirmation from their husbands. This is done in many ways, some subtle. An example of this affirmation can be seen when a husband takes the few extra seconds necessary to open the car door for his wife. It sends the message to the world that she is important to him.

While leaving a restaurant one evening, Danny opened the car door for his wife, Mary, while their 17-year-old son, Jim, opened the rear car door for their 14-year-old daughter, Liz. The woman sitting in the booth next to where they had been sitting saw this through the window and hit her husband. Mary and Liz laughed when they saw it, but Mary was wise enough to realize how blessed she was to have a husband who enjoyed "showing her off in public." They've also instilled this into their sons, who know how to treat a lady like a lady (Even if it is their sister).

4. ***She needs to know that he understands her by protecting her in areas of her limitations.***

Women need understanding, especially from their husbands. Most men throw their hands in the air and give-up when they don't understand why a woman is crying or going through a painful, emotionally stressful experience. And then others believe that they thoroughly understand their wives. Most do not.

Wives want boundaries that show concern for them, not neglect of them. They want them to know their spiritual, mental, emotional, and physical strengths and weaknesses. They want you to have the wisdom and courage to provide loving but firm direction so they won't fail by going beyond their limits. Occasionally, they may ask for something they don't want or need. This can be a test to see if you understand their real needs and the dangers they face. If you give her whatever she wants, she

will become insecure. A husband should know his wife so well that he understands when to be firm and when to be lenient. She respects loving firmness when you both know it's correct.

5. ***She needs to know that he enjoys setting aside time for an intimate conversation.***

A wife needs intimate conversation. This kind of communication is possible only with oneness of spirit: the goal of marriage. At the close of the day, there is so much to talk about. Women must share their experiences, expressing hidden, confused feelings. They need to know that you are listening and are not anxious to get away and do something else.

One way to ensure intimate conversation is to have a regular time planned for it. The most intimate ultimate level of communication occurs when a wife can trust her husband with the deepest secrets of her heart. Most wives have fears and feelings that they never share with their husbands. There are several reasons that wives don't share all their feelings:

- a. Feeling guilty for having them
- b. Hoping they will pass
- c. Fearing rejection from their husband
- d. Desiring to reduce their husband's burdens
- e. Know that their husbands don't know the answers

Husbands need to help their wives overcome their fears. You can do this only if you give her respect and value by listening to her and encouraging her to talk. What she has to say is essential to her. Be careful not to belittle her or make what she says

seem insignificant. If you do, she will find someone else to talk to, and your relationship will suffer for it.

Mike and Tina are so busy during the day that they sit up talking late many nights. This is usually the only time they have alone. As a woman, Tina gets emotions bottled up inside. Through the years, her wise husband has been a sounding board. Many times, he just says, "Um-hum, yeah. Right." Women often find solutions as we talk things out. If things stay inside, it confuses us until we feel like an emotional wreck. We must get it on the outside so we can see it.

Some common fears wives have are:

- a. Insecurity if her husband dies
- b. Growing old
- c. Becoming unattractive to her husband
- d. Ill health due to past sins
- e. Failing as a wife or mother
- f. The loss of her husband's job
- g. Having a mental breakdown
- h. Social awkwardness
- i. Educational deficiency
- j. Physical safety when alone
- k. Future of the children
- L. Displacement by another

6. ***She needs to know that he is aware of her presence even when his mind is on other matters.***

When your wife is confident that you think about her and are aware of her presence, it assures her of your love and protection. It is this courtesy that won her in

the beginning. She can vividly recall your awareness of her presence and attentiveness to her needs before marriage. She feels hurt, shut out, and lonely if this is missing.

Attentiveness to a woman's presence is the fundamental basis of manners and explains women's concerns about them. Your wife has a way of "measuring" your awareness every day. This tells her how much of a part of your life she is. Manners require consistency. If you treat your wife like a queen one day and ignore her the next, she will feel insecure and resist your attention in order not to let you hurt her.

