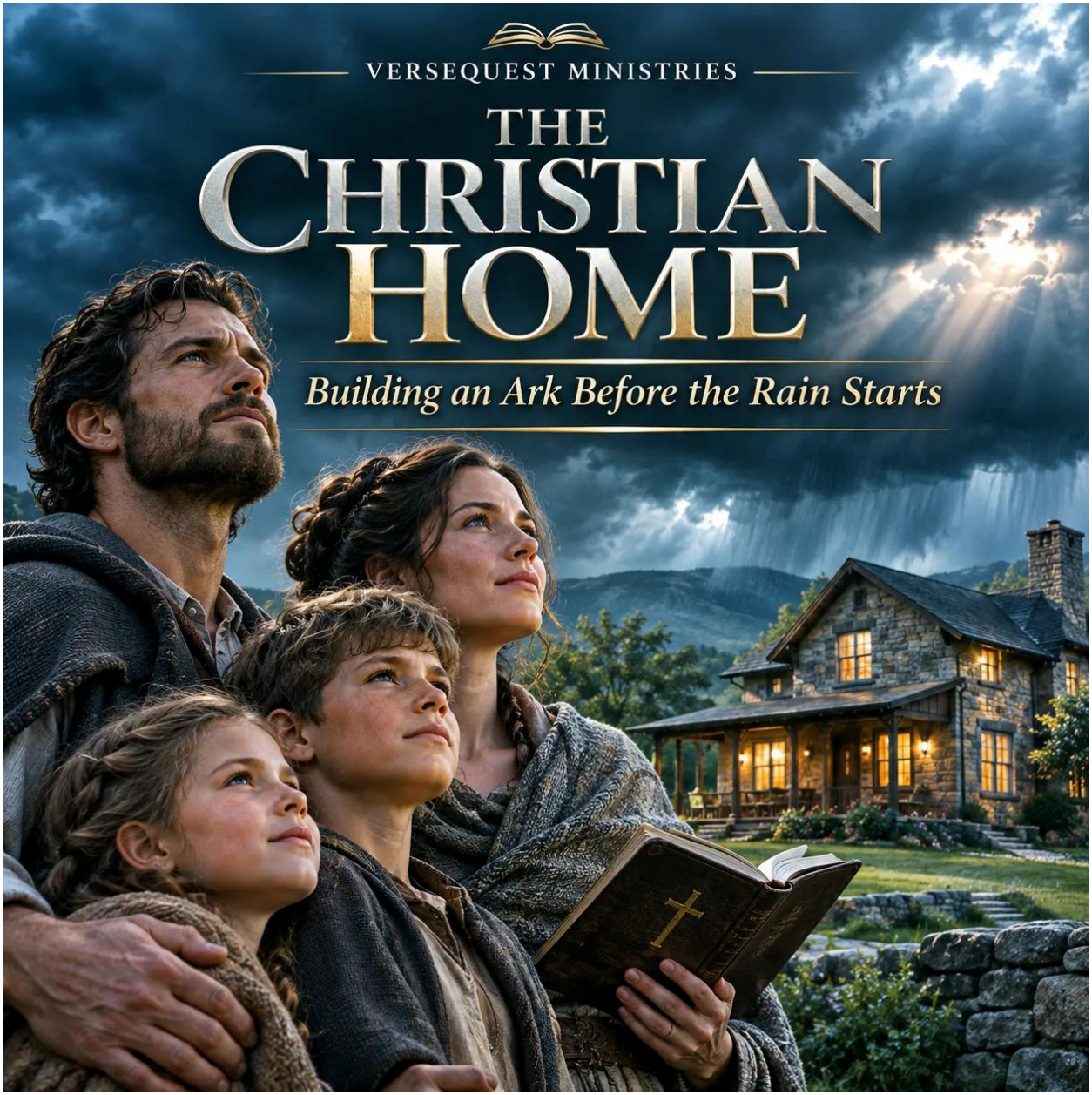
The Christian Home

Building an Ark Before the Rain Starts

Series 1-10

By Paul Tackett

VerseQuest Ministries




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The Christian Home
Building an Ark Before the Rain Starts

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All Scripture quotations in this publication are taken exclusively from the **King James Bible (Authorized Version)**.

This book presents biblical teaching concerning Christian marriage, parental responsibility, godly household leadership, family worship, spiritual discernment, suffering, and the responsibility to instruct future generations according to the Scriptures.

Old Testament historical and covenantal passages are examined in their proper biblical settings, with practical applications distinguished from the doctrinal responsibilities of New Testament believers.

Salvation is presented as the gift of God, received by grace through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, apart from human works or religious merit.

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Faithful to the King James Bible. Dedicated to rightly dividing the Word of truth and strengthening believers through sound biblical teaching.

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The Christian Home — Building an Ark Before the Rain Starts

Introduction — When the World Is Falling Apart, What Is Holding Your House Together?

Noah did not wait until the first raindrop struck the ground before deciding whether God knew what He was talking about. He did not assemble a committee to investigate the likelihood of a flood, consult the neighbors concerning their religious preferences, or postpone construction until the weather became sufficiently alarming. God spoke, Noah believed Him, and the work began. Hebrews 11:7 declares, "By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house." There is enough truth in that verse to straighten out a generation of Christian families that have become remarkably skilled at preparing for everything except the spiritual dangers threatening their own households. We insure our automobiles, secure our property, monitor our finances, investigate our investments, and install electronic equipment to protect possessions that will eventually wear out, break down, or belong to somebody else. Yet many families give almost no serious attention to the spiritual condition of the people living beneath the same roof. The front door is locked, the windows are secured, the mortgage is current, and the children have everything imaginable except a working knowledge of the word of God. We have become experts at protecting what we own while neglecting the souls of those we love. Noah understood something that modern Christianity desperately needs to recover. When God gives a warning, the proper response is not admiration for the warning. It is obedience before the danger arrives.

The Christian home is under assault, and much of the damage is being accomplished without anybody having to force his way through the front door. The world has discovered that it can enter through entertainment, education, social media, fashionable philosophies, and the countless voices competing for the attention of husbands, wives, and children. It can teach rebellion while calling it independence, celebrate immorality while calling it freedom, ridicule biblical convictions while calling it enlightenment, and undermine marriage while pretending to offer superior alternatives. The astonishing thing is how willingly some Christian families accommodate the arrangement. Parents who would never permit a stranger to walk into their living room and deliver a lecture promoting fornication will allow the same message to be repeated through entertainment for hours. Fathers who would object to somebody teaching their sons to despise biblical authority will purchase the devices through which those lessons are delivered. Mothers who want their daughters to understand godly womanhood may discover that the most influential voices in their daughters' lives belong to people who openly reject the Scriptures. Then everybody wonders why the next generation seems increasingly unfamiliar with convictions their grandparents once considered elementary. The world does not need to burn your Bible if it

can persuade your family to leave it unopened. It does not need to remove Christianity from your home if it can make everything else more important than Christianity.

But before anybody begins blaming the world for everything wrong with the Christian family, there is another matter that deserves immediate attention. Some of the greatest damage occurring inside Christian homes is being committed by the very people who claim to defend biblical values. A husband can demand respect while refusing to demonstrate sacrificial love. A wife can insist upon receiving understanding while allowing bitterness to govern her conduct. Parents can demand obedience from their children while openly disregarding the commandments of God themselves. A father can explain biblical authority with tremendous enthusiasm while remaining unable to control his own temper. A mother can teach kindness while filling the household with criticism, gossip, and unnecessary contention. Both parents can attend church faithfully, carry King James Bibles, and speak intelligently about doctrine while making their children dread the sound of another religious argument. That is not the Christian home functioning according to Scripture. That is the flesh wearing religious clothing. Ephesians 4:31 commands believers to put away bitterness, wrath, anger, clamour, evil speaking, and malice. The command was not written exclusively for people who live somewhere else. A family cannot continually violate the Scriptures in private and expect its public profession of Christianity to compensate for the contradiction. The first responsibility of a Christian household is not to look Christian. It is to obey Christ.

The Bible has never been silent concerning the family. God established marriage in Genesis 2, before the fall of man, and the Scriptures continue addressing household responsibilities throughout both Testaments. Ephesians 5 commands husbands to love their wives as Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it. Ephesians 6 commands children to obey their parents in the Lord and fathers to bring their children up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Colossians 3 establishes responsibilities concerning husbands, wives, children, and parents, placing ordinary domestic conduct beneath the authority of Jesus Christ. These instructions are not optional religious decorations that Christians may admire while constructing their households according to whatever philosophy happens to be fashionable. They are commandments. Yet they must also be handled honestly, without the distortions that have created so much needless controversy. Biblical headship is not permission for a husband to become a domestic dictator. Biblical submission does not make a wife spiritually inferior or require her to tolerate violence, coercion, or wickedness. Parental authority does not authorize cruelty, and Christian liberty does not justify abandoning responsibility. God did not establish the home so that one sinner could become the household's personal deity while everybody else served his preferences. He established responsibilities that place every member of the family

beneath His own authority. A biblical home requires more than somebody claiming to be in charge. It requires everybody recognizing who is ultimately in charge.

The responsibility becomes especially serious when children enter the picture. Psalm 127:3 declares, "Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD: and the fruit of the womb is his reward." Children are not merely additional occupants who need food, clothing, transportation, entertainment, and educational opportunities. They are young human beings who must be instructed concerning truth, righteousness, personal responsibility, and their need for salvation. They will not remain children forever, and they will not spend their formative years waiting patiently for their parents to become serious about spiritual instruction. Somebody will teach them. Somebody will explain morality. Somebody will establish their understanding of marriage, purity, authority, work, honesty, and the meaning of life. Deuteronomy 6:7 commanded Israel to teach God's words diligently to the next generation throughout ordinary household life. Although that command belonged to Israel under the law, the responsibility of Christian parents to instruct their children is plainly established in Ephesians 6:4. The question is not whether children will receive instruction. The question is who will provide it and what that instruction will contain. A father who has enough time to study every statistic concerning his favorite sports team but cannot find time to explain the gospel to his own children has not suffered a shortage of hours. He has suffered a collapse of priorities. The world is already holding classes, and the tuition is often paid by parents who have no idea what their children are learning.

There is also a serious difference between raising children who know how to behave in a religious environment and raising children who understand the truth of Scripture. A child can learn when to stand, when to sit, when to remain quiet, what clothing to wear, and what answers adults expect to hear without ever understanding the gospel of Jesus Christ. Church attendance does not regenerate a soul. Christian parents cannot transfer eternal life through ancestry, household regulations, religious ceremonies, or personal expectations. Ephesians 2:8–9 establishes that salvation is by grace through faith, not of works. First Corinthians 15:3–4 identifies the gospel concerning Christ's death for our sins, burial, and resurrection the third day. That message must be communicated clearly, without confusing salvation with church membership, baptism, family tradition, or the performance of good works. Nor does the responsibility end when a child professes faith in Christ. Believers must learn sound doctrine, understand how to rightly divide the word of truth, and develop convictions that remain standing when parents are no longer present to supervise every decision. The objective is not to raise children who can repeat their parents' opinions with impressive accuracy. It is to teach them enough Scripture that they can recognize the truth even when somebody they admire is teaching a lie. A borrowed

conviction may sound excellent during childhood, but adulthood has a way of discovering whether that conviction ever became personal.

The Christian home must also rediscover the difference between possessing a Bible and allowing the Bible to govern daily life. A family may have a beautiful copy of the King James Bible displayed prominently in the living room while remaining almost completely ignorant of its contents. It may subscribe to excellent ministries, attend sound churches, and purchase an impressive collection of Christian books while never taking the time to study together. Colossians 3:16 commands, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom." Notice that Paul did not instruct believers to let God's word make occasional ceremonial appearances when convenient. It is to dwell richly among them. The Scriptures should inform household decisions, guide correction, encourage forgiveness, expose sinful conduct, and provide the doctrinal foundation upon which family members learn to understand life. Family Bible reading does not require an elaborate ceremony or a father pretending he has become the pastor of a congregation consisting of three children and a sleepy dog. It requires consistency, seriousness, and a willingness to learn. Questions should be welcomed, difficult passages should be examined, and the adults should demonstrate that they are subject to the same Bible they expect their children to respect. The finest family devotional program ever invented is spiritually useless if everybody performs the ceremony and then spends the remainder of the day ignoring what was read.