- * Love has good manners. Which of the following manners do you consistently practice?
- a. Helping her on and off with her coat
 - b. Seating her at the table
 - c. Open doors for her, especially the car door
 - d. Lifting heavy objects for her
 - e. Ordering for her at restaurants
 - f. Knowing and using table manners
 - g. Punctuality
 - h. Properly introducing her
 - i. Telling her your schedule
 - j. Refraining from crude language, criticism, and improper subjects
 - k. Personal cleanliness, neatness, and grooming

Explain to your wife that you plan to work on developing good manners. Ask her to help you by waiting for you to open the door, standing by her chair, and gently reminding you of appointments. (Don't get upset with him if he has been sitting for a while before he notices you standing. It takes time to develop new habits).

- * Be alert and responsive to your wife's "daily readings" of your awareness of her presence. When she asked you a question:
1. Stop what you are doing
 2. Look at her
 3. Smile when you talk
 4. Answer her questions, even little ones
 5. Tell her with your eyes that you love her

7. *She needs to see that he is making investments in her life that will expand and fulfill her world.*

The primary function of the head is to develop, train, and protect the rest of our body so the whole being can achieve its highest potential. In this sense, the husband is to be the head of the wife (Ephesians 5:23). He is responsible for seeing that his family is in a good Bible-based church and that he is close enough to God to recognize solid teaching from false doctrines.

A wife can become discouraged if she feels her husband concerns himself with employers, employees, colleagues, church members, etc., more than he is concerned with her needs and world. She wants to be an essential part of his world. If she is not, her world begins to disappoint and smother her.

SEVEN BASIC NEEDS OF A HUSBAND

1. *He needs her to respect him as a man.*

Wives have a power that few understand. It is said, "Behind every good man, there is a woman." There is more truth here than we realize. Women can encourage men

into greatness or discourage them into despair. With a few well-chosen words, she can build his confidence and convince him that he can conquer any obstacle. *"Every wise woman buildeth her house: but the foolish plucketh it down with her own hands" (Proverbs 14:1).*

The Bible tells us to reverence our husbands. When a wife loses respect for him, she slowly chips away at his confidence and manhood. A man can handle anything if he has a loving, supportive wife. If she turns against him, what does he have left? An uninformed or selfish wife can do severe damage to her marriage.

Women can place difficult, if not impossible, expectations on men. If she doesn't



use wisdom, she can destroy her husband's confidence and manliness. She does this by expecting him to know what protection she needs without communicating it. The husband is to protect his wife; however, she must reveal her needs to him. Whether these needs are physical, spiritual, mental, or

emotional, she must tell him what is on her mind.

A wife will often solve many problems if her husband listens to her. When a woman keeps her feelings inside, she can't look objectively at the circumstances. When she can express her feelings without fear of condemnation or rejection, she often recognizes thoughts she may be wrestling with. She does this not only at the conscious level but subconsciously and unconsciously, too. She can gain a clearer perspective and insight into her feelings this way. This freedom to talk helps her find a solution.

Women who become financially independent can carelessly hurt their husbands. Making more money than her husband shouldn't be a problem. It will, though, unless both are prepared for it. Self-sufficiency kills love. It can crush a man's spirit when his

wife tells him she doesn't need him. She can do this through her actions and careless words.

Wives can also adversely affect their husbands by having greater loyalty to outside leadership. If a woman constantly reminds her husband of what Pastor Jones says about everything, she can create tension between her husband and Pastor Jones. The husband is the Spiritual leader of the home. Pastor Jones, the Bible teacher, and Old Sainted Aunt Millie all have an important place, but the husband is the leader.

When a wife resists her husband's decisions in her spirit, he knows it. When he makes choices and she draws back because of distrust, it affects his self-worth. A wife's spirit controls her husband's ambition. He is free to succeed when she supports her husband and allows him to fail without condemnation. If he is free to fail and not be criticized, he will also have the freedom to succeed.