Neither should the Christian family imagine that establishing biblical principles will prevent every difficulty. Noah built according to God's command, but the Flood still arrived. In Matthew 7:24–27, the Lord Jesus Christ described two houses, one founded upon rock and the other upon sand. The rain descended upon both. The floods came against both. The winds beat against both. The difference was not that the wise builder had received a private exemption from unpleasant weather. The difference was the foundation. That truth belongs in every Christian home before the first serious tragedy arrives. Faithful families experience sickness, unemployment, financial emergencies, bereavement, marital difficulties, and the heartbreak of children who make foolish decisions. The Bible does not promise that Christians will escape every consequence of living in a fallen world. Neither does it teach that every tragedy reveals some secret sin or failure of faith. Job feared God and eschewed evil, yet experienced losses that would have crushed the confidence of many comfortable religious people. Psalm 46:1 declares, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." A refuge does not become valuable because trouble never comes. It becomes valuable because trouble cannot overthrow the One in whom we trust. The Christian home must be prepared to stand when circumstances become too painful for cheerful slogans and too serious for religious pretending.

This series will therefore confront the Christian household from its foundation to its final earthly legacy. We will examine what it means to build before the rain begins, who possesses the final authority within the home, and what Scripture actually requires of husbands and fathers. We will examine the tremendous spiritual influence of wives and mothers without surrendering biblical womanhood to the world's changing standards or reducing faithful women to shallow religious stereotypes. We will address parental instruction, household Bible reading, spiritual discernment, the influences entering through modern technology, and the responsibilities that arise when marriage becomes a battleground instead of a place of faithful companionship. We will consider what happens when the storms of suffering finally arrive and how families should respond when ordinary comforts disappear. Finally, we will confront the question that waits at the end of every season of parenting: what will remain when the children have grown and departed? The purpose is not to manufacture a sentimental picture of perfect families sitting around a spotless table while everybody smiles at a Bible nobody has opened. Real Christian homes contain imperfect people who must continually submit themselves to the word of God. The issue is not whether your family can produce an impressive photograph. The issue is whether it can produce a credible testimony when the photograph is over and everybody returns to ordinary life.

This instruction is not limited to households possessing the traditional arrangement of a husband, wife, and children. Scripture recognizes widows, unmarried believers, single parents, grandparents, marriages involving unbelieving spouses, and families carrying responsibilities that others may never understand. A woman does not become spiritually worthless because she is unmarried. A father raising children without the assistance he expected is not excused from faithful instruction. A widow does not lose her responsibility to serve Christ when her husband dies. The apostle Paul recognized the genuine faith of Timothy's mother Eunice and grandmother Lois, demonstrating that godly influence is not measured exclusively by the outward arrangement of a household. First Corinthians 7 addresses believers in differing circumstances while maintaining their responsibility before the Lord. Biblical faithfulness is not reserved for families whose circumstances appear ideal. Neither is a beautiful household proof of genuine godliness. A modest home where the Scriptures are believed and practiced may possess more spiritual substance than a mansion filled with religious decorations and people who have no intention of obeying the Lord. God is not impressed by square footage, expensive furniture, or the number of smiling faces arranged for public admiration. He examines the heart, and He has given His word by which the conduct of every believer must be judged.

There is another matter that must be understood before proceeding. The Christian home cannot be built upon the assumption that parental authority possesses the power to

guarantee the future decisions of children. Parents can instruct, correct, warn, protect, pray, demonstrate faithful conduct, and provide every legitimate opportunity for biblical understanding. They cannot regenerate a soul, compel saving faith, or exercise permanent control over another human being's conscience. Children eventually become adults, and adults must answer to God for their own decisions. Some will continue walking faithfully in the truth they received. Others may depart from sound doctrine, abandon righteous conduct, or make decisions that bring grief to their parents. Such possibilities do not excuse negligence, but neither do they prove that every parent experiencing disappointment must have failed in every responsibility. Proverbs 22:6 emphasizes deliberate training, not a magical formula that eliminates personal accountability. A parent is responsible to teach the truth, not to manufacture another person's obedience through a power God never gave him. The Christian household must maintain conviction without surrendering love, uphold biblical boundaries without confusing control with faithfulness, and continue trusting God when the choices of others become painful.

And then comes the matter that every parent would prefer to postpone considering. The children will grow up. The years that seem endless while the house is filled with activity will pass. The little shoes by the doorway will disappear. The toys will be packed away. The school assignments, family outings, bedtime prayers, ordinary conversations, and countless responsibilities that once filled the day will become memories. Eventually somebody else may own the property, repaint the walls, replace the furniture, and occupy the rooms where a family once lived. Proverbs 13:22 speaks of leaving an inheritance to one's descendants, and there is nothing wrong with responsible material provision. But the greatest inheritance cannot be measured entirely through property, money, educational achievements, or professional success. Second Timothy 1:5 remembers the unfeigned faith of Lois and Eunice. Third John 4 declares, "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth." In its immediate setting, John was rejoicing over those connected with his spiritual care, but the principle of joy in continued faithfulness is precious to Christian parents as well. The greatest tragedy is not that children eventually leave the house. It is that they may leave without ever having been shown what genuine Christianity looks like inside it.

That brings us back to Noah. He did not build the ark because everybody agreed that it was necessary. He did not wait for the surrounding world to become interested in righteousness. He believed God concerning things not seen as yet, and he acted while the opportunity remained. The Christian home must be approached with that same seriousness, while remembering that Noah's historical deliverance through the Flood is not a promise that parents can guarantee their children's salvation through domestic regulations. The principle is preparation through obedience to God's revealed word. Build

upon Scripture before the storm. Teach the children before the world establishes their convictions. Strengthen the marriage before selfishness and bitterness become permanent residents. Guard the household before corrupt influences occupy every room. Learn to pray before suffering arrives. Practice forgiveness before resentment becomes a family tradition. Establish the proper priorities while there is still time to establish them. Above everything else, keep the Lord Jesus Christ at the center of the household, not as a religious decoration, but as the Saviour to whom every individual must personally come and the Lord whose word every believer is commanded to obey. The rain is not waiting for your family to finish making excuses. The world is not waiting for your children to become adults. The devil is not waiting for the household to develop better spiritual habits. Every day is another opportunity either to strengthen the foundation or to neglect it. Noah built the ark before the rain started. The question confronting every Christian home is whether we intend to take God seriously enough to do the same.

1 of 10 — The Christian Home — Build the Ark Before the Rain Starts

Key Scriptures: Genesis 6:13–22; Matthew 7:24–27; Joshua 24:15; Hebrews 11:7 (KJV)

Introduction

Noah did not build an ark because the sky looked threatening. He did not consult the weather reports, examine the clouds, or wait until somebody down the road reported water in the basement. God spoke, Noah believed Him, and the construction began before the first drop of judgment fell. Genesis 6:22 declares, "Thus did Noah; according to all that God commanded him, so did he." There is enough instruction in that single verse to straighten out a remarkable number of Christian households. Noah did not negotiate the dimensions, redesign the vessel to suit public opinion, or wait until his neighbors became enthusiastic about the project. He obeyed God when obedience appeared unreasonable to a world that had already decided it could live without Him. That is precisely where the Christian home must begin. The issue is not whether the surrounding culture approves of biblical living. The issue is whether God has spoken and whether anybody in the household intends to believe Him. A home built upon the word of God will often look strange to people who have made peace with disobedience. Noah's ark undoubtedly looked strange too, until the rain began falling.

There is something almost comical about the way modern Christians approach the spiritual condition of their homes. They will spend months selecting a house, investigating neighborhoods, comparing interest rates, examining school districts, and making sure the

kitchen has enough counter space to accommodate three generations of kitchen appliances. They will insure the automobile, insure the furniture, install security cameras, and purchase enough electronic equipment to communicate with somebody standing six feet away. Then they will devote approximately twelve minutes to deciding how the household should be governed spiritually, assuming the matter comes up at all. The family has entertainment, transportation, recreation, communication, and convenience, but nobody seems particularly concerned about whether the occupants know their Bibles. The children can identify every character in a fictional universe but cannot explain the gospel of Jesus Christ. The parents can discuss the economy for an hour but cannot explain why salvation is by grace through faith. The roof is expensive, the furniture is attractive, and the foundation is sand. The tragedy is not that such homes lack religious decorations. The tragedy is that they possess nearly everything except the spiritual preparation they desperately need.

The Christian home is not created by hanging a wooden cross on the wall, putting a Bible on the coffee table, or telling the neighbors that everybody attends church. Those things may accompany a Christian household, but none of them establishes one. The Lord Jesus Christ warned in Matthew 7:26 that "every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand." Notice that the foolish man heard the words. His problem was not a lack of exposure to truth but a refusal to act upon it. That ought to disturb every professing Christian who knows enough Scripture to recognize disobedience but has become comfortable practicing it. A household can be thoroughly acquainted with Christian vocabulary while remaining governed by worldly principles. Parents can insist that their children respect the Bible while repeatedly demonstrating that convenience outranks obedience. The purpose of this study is to establish a fundamental principle before examining the particular responsibilities of husbands, wives, parents, and children: the time to build a biblical home is before the storm, not after the floodwaters have reached the second floor.

1. God Announced the Judgment Before the World Saw the Danger

Genesis 6:13 records the LORD speaking directly to Noah: "The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth." That announcement establishes the reason for Noah's extraordinary undertaking. The world was not merely experiencing a temporary decline in public manners. Genesis 6:5 declares that "GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." The corruption was moral, spiritual, and widespread. Genesis 6:11 adds that "the earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence." Men had their own

opinions about the condition of civilization, but God delivered the verdict that mattered. Noah was not instructed to improve public relations with the corrupt society around him. He received a divine warning and specific instructions concerning the preservation of his household. When God identifies danger, faith does not demand that the danger become visible before taking His word seriously.

The Lord Jesus Christ supplied additional insight in Matthew 24:37–39 when He compared the days of Noah with the conditions preceding His coming. He described people eating, drinking, marrying, and giving in marriage until Noah entered the ark. None of those ordinary activities was inherently sinful. The point was that normal life continued while divine judgment approached, and the population remained unconcerned until the flood arrived. The immediate prophetic setting concerns the coming of the Son of man, not a promise that every Christian family will encounter a literal flood. Nevertheless, the spiritual lesson concerning heedlessness is unmistakable. People can become so occupied with ordinary living that they cease to consider what God has revealed. The same danger confronts Christian families when daily schedules become substitutes for spiritual priorities. Everybody is busy, everybody is entertained, everybody has somewhere to go, and nobody has time to open the Bible. The house is functioning beautifully according to the world's standards. Unfortunately, the world has never been particularly qualified to inspect a spiritual foundation.

Hebrews 11:7 explains Noah's response: "By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house." Those words deserve careful attention. Noah was warned before he saw the threatened events, and he acted because he believed the One who warned him. Biblical faith is not a mysterious feeling that everything will work out pleasantly. It is confidence in what God has said, whether circumstances appear favorable or not. Notice also that Noah "moved with fear." That fear was not unbelief; it was reverence serious enough to produce action. The modern religious world likes faith that makes everybody comfortable, but Noah demonstrated faith that made a man get to work. Christian parents ought to recognize the distinction. The Bible warns about sin, foolish companions, corrupt communications, disobedience, and the consequences of sowing to the flesh. Waiting until those warnings become painful realities is not spiritual sophistication. It is foolishness with a calendar. The man who believes the warning begins preparing while the ground is still dry.

2. Noah Found Grace Before He Ever Picked Up a Tool

Before examining the construction of the ark, we must notice something that religious people frequently overlook. Genesis 6:8 declares, "But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD." That statement appears before the command to construct the ark. Noah did not

purchase divine favor by producing an impressive vessel. The passage first identifies grace, then describes the obedience of a man walking with God. Genesis 6:9 states that "Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God." That does not mean Noah possessed a sinless nature. The subsequent history of Noah makes such a conclusion impossible. It means he stood apart from the prevailing corruption of his generation and maintained a relationship with God. Hebrews 11:7 identifies him as an "heir of the righteousness which is by faith." There is no justification for turning Noah into a religious carpenter who earned salvation through excellent workmanship. The ark was prepared by faith in response to God's command. Salvation has never been obtained by impressing God with the quality of human construction.

That distinction is essential when applying Noah's example to the Christian household. Ephesians 2:8–9 declares, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast." The believer living in the present dispensation of grace is saved through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, whose death, burial, and resurrection constitute the gospel described in 1 Corinthians 15:1–4. A Christian home cannot substitute family standards, domestic discipline, church attendance, or religious education for personal salvation. A father may enforce admirable household rules while remaining lost himself. A mother may maintain outward respectability while never having trusted Christ as her Saviour. Children may memorize dozens of verses and still need to understand that they are sinners who must personally believe the gospel. Some families have become so absorbed in producing well-behaved children that they have forgotten the difference between a child who obeys household regulations and a sinner who has been born again. A polished exterior is not regeneration.