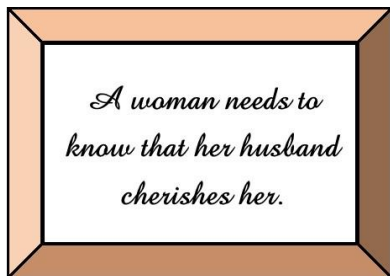
A wife tends to see her husband's actions as a reflection of herself, often resisting his plans and decisions because she doesn't want to be or look like a failure. This isn't God's plan. A wife reflects her husband. An excellent example is the old married couple at the beginning of this chapter. Women reflect their husbands on the world around them. When a husband loves and cherishes his wife, her continence and attitude will show it.

2. He needs her to accept him as a leader and believe in his God-given responsibilities.

Let's look at the basic needs of a leader for a moment. A leader must have the reassurance that his authority comes from God. Scripture reveals the husband's authority. Husbands must govern their wives. (See Genesis 3:16). Wives are to submit to their husbands. (See Ephesians 5:22; Colossians 3:18; I Peter 3:1). Christ and the Church illustrate the husband's headship (See 1 Corinthians 11:3; see Chapter One).

A wife must reassure her husband that he is her God-given leader. She must have confidence that God is working through him. God works through his decisions, whether good ones or bad ones. A poor decision reveals his needs, allowing her to petition him and show godly character. The more she trusts him, the more careful he will be in making choices. It also increases his confidence in her involvement in the decision-making process.

A woman needs to show loyalty to her husband when he does make a mistake that causes pressure to increase. A wife can demonstrate commitment through adversity or misfortune. When she unreservedly stands by him under any circumstance, she shows him that she trusts him. When she does this, she has total



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trust and devotion. A real test of loyalty is when a wife bites her tongue instead of saying, "I told you so!" Sometimes, his decision results in added pressure: financial, mental, or even spiritual. A wise woman will use this pressure to show her husband her loyalty and confidence in his leadership, saying, "It's okay. We will get through this together."

A man needs his wife to encourage him not to give up God-given goals. Sometimes, a husband will become discouraged by circumstances outside the home. Pressure from work, responsibilities at church, or problems with a family member can seriously strain the family. A wife can encourage him through carefully chosen words or her quiet, loving presence. Men need their wives to hold them when their world closes in. As adults, we never outgrow our need to be touched, held, and comforted.

Leaders must have patience while they are under pressure. A man's goals often involve long-range achievement. A wife's needs usually include immediate projects. Both women and men need to learn to accept difficult situations from God without giving Him a deadline to remove them because they are for our benefit.

A man needs his wife to show enthusiasm for his achievements. A husband perceives rejection of his performance as a rejection of him. A wife can share his excitement with him. This is important for wives to understand. A man derives most of his self-worth through his achievements. When his wife shares his excitement over what he has done, she knits her heart with his. A man will look forward to coming straight home to a wife who revels in his successes.

A wife needs to show attentiveness when her husband is talking. When she looks at her husband admiringly when he talks to others, it inspires their respect. People respect a man if they believe his wife respects him.

3. He needs her to continue to develop inward and outward beauty.

A woman's desire at marriage is to become more and more the wife of her husband's dreams. She does this partly by her outward appearance. Women must spend extra time and effort on their appearance because it expresses reverence for their husbands. We should dress to please our husbands and draw attention to our countenance, not our bodies.

A meek and quiet spirit is essential for a wife's beauty (I Peter 3:1-7). Meekness is yielding rights. It is the opposite of harshness and anger. We must yield our rights and expectations to God. When we do, we will not become disillusioned when disappointment does occur. We can discern how God can use disappointments to develop godly character.

4. He needs her to lovingly petition him when he goes beyond his limitations. Wisely respond to those who question his ideas, goals, or motives.

We covered the principle of a petition in Chapter Four. We can use the same basic principle in petitioning God. We can ask God to show our husbands where they are

wrong. We must show a Godly attitude in our petition, whether to God or our husbands.

Women must carefully protect the honor of their husbands by not discrediting them. We can do this by the words we say about him or by our facial expressions when his name is mentioned. A wife should never participate in a "husband bashing" party. Sometimes, we need to share our feelings with others, but make sure it's one or two trusted individuals who have proven their discretion. People who react to our husbands will often distort and misuse our words. Nothing is more frustrating than having our words twisted and used against us. Women must be careful not to give anyone ammunition to use against their husbands.