Neither should grace become an excuse for neglecting obedience. Titus 2:11–12 explains that the grace of God teaches believers to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts and to live soberly, righteously, and godly. Grace does not teach a Christian father to abandon responsibility, a Christian mother to despise biblical instruction, or Christian children to treat obedience as optional. The believer's righteous standing in Christ and his practical conduct are related, but they must not be confused. Eternal life is God's gift; faithful living is the proper response of one who has received it. A home does not become Christian by performing enough religious duties to qualify its occupants for heaven. It becomes genuinely Christian in its character when those who know the Lord submit their conduct to His word. Noah's construction did not create the grace he had found; it demonstrated the faith by which he responded to God's command. The ark was not an advertisement for Noah's greatness. It was evidence that Noah believed God's warning more than he believed the opinions of the world.

3. God Supplied the Blueprint, and Noah Followed It

Genesis 6:14 begins the construction instructions with a direct command: "Make thee an ark of gopher wood; rooms shalt thou make in the ark, and shalt pitch it within and without with pitch." God then supplied measurements and structural details. Genesis 6:15 specifies a length of three hundred cubits, a breadth of fifty cubits, and a height of thirty cubits. Verse 16 gives instructions concerning a window, a door, and three stories. Noah was not invited to express his artistic personality by redesigning the vessel. The LORD provided the requirements, and Noah was responsible for obedience. That principle is particularly offensive to modern religion, which seems convinced that God should appreciate whatever arrangements human ingenuity produces. Imagine Noah explaining that the ark would contain several additional doors because his neighbors considered the original design intolerant. Imagine him shortening the vessel because the measurements appeared unnecessarily restrictive. The absurdity is obvious. Yet Christians routinely approach biblical instructions concerning marriage, children, holiness, and household conduct as though divine commands were merely opening suggestions in a discussion that mankind has permission to finish.

The Bible likewise provides instructions concerning the Christian household, although we must rightly divide the Scriptures rather than pretend that every command given to Noah was addressed directly to the Church. Ephesians 5:25 commands, "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it." Ephesians 6:1 declares, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right." Verse 4 instructs fathers not to provoke their children to wrath but to bring them up "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." Colossians 3:18–21 likewise addresses wives, husbands, children, and fathers with distinct responsibilities. These are not optional decorations attached to Christianity. They are apostolic instructions for practical Christian living. A husband who quotes headship while refusing sacrificial love has not discovered biblical leadership; he has discovered a convenient half-verse. A parent who demands obedience while continually provoking a child through uncontrolled anger has ignored the very passage he claims to defend. God does not merely identify the authority within a household. He also commands how that authority is to be exercised.

Biblical construction requires obedience to the whole counsel relevant to the household, not selective obedience to whatever happens to favor the person holding the Bible. A father cannot demand that everybody respect his authority while behaving as though his own accountability to God is nonexistent. A mother cannot insist that children tell the truth while teaching them by example that dishonesty is acceptable whenever circumstances become inconvenient. Parents cannot condemn worldly influences while inviting those

same influences into their own entertainment. James 1:22 declares, "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves." That warning identifies a particularly dangerous religious condition: a man can possess enough Bible knowledge to explain what ought to be done while remaining remarkably skilled at avoiding it. Noah's obedience was specific. He followed the instructions given him. Christian households likewise need more than broad declarations about loving God. They need biblical principles applied to speech, finances, priorities, discipline, marriage, worship, and personal conduct. The strongest family foundation is not constructed from religious enthusiasm but from truth believed and obeyed.

4. Every Household Needs More Than an Attractive Exterior

The ark was constructed for a purpose far more serious than impressing spectators. God commanded Noah to pitch it "within and without with pitch." The vessel required protection suitable for the waters it would encounter. Whatever its outward appearance, its usefulness depended upon whether it had been constructed according to divine instruction. Here is a lesson worth carrying into every Christian home: the outside of a house can be impressive while the inside is completely unprepared for trouble. There are families whose public reputation bears little resemblance to their private conduct. They know how to smile for photographs, exchange pleasant greetings at church, and speak warmly about Christian values. Behind closed doors, however, Scripture is neglected, tempers are uncontrolled, forgiveness is withheld, and spiritual responsibilities are repeatedly abandoned. The neighbors admire the paint while the occupants know that the walls are rotting. God is not deceived by religious appearances. First Samuel 16:7 reminds us that "man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart."

The necessity of inward spiritual integrity does not make external obedience unimportant. It establishes the proper relationship between the two. Colossians 3:16 commands believers to "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom." That is a great deal more demanding than occasionally hearing a sermon or displaying a verse beside the kitchen sink. God's word must govern the inward life if it is to direct the outward conduct consistently. Consider what happens when a household encounters financial difficulty. Does the family immediately begin blaming one another, or does Scripture govern its response to worry, honesty, stewardship, and responsibility? When disagreement arises, do the occupants practice Ephesians 4:32, being "kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another," or do they behave like enemies temporarily occupying the same address? When children ask difficult questions, do parents provide biblical answers or merely command silence because they have neglected to study? A family's real

convictions are ordinarily revealed not in ceremonial declarations but in the repeated decisions nobody outside the home ever sees.

The Christian household must also be distinguished from a household attempting to manufacture holiness through endless regulations. Some parents mistake constant severity for spiritual strength, as though children become godlier in direct proportion to the number of things they are forbidden to enjoy. Others abandon nearly every boundary because they fear being considered strict. Both errors can arise from neglecting Scripture. Biblical authority includes instruction, correction, consistency, patience, and personal example. Proverbs 29:15 teaches that "a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame," while Ephesians 6:4 warns fathers against provoking children to wrath. Those passages do not contradict each other. They expose opposite forms of parental failure. A home without correction lacks necessary guidance; a home governed by uncontrolled wrath misuses authority. Discipline must never become an excuse for cruelty, and affection must never become an excuse for surrendering responsibility. Noah's ark required deliberate workmanship, not a collection of attractive boards thrown together at random. The same principle applies to family life. Spiritual strength requires every necessary part to be placed where God intended it.

5. The Wise Man Built Before the Storm Arrived

In Matthew 7:24, the Lord Jesus Christ declared, "Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock." The word "therefore" connects the illustration with the preceding teaching. Christ had warned against false prophets, empty religious professions, and those who called Him Lord without doing the will of His Father. The immediate setting belongs to the Sermon on the Mount, delivered during Christ's earthly ministry to Israel, and its kingdom context must not be discarded. Nevertheless, the distinction between hearing divine truth and obeying it has a clear practical application to believers today. The wise man did not create the rock. He recognized the proper foundation and built upon it. The difference between wisdom and foolishness was not discovered when the construction appeared complete. It was determined by what each builder did before the storm arrived. A house can look magnificent on a sunny afternoon and still be standing upon a fatal mistake.

Christ continued in Matthew 7:25: "And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock." Notice that the wise man's house was not exempted from the storm. The rain descended upon it. The floods approached it. The winds beat against it. Wisdom did not eliminate adversity; wisdom provided a foundation capable of enduring it. This destroys the childish notion that a properly ordered Christian household will never experience serious difficulty.

Saved people become sick. Faithful spouses experience financial distress. Godly parents encounter painful decisions concerning their children. Families suffer bereavement, disappointment, persecution, and uncertainty. Second Timothy 3:12 declares, "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." A biblical household is not one that possesses a supernatural guarantee against every hardship. It is one whose members have been taught where to stand when hardship arrives. The purpose of the foundation is not to make the weather obey the builder.

Matthew 7:26–27 describes the opposite result. The foolish man heard Christ's words but did not obey them, and he built upon sand. When the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew, the house fell, "and great was the fall of it." The tragedy was not merely that the storm arrived. The tragedy was that the builder had prepared his house for appearances rather than endurance. Sand is attractive because it requires less labor than digging down to something solid. It allows a man to begin construction without confronting inconvenient realities beneath the surface. That is why worldly methods often appeal to Christian families. They promise easier parenting, effortless marriages, happiness without holiness, and peace without correction. Nobody needs to disturb the foundation because everybody is encouraged to concentrate on decorating the rooms. Unfortunately, storms have never shown much respect for interior design. When a family replaces Scripture with convenience, it may enjoy temporary comfort, but temporary comfort is a poor substitute for permanent truth. The foundation is tested when circumstances cease cooperating.

6. As for Me and My House, We Will Serve the LORD

Joshua 24:15 contains one of the most frequently displayed declarations in Christian homes: "but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD." The words are excellent, but they deserve more than being printed on decorative lumber and hung above a fireplace. Joshua spoke them to Israel after recounting the LORD's dealings with the nation, including its deliverance, preservation, and possession of the land. His challenge concerned the worship of the true God rather than the false gods associated with Israel's fathers and the surrounding peoples. Verse 14 commanded the people to fear the LORD, serve Him in sincerity and truth, and put away the gods their fathers had served. Joshua's declaration was therefore a statement of covenantal allegiance in Israel's historical setting. It was not originally written as a magical household promise guaranteeing that every child of a Christian parent would eventually be saved. Nevertheless, the determination to reject idolatry and serve the LORD provides an unmistakable example of responsible spiritual leadership.

A Christian father who places Joshua 24:15 in his living room should understand that the words create a serious question about the household beneath them. What does serving

the LORD actually mean in daily conduct? Does it mean that Christ receives whatever time remains after entertainment, work, recreation, and personal ambition have taken their portions? Does it mean the children are expected to appreciate biblical principles while the parents continually demonstrate indifference toward them? Joshua did not announce that his household would serve the LORD provided the surrounding nations approved or the arrangements remained convenient. He established a clear commitment. Christian households likewise need settled convictions. There should be no uncertainty about whether lying is acceptable, whether sexual immorality is sinful, whether the Scriptures possess authority, or whether obedience to Christ matters. A home where every biblical principle must be renegotiated whenever somebody becomes dissatisfied is not being governed by conviction. It is being governed by whichever occupant objects most loudly. That may produce a remarkably democratic argument, but it does not produce spiritual stability.

At the same time, Joshua's statement must not be twisted into the claim that the head of a household can believe God on behalf of everybody else. Personal salvation cannot be inherited from parents, transferred through marriage, or secured by the presence of religious authority. Romans 10:9–10 addresses personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, while John 1:12 identifies those who receive Christ and believe on His name. A father may establish the rules governing his home, but he cannot regenerate his children's spirits by issuing a command. A mother may faithfully instruct her family, but she cannot personally believe the gospel for another individual. Parents are responsible to teach truth, demonstrate obedience, correct wrongdoing, and present the gospel clearly. Each individual remains responsible before God for his response. This distinction protects us from two opposite errors: the presumption that religious upbringing automatically saves children, and the despairing assumption that every sinful decision by an adult child proves the parents never served God faithfully. A Christian home is responsible for faithful testimony, not for possessing powers that belong to the Holy Ghost.

7. The Ark Must Be Ready Before the Door Is Shut

Genesis 7:16 records a solemn detail following Noah's obedience: "and the LORD shut him in." The door that had provided access to the ark was closed by divine action as the judgment approached. Noah and those with him were preserved within the vessel God had commanded him to prepare. The original account concerns an actual historical judgment, not merely a convenient illustration about family improvement. Second Peter 2:5 identifies Noah as "a preacher of righteousness" and speaks of God bringing the flood upon the world of the ungodly. First Peter 3:20 recalls the days when the longsuffering of God waited while the ark was preparing, wherein eight souls were saved by water. Scripture therefore

presents both divine patience and divine judgment. The warning was real, the opportunity was limited, and the appointed event arrived. The Christian should not transform every difficulty into a prophetic fulfillment of Noah's flood, but neither should he ignore the seriousness of preparation. There comes a time when neglected opportunities can no longer be recovered.

Consider the ordinary opportunities that pass through a Christian household. Children remain young for only a season. Parents have a limited number of evenings in which to read Scripture with them, answer their questions, correct their thinking, and demonstrate what Christian faith looks like in private. The seasons of childhood do not stop because a father is preoccupied with his career or a mother is overwhelmed by the world's expectations. Eventually the small child becomes a teenager, the teenager becomes an adult, and the opportunity to shape daily habits through parental instruction changes. This is not an argument for panic or an impossible standard of perfect parenting. It is an argument against deliberate neglect. Deuteronomy 6:6–7 instructed Israel to teach God's words diligently to their children, speaking of them throughout the ordinary activities of life. That command belongs historically to Israel under the law, yet the principle of deliberate scriptural instruction is reinforced for Christian parents in Ephesians 6:4. A family need not imitate Israel's covenantal arrangement to recognize the wisdom of teaching children while they are still listening.

The same urgency applies to husbands and wives who continually postpone necessary obedience. Some people intend to become faithful Christians when their circumstances become less demanding. They will begin studying Scripture when the business improves, begin praying together when the children become older, address serious marital problems when life slows down, and establish household standards when the next school year arrives. The calendar keeps moving, but the promised season of convenience never seems to appear. Ecclesiastes 11:4 declares, "He that observeth the wind shall not sow; and he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap." A man can spend his entire life waiting for circumstances to become agreeable while accomplishing very little that matters eternally. The Christian family must learn to obey God amid the responsibilities of ordinary life rather than waiting for ordinary life to disappear. Begin with the Scripture that is already available. Correct the wrong that is already known. Restore the neglected responsibility that can be addressed today. Noah did not wait for favorable public opinion to begin construction. He had a commandment from God, and that was sufficient reason to start.