5. *A husband needs time to be alone with the Lord.*

God created man to have fellowship with Him first. Adam walked with God before God created Eve. A woman must never allow her relationship with her husband to interfere with his relationship with God. God bases a man's success on seeking after Him. When a woman marries a man, and he becomes her spiritual leader, she will show much wisdom to encourage his relationship with God.

The more vibrant a man's fellowship is with God, the sweeter his fellowship will be with his wife. When a man is out of harmony with God, he will lose his close connection with his wife and children. He will appreciate and value his family more as he draws closer to God. This is because his life-partner usually fulfills his hunger for intimate fellowship. He will also see the eternal hope and know he is responsible for his family's future.

A wise woman will encourage her husband to find a quiet place to be alone with God. She must understand that his desire to be alone is not a rejection of her. Time alone allows a man to regain a broader perspective. He also needs to spend time with

other men. This masculine fellowship helps to sharpen his thinking. *"Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend"* (Proverbs 27:17).

6. He needs her to be grateful for all he has done and is doing for her.

Gratefulness is among the most critical attitudes a person can have. Without it, we begin to take God and others for granted. What are the fundamental aspects of gratefulness, especially concerning our husband?

First, we begin by giving all our expectations to God (Ps. 62:5). Expectations destroy gratefulness. It's easy to go from expecting something to demanding it. When we expect something, we are no longer grateful for receiving it. Gratefulness is the basis of happiness. *A happy wife is a crown to her husband, and an unhappy wife is a public rebuke to him* (Proverbs 12:4). If you continue to expect an expensive lifestyle, especially when it taxes your husband's ability to give, he may try to decrease your expectations by providing you less. A wise woman will be genuinely grateful for evidence of her husband's love.

Another aspect of gratefulness is to learn contentment with godliness (1 Timothy 6:6). We must set our affections on heaven and be willing to forget this world to win more of Christ. Temporal values so easily compete with Jesus for our attention. We will receive more of Christ as we are willing to give all.

A wife should work to help her husband gain scriptural self-acceptance. She can do this by realizing that she and his priorities often differ. By listing what he has done for her and what he has wisely not done, it's easy for a wife to overlook the mistakes and failures her husband has avoided because he allowed God to lead in his decisions. A wife should complement her husband for any achievement in areas where she wants him to excel. This is part of picturing character achievement for intimate friends from Chapter Five.

7. *He needs a wife whom other people praise for her character and good works.*

Reading the 31st chapter of Proverbs shows us how seriously God takes this. God wants women to bring honor to Him and His power in their lives. A virtuous woman can build a man into God's man for his generation through the wisdom she receives from God. As a husband and wife become one and apply God's principles into their lives, they magnify God and make His integrity and truth visible before a watching world.

God made men and women with different needs, desires, strengths, weaknesses, and abilities. This was to help us work together in one mind, heart, and spirit to achieve God's plan for our lives. Our strengths and weaknesses complement each other, so we are one.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THAT IMPOSSIBLE CREATURE: THE TEENAGER

Mark Twain once said, "When a kid turns thirteen, stick him in a barrel, nail the lid shut, and feed him through the knothole. When he turns sixteen, plug the hole." Although this is not practical, it can be tempting to the parents of a teenager.

A well-known philosopher wrote, "Our youth love luxury. They have bad manners and contempt for authority; they disrespect their elders and love to chatter in place of exercise. Children are now tyrants, not the servants of their households. They no longer rise when their elders enter the room. They contradict their parents, chatter before company, gobble up food, and tyrannize teachers." Socrates penned these words in the year 400 BC.

Teenagers have always been a challenge for parents. It must have been a parent who



said, "The best substitute for experience is being sixteen." When a child reaches adolescence, a new world opens to him. By now, he should have successfully gone through Rapha's first two steps of human development. If so, he will be better prepared to handle the turbulence he will meet as a teenager.

If not, he will have difficulty adjusting to the new requirements that maturity forces upon him.

Bonding is the first stage every child goes through. This stage extends from birth to 2 years. The child needs love. This is when he and his parents form a bond, developing necessary attachments as they get to know one another. A child must successfully bond with his parents. This is the foundation of his relationships for the rest of his life.

In his best-seller, *The Search for Significance*, Robert McGee calls the second stage of a child's development the Separateness Stage. This begins at age two and continues through about the age of eleven. After those precious first words, "Momma" and "Dadda," babies quickly learn another not-so-precious word, "No!" Children struggle for independence early in their lives. During the Separateness stage, they must set and define personal boundaries, including those they are and are not responsible for. They will sometimes surprise us with their mature responses and attitudes during these years. We might come home one day to find that our 10-year-old daughter has washed dishes, scrubbed the kitchen floor, and cooked dinner. This stems from a natural desire to grow up.

It's destructive for a child not successfully to move through these stages. He will go from one step without the proper foundation. He will have a strong sense of inherent worth if he successfully goes through the bonding and separateness stages. He will know that he is loved and is lovable. This foundation will better prepare him to reach out to others and form healthy relationships later in life. He will be more self-assured in his thoughts, feelings, and behavior and less swayed by peer pressure in adolescence.

Rebellion is rampant today, even for a child with the strongest foundation. This is a difficult time in our world. We are going through terrible culture shocks. The economic future is ominous. Future hope is a relic, a mere memory of yesteryear. Morals and ethics no longer matter. Sin is now a virtue, and we consider virtues vices. The temptations we had as teenagers and those facing our children are like a pussycat compared to a tiger.

We are sometimes too quick to compare ourselves with our children. This is dangerous. We have never faced the pressure they live under today. Sure, drugs, alcohol, and premarital sex were in abundance even then. Yet, they were not the

norm. Only the "bad kids" were doing them. Those who did were outcasts. Today's teenager is an outcast if he doesn't give in to these temptations.

During Adolescence, McGee's third stage of growth, children become adults. From 12 to 18, a child goes from childhood to adulthood. He passes through many complex trials and tests during these turbulent years. He builds relationships that will stay with him throughout his adult life. He determines his gender behavior during adolescence. Today's public schools are taking advantage of this as they work to make it more difficult for kids even to be sure of their gender. These few years are critical in our children's lives.

His identity will develop in these all too short years. He enters adolescence as a child; he leaves as a man. At age 12, a child is still a child. Each consecutive year increases his desire to grow up, heightening his demands for freedom. He pressures his parents as he works to break away from his childhood role and searches for his own identity.

These are critical years. Churches that don't understand the needs of each passing year in a teenager's life can't possibly meet his needs. Twelve and 13-year-olds are just beginning to explore their sexuality. Their bodies start to develop and change. Boys struggle with an occasional high-pitched squeal as their voices grow deeper. They resemble a baby calf whose legs and arms grow longer, clumsily knocking a glass off of shelves and pictures off the walls. Everything in their world revolves around the question, "What do people think of me?"

At ages 14 and 15, they've made it through much of their clumsiness and are taking the opposite sex more seriously. They yearn to grow up quickly. Their battle for independence takes on new dimensions. They no longer accept their parent's flippant response, "Because I said so," in answer to their questions. They want real answers. If their parents have lovingly guided them through their early childhood, they may listen to them now.

They only see the immediate, the now. They can't see the big picture. They only see that Pastor Jones tells everyone not to do something, and then he does it himself. They quickly pick up on a parent's phony walk with Christ. It's so important that parents are open and honest with their children.



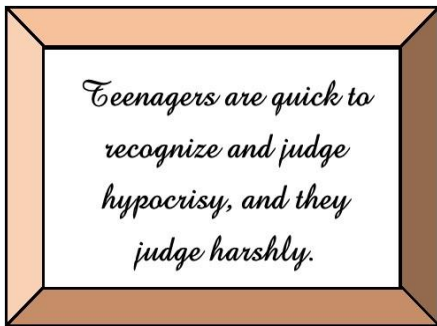
At age 16, he begins to think about his future: mate, career, lifestyle, education, etc. Between the ages of 16 and 19, his adult identity takes form. How he relates to the opposite sex, gender behavior, and adult relationships (or at least habit patterns for determining adult relationships) are becoming character traits.