Conclusion

The ark of Noah was an actual vessel constructed in obedience to an actual command from God, and the flood was an actual judgment upon a corrupt world. Its historical truth

must never be sacrificed merely to manufacture an attractive family illustration. Nevertheless, Hebrews 11:7 expressly presents Noah as an example of faith, and the principles established by his obedience remain instructive. He believed God before the threatened event appeared. He responded to grace with obedience. He accepted divine instructions rather than redesigning them to satisfy unbelief. He acted with reverent seriousness while the surrounding world continued its ordinary existence. Those principles expose the weakness of much modern family religion. Too many Christian households have mistaken good intentions for spiritual preparation, church attendance for personal discipleship, and public respectability for private godliness. A family does not become spiritually secure merely because its members possess Christian names, attend occasional services, or maintain respectable appearances. It must continually be governed by the word of God. There is no substitute for knowing what the Book says and taking it seriously enough to obey.

That responsibility begins with the adults who possess the greatest influence over the household. Fathers must be more concerned about their own obedience than about preserving an impressive image of authority. Mothers must understand the enormous importance of scriptural wisdom, faithfulness, and personal example. Husbands and wives must recognize that their treatment of one another provides daily instruction to the children watching them. Parents must communicate the gospel clearly rather than assuming their children understand salvation through religious association. Families must recover the ordinary practice of opening the Scriptures, praying, correcting sin, extending forgiveness, and placing spiritual responsibilities above worldly convenience. None of this requires wealth, an impressive property, unusual intelligence, or a perfect personal history. A family living in modest circumstances can demonstrate remarkable faithfulness to God, while a luxurious household may possess every earthly advantage and remain spiritually impoverished. Psalm 127:1 declares, "Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it." That verse does not excuse laziness. It exposes the futility of labor that proceeds without dependence upon God. Human effort cannot replace divine authority, and religious appearances cannot substitute for obedience.

The final question is not whether the rain will someday test the house. Scripture has already warned believers that trials, temptations, and opposition are part of life in this present world. The question is what the household will be standing upon when those things arrive. A father who continually postpones spiritual responsibility should stop discussing what he intends to become and begin obeying what God has already commanded. A mother discouraged by the pressures of family life should remember that patient faithfulness to Scripture accomplishes more than worldly applause can measure. Parents should teach their children the gospel while they have the opportunity, and children should

be shown by consistent example that Christianity is not merely something practiced inside a church building. There is still time to correct neglected priorities, restore biblical instruction, remove corrupting influences, and establish convictions that will not be surrendered at the first sign of opposition. Do not mistake present comfort for future security. Do not assume that an impressive exterior guarantees a sound foundation. Do not wait until the marriage is collapsing, the children are departing, and the household is overwhelmed before discovering that God provided instructions all along. The fool waits until the rain is falling to ask where he should build. The wise man believes God while the ground is dry. Noah built the ark before the rain started. Build your Christian home accordingly.

2 of 10 — The Christian Home — Who Is Really Running This House?

Key Scriptures: Joshua 24:15; Ephesians 5:21–33; Colossians 3:17–21; Psalm 127:1 (KJV)

Introduction

Joshua 24:15 contains one of the most familiar declarations in the entire Bible: "but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD." Those words have been engraved on plaques, printed on pictures, painted above doorways, and displayed in countless Christian living rooms. That is perfectly acceptable, provided somebody living beneath the inscription intends to obey what it says. There is something rather peculiar about hanging a declaration of divine authority over the fireplace while allowing everything in the house to operate according to the preferences of the flesh. The television determines the entertainment, the children determine the boundaries, the bank account determines the priorities, public opinion determines the convictions, and God receives an occasional acknowledgment when everybody remembers it is Sunday. The declaration is impressive, but the administration is another matter entirely. Joshua was not making a decorative statement. He was announcing a settled commitment to serve the living God regardless of the choices made by the surrounding population. A Christian household must eventually answer the same question. Who is actually running this house?

Every household operates under some form of authority, whether its occupants recognize that fact or not. Somebody decides what receives attention, what is permitted, what is prohibited, what matters, and what can be safely neglected. Even a household that prides itself on having no rules has established a governing principle: everybody is permitted to do what seems right in his own eyes. Judges 21:25 describes the spiritual disorder of Israel with these words: "every man did that which was right in his own eyes." That statement is

not a recommendation for domestic administration. It is an indictment of a people who had departed from God's established authority. Yet that same philosophy has moved into modern homes, put its feet on the furniture, and made itself comfortable. Parents are afraid to correct their children, husbands are afraid to assume responsibility, wives are encouraged to despise biblical instruction, and everybody insists upon individual preferences while wondering why the household lacks unity. The problem is not complicated. When every occupant insists upon being sovereign, the house becomes a collection of competing kingdoms.

The Christian home begins with a principle that must never be reversed: God possesses the supreme authority, and every member of the household is accountable to Him. Ephesians 5:21 commands believers to live in a spirit of submission "in the fear of God," while the verses that follow establish particular responsibilities within marriage. Colossians 3:17 supplies the governing standard for Christian conduct: "And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him." Notice that word "whatsoever." It leaves remarkably little room for Christians who want Christ to govern their religion but not their domestic arrangements. The Lord's authority reaches into conversations, decisions, discipline, finances, relationships, entertainment, and private conduct. A Christian home is not a building where God is occasionally invited to attend family activities. It is a household where His word possesses authority over everybody living inside. The husband is not God, the wife is not God, the children are certainly not God, and the family pet has no theological jurisdiction whatsoever. Christ must remain supreme.

1. Joshua's Household Declaration Was a Decision, Not a Decoration

Joshua's declaration must first be understood in its proper biblical setting. Joshua 24 records his final charge to Israel, the nation God had brought out of Egypt and established in the land promised to their fathers. Joshua rehearsed the LORD's dealings with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, and the children of Israel. He reminded them of their deliverance, their victories, and the blessings God had provided. Then he confronted them with a choice concerning their worship. Joshua 24:14 declares, "Now therefore fear the LORD, and serve him in sincerity and in truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the LORD." The command concerned Israel's covenant obligations under the law. Joshua was not speaking to a New Testament congregation, and his declaration was not a guarantee that every member of a Christian household would automatically receive eternal life. Nevertheless, the principle concerning exclusive allegiance to the LORD remains unmistakable. God does not accept divided worship.