The final test of our success as parents is the result of our child's adult life. This can't always be seen when they are 14 years old trying to be twenty-four. Parents must be the most patient people in the world. In the end, patient endurance will bear the fruit of a mature young man or woman of God.

ROAD TO REBELLION

Even when we make mistakes in the child's formative years, God can use them (Romans 8:28). In this chapter, we will look at how an adolescent develops destructive attitudes of rebellion and anger. If we're sincere in our desire to mold our children into strong men and women of God, we must fight their battles, even when they don't know how to or are unwilling to do it for themselves.

Twelve-year-old Timmy Sparks couldn't believe his ears. His dad had said he would come to watch him play in the big game on Saturday. Since Timmy started in Little League, his father had never seen him play. Boy, was he excited! Timmy went to practice the next day and told all his teammates that his dad was coming to the



game. He told his coach that he wanted to save his dad a seat right up front so he could see him more clearly.

Saturday morning, Timmy jumped out of bed without his mother having to scold him. He had his uniform all washed and ironed. His mother had paid particular attention to every detail, anything to make Timmy "look sharp for Dad."

The game was at one-o'clock. Timmy knew that the other team was in trouble. He felt like he could take them on single-handedly. At 12:15, the phone rang. "Sure. Yeah. Yeah, I'll be there in a few minutes." It was his dad's office.

Timmy never said a word. Instead, he went into his room and shut the door. His dad had forgotten again. Through his tears, he began to believe that his father didn't love him.

Timmy went to the game alone that day with a broken heart. He could have reminded his father of the game, but he felt he wouldn't have forgotten it if he were important to his father.

From then on, Timmy found he couldn't respond to his father like before. He developed inner conflicts with visible symptoms that became a pattern of destructive behavior for the next several years.

What causes rebellion to develop in a teenager? Rebellion often has a beginning or roots if we take the time to look for them. It can be planted in the heart like a seed planted in the earth. It often starts with a wounded spirit. Usually, like Timmy, it occurs after several incidents of a parent's failure. Repeated messages of rejection and alienation from parents or those in authority will eventually turn a teenager off to one who continually hurts them. Sometimes, we fail to recognize that a setback or rejection to a teenager affects the same level of emotions that it does adults. We have just had

more experience in coping with them. Adults often see problems in the lives of their children as trivial. To the child, it is traumatic.

A visible symptom of a wounded spirit is communication breakdown (silence at the dinner table, going to bed early). When this happens, parents usually respond inappropriately. They will likely overlook the silence temporarily, expecting him to forget soon. "Oh, he'll get over it."

If the child gets no relief from his parents [accepting and admitting that they made a mistake and asking forgiveness], the child will develop an ungrateful spirit. J. Edgar Hoover noticed that one chief characteristic of a juvenile delinquent is ungratefulness: the attitude that the world owes him a living. Ungratefulness results from the alienation of affection. He will withhold his affection from the parents who have hurt him.

When a parent recognizes ungratefulness in their child, they will sometimes compare his benefits with their past hardships ("When we were your age . . ."). This only drives him deeper into rebellion. He begins to resent his parents for not understanding and caring. This leads to a teenager's battle with the inner conflict of the rejection of authority. Rebellion is not nearly as easy for teenagers as most people believe. This is especially true if the child has bonded with his parents and knows his actions will hurt them.

When he decides to reject authority, it will manifest itself in stubbornness. He will be slow to follow through on orders. When told to do something, he won't do it. When questioned about it, he shrugs it off as if he doesn't care what anyone thinks. Parents see this stubbornness and respond by trying to coax him to obey. Nagging only increases his determination and alienates him further. When this happens, he takes the next step of setting himself up as his own authority in his heart.

He may live in his parent's home and give token recognition to their authority; however, he will set his standards and make rules for his life when he is away from

them. Self-authority produces relative standards. By now, he is in open rebellion. He desires an equal voice with his parents.

This change perplexes his parents, who usually increase their demands and tighten regulations. They take on the attitude: "More freedom requires more responsibility." This approach never works. When a parent tightens the reigns, especially in areas they never had to, the child will pull against them harder.

He begins to develop new friends. His old ones are not compatible with his new attitude. Rebels are drawn to those of like spirit. His new friends will be a comfort and counsel to him while his "unreasonable" parents keep picking on him.

There are three common characteristics of wrong friends. The first one is that they serve fleshly appetites. These will usually be the ones who already have addictive habits. Second, they take pride in the very actions that should embarrass them. The third characteristic is that they have no concern for eternity (Philippians 3:19).

When their child begins running around with the wrong crowd, parents start asking questions about his new friends. They will want to know what their parents do and where they live.

When parents ask questions about their child's friends, he defends them. With the defense of his friends comes the defense of sensuality. He then feels compelled to defend what he and his friends are doing, which forces the teenager to take a stand on morality. Parents usually respond by condemning or condoning their activities by comparing the present morality of their children to their own past actions.

When a teenager defends his friends and what they do together, he wrestles with a deep sense of guilt. This guilt will often manifest itself in his condemnation of others. He can point out every act of hypocrisy in the church or family. He will magnify every flaw of others in his own eyes. Parents usually respond by justifying their actions and attitudes.

Nevertheless, this doesn't change anything. The child sees the parents' defense of all the hypocrites as a double standard. He won't understand why his parents complain and gripe about everything he does while defending others he sees as no different. If his parents haven't reached him by now, a teenager will toy with thoughts of suicide.

There are four types of suicide facing our children. The first is mental suicide. He will quit when the teenager's mind has been given over to despair and hopelessness. This can lead to his running away from home, even if he has nowhere to go. The inner-city streets are full of children who would rather sell their bodies for food than go home to parents who they feel don't understand them.

The second type of suicide is moral suicide. A teenager repeatedly giving himself over to his sensual desires will eventually become deluded about truth. God's Word and the parents who try to live it become enemies.

Spiritual suicide is the third type of suicide challenging teenagers. If his parents don't reach him and help him turn around soon, his heart will become seared over. Years ago, when a man had his leg or arm amputated, the doctor had a flat, hot, iron surface to sear the end. This stopped the bleeding and deadened the raw nerve endings. Even the gentle prodding of the Holy Spirit may not reach a seared heart. The Bible calls this reprobation (Romans 1:28). Once a person becomes a reprobate, they have sold themselves over to Satan.

The fourth and final type of suicide is physical suicide. This results in death. In 1989, Dr. Seymour Perlin, board chairman of the National Youth Suicide Center in Washington D.C., estimated that about "2 million people between the ages of thirteen and nineteen attempt suicide each year." These numbers increase annually. We see:

- Suicide is the second-leading cause of death among teenagers.
- Approximately 6,000 adolescents will take their lives annually.

- If we include all age groups, those numbers climb to 30,000 successful suicides per year.
- According to the National Institute of Mental Health, this is nearly one person every twenty minutes or more than 70 persons per day.
- Nearly 12% of all school children will experience serious ideas of suicide at least once.
- Each day, more than thirteen persons between the ages of fifteen and twenty-four will take their lives.
- Since 1970, the suicide rate for adolescents has risen 44% while increasing less than 3% in the nation as a whole.

Before a child reaches this point, wise parents should pray and seek direction from God. He will show us where we've failed. We need to then go to the child and seek forgiveness. There is no other way to retrieve a child who is this deep in the clutches of Satan. Unfortunately, most parents are too proud to do this or do not understand how important this step is.

Remember that we all base our reality and truth on what and how we perceive specific messages and stimuli from those around us. This stimulus doesn't necessarily have to be the truth. We react to what we believe another person means by his actions. It matters little that a father says he loves his son and he feels he proves it by working to provide a home and food. The son doesn't see this as love. He understands his father is never home and doesn't care about him. Both the father and the son deeply love each other. They have lost the ability to communicate their needs.

Parents are under the illusion that their child's actions are only temporary. They want to believe that the child will grow out of it. This couldn't be further from the truth. A child will often reach adulthood without resolving these inward conflicts. He will probably struggle much of his adult life with questions never answered to his satisfaction as a child. He will fight feelings of doubt and inadequacies he picked up from his parents as a child.

If we have failed our children, we are as much at fault as they are. On the last page of this book is a list of 19 root causes of why children rebel against their parents. We can trace many of the problems parents have with teenagers back to one or more of them.

Children are a trust from God. Parents can't neglect their responsibility and expect the school, church, or youth programs to do their job. The most important way parents can prevent their child from experiencing the deep depression and anguish accompanying this path of rebellion is to admit when they are wrong and ask for forgiveness. Then, they must be willing to change their lives as much as they expect their children to do.

Parents can use the List Method taught in Chapter Four to help see circumstances from the child's point of view and their own. When the teenager sees his parents are sincere, he will slowly come around. Teenagers don't want to be alienated from their parents. If we could see inside the heart of every teenager, we would find that most of them don't want problems with their parents and family; they love their family. They want respect, acceptance, and love.

Teenagers will test their parents to see how sincere they are. The child's eternity is too important to ignore. Parents must forgive. The teenager is the child; the parent is to be the mature adult. Parents can use these tests to reveal God's real character to their children.

Jason was fourteen when he started having problems at school. He had served God since he was a small boy and had even been preaching from age eleven. Nevertheless, some influences managed to get to him because, as pastors, his parents, Becky and Joe, were too busy. They were committed to saving the lost world around them, yet the heart cry of their own child went unheard. He struggled for about six months before he went into an open rebellion. This was a severe trial for the entire family.

His parents were teaching Bible College, completing their master's degree in Christian counseling, and pastoring a church. When Jason ran away from home, his parents had to call the police to pick him up. This made them realize it was time to change something. They resigned from their church and freed themselves from some of their commitments. They completed the year of teaching and finished their schooling while refusing to take on any other responsibilities. They committed to their family and God.

Becky and Joe apologized to their children both privately and publicly. They pledged that when one of their children wanted to talk, they would be available, regardless of what they had to do the next day. Teenagers are not usually ready to speak just because we can finally squeeze in a little time for them. Jason's parents had to learn that sometimes, he was only open to sharing with them at 3 a.m. Our children, next to our life partners, are the most important people in our lives. How can we fail to reach them for Christ if we believe what we preach? The thought of any child going to hell is too disgusting to even think about.

Jason ran away from home in March. He gave his life back to God two days after Christmas of the same year. Between these two dates, his parents stayed up many nights with him. Sometimes, they would talk about nothing important. Sometimes, they played and laughed. Other times, they cried and held him while he fought off the desires and pain of addictions. It didn't matter what they did. He needed to know that he was the most important person in their lives.

NINETEEN REASONS WHY CHILDREN REBEL

1	When a parent does not fulfill promises	the child gets a wounded spirit
2	When a parent does not admit he is wrong	The child loses confidence in his leadership
3	When a parent refuses to ask for forgiveness	The child reacts to his pride.
4	When a parent does not have the right priorities	The child will feel like he is too busy for him
5	When a parent is too strict with discipline	The child has his spirit broken
6	When a parent gives too much freedom to the child	The child sees freedom as a form of rejection
7	When parents neglect their parents	The child does not honor the counsel of his grandparents
8	When a father does not love his wife	The child takes up the offenses of his mother.
9	When parent neglects God's word	The child rejects the authority of God and His Word.
10	When a father sacrifices his family for a better retirement	The child develops temporal values
11	When a parent disciplines in anger	The child has seeds of bitterness
12	When a parent delegates his child's education to others without being involved	The child doesn't respect his teaching
13	When a parent does not teach the child how to please him	The child will feel frustrated and rejected.
14	When parents focus on the outward beauty of others.	The child feels inferior and rejects himself
15	When parents are impatient with their children	The child seeks approval from friends.
16	When parents have inconsistent standards	The child despises him
17	When a father lets his wife assume spiritual leadership	The child may regard religion as childish when he grows up
18	When parents do not have personal convictions	The child accepts situational ethics above what the parents allowed in moderation.
19	When parents try to warn them of the consequences of sin	The child is challenged to be successful in avoiding the consequences.