Joshua did not merely announce that his family would possess religious interests. He identified the LORD as the One his household would serve. That distinction exposes the weakness of much modern Christianity. There are families that enjoy the social advantages of religion without accepting its authority. Church attendance provides respectable associations, Christian vocabulary creates a pleasant appearance, and occasional Bible verses supply the finishing touches. But when Scripture contradicts personal preference, the household suddenly develops a remarkable talent for explaining why obedience is unnecessary. The modern Christian often wants enough Bible to feel religious without enough Bible to interfere with anything. Joshua's declaration will not fit comfortably into that arrangement. He placed the matter before Israel as a genuine choice between the LORD and false gods. A Christian household must likewise decide whether God's word will govern its conduct or whether biblical principles will be treated as suggestions that may be revised whenever circumstances become inconvenient. A house cannot serve two competing authorities without eventually revealing which one its occupants actually honor.

It is also important to recognize what Joshua's decision could and could not accomplish. As the responsible leader of his household, he could establish its public allegiance and determine that idolatry would not be welcomed under his authority. He could require conduct consistent with the worship of the LORD. He could not manufacture personal faith within another human heart. Salvation has never been obtained through a father's declaration or a mother's religious convictions. In the present dispensation, a sinner must personally believe the gospel of Jesus Christ. Ephesians 2:8–9 establishes salvation by grace through faith, not by works or family membership. A Christian parent may provide faithful instruction, but no parent can regenerate a child by commanding him to become saved. This distinction matters because some families mistake outward conformity for spiritual conversion. They produce children who know how to behave in church but have never understood their personal need of the Saviour. Joshua's example encourages deliberate household leadership, not the presumption that spiritual life can be inherited with the family furniture.

2. Christ Must Be the Head Before Anyone Else Claims Authority

Ephesians 5:21 establishes an important principle before Paul addresses the specific responsibilities of husbands and wives: "Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God." The immediate setting concerns believers whose lives are to be characterized by the filling of the Spirit, thanksgiving, and conduct consistent with their calling in Christ. This instruction does not abolish the distinct responsibilities that follow, nor does it establish a household where nobody possesses legitimate authority. It places Christian relationships beneath the fear of God. The husband answers to Christ. The wife answers to Christ.

Parents answer to Christ. Children are instructed to obey the Lord in their proper relationships. Nobody receives a divine exemption from accountability because of his position within the household. That is an important distinction in an age when some people use the word authority as though it were a license to indulge personal pride. God never established household responsibilities so that sinners could acquire religious permission to behave selfishly. Authority exercised without submission to God is already departing from the purpose for which that authority was established.

Ephesians 5:23 declares, "For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body." Paul identifies a divinely established relationship within marriage, but notice the comparison he uses. The husband's headship is measured against Christ's relationship to the Church. That ought to end a considerable amount of masculine foolishness before it gets started. Christ did not establish His headship by throwing tantrums, threatening His people, or demanding admiration while neglecting their needs. He loved the Church and gave Himself for it. The husband's position therefore carries tremendous responsibility. It does not make him the household's personal deity. Any man who imagines that biblical headship means his preferences are sacred has apparently confused himself with the Almighty. There is only one Lord of the Christian home, and His name is Jesus Christ. Every earthly authority remains subordinate to Him. The moment a man's command contradicts God's revealed word, the man has stepped beyond the authority Scripture gives him.

This truth also corrects the opposite error, which insists that Christian liberty eliminates every distinction in household responsibilities. The New Testament does not teach spiritual anarchy disguised as equality. First Corinthians 11:3 identifies an order of headship, and Ephesians 5 applies distinct commands to husbands and wives. Yet both passages must be understood in harmony with the believer's position in Christ. Galatians 3:28 declares that believers are "all one in Christ Jesus," establishing their spiritual standing without erasing every distinction of responsibility in earthly relationships. The husband is not saved more thoroughly because he is a man, and the wife does not possess an inferior salvation because she is a woman. Both are accountable to the same Lord and dependent upon the same grace. A family becomes spiritually disordered whenever it rejects God's distinctions or exalts those distinctions beyond what Scripture teaches. Biblical authority is not an argument about who possesses the greatest personal importance. It is a responsibility assigned by God, exercised under His supervision, and ultimately answerable to His judgment.

3. A Husband Cannot Lead Biblically While Refusing to Love Biblically

Ephesians 5:25 delivers a command that ought to make every Christian husband examine himself before he begins lecturing his wife about submission: "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it." The standard is not merely affection, attraction, companionship, or financial provision. Paul points directly to the sacrificial love of Jesus Christ. The Lord gave Himself for the Church, and husbands are commanded to demonstrate love consistent with that example. This is not an invitation to become weak or passive. It is a command to accept responsibility that costs something. A husband must provide leadership without selfishness, instruction without arrogance, correction without cruelty, and strength without intimidation. He must be willing to deny his own convenience for the good of his family. A man who demands the privileges of headship while rejecting its sacrifices is trying to collect the wages without reporting for duty. Scripture does not recognize that arrangement as faithful leadership.

Colossians 3:19 adds, "Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them." Notice that Paul addresses bitterness directly. A husband can maintain outward authority while allowing resentment, harshness, and contempt to poison the entire household. He can provide food, clothing, and shelter while making his family dread the sound of his footsteps approaching the front door. That is not the leadership described in Ephesians 5. First Peter 3:7 instructs husbands to dwell with their wives "according to knowledge," giving honor unto the wife. The same verse warns that improper conduct can hinder their prayers. Apparently, heaven is not especially impressed by a man who delivers magnificent religious speeches while mistreating the woman he promised to cherish. Biblical headship must include faithfulness, honesty, compassion, patience, and the willingness to acknowledge wrongdoing. The Christian husband should be the first man in the house to demonstrate repentance when he sins, not the last man on earth willing to admit he has made a mistake.

A husband must also understand that spiritual leadership requires more than issuing instructions from a comfortable chair. First Timothy 3:4–5 addresses the requirement that a church overseer rule his own house well, using household management as evidence relevant to his fitness for church leadership. Although those verses directly concern qualifications for an overseer, they reveal the importance Scripture attaches to responsible domestic conduct. A Christian man should know the spiritual condition of his household, take an active interest in his children's instruction, protect his marriage from corrupt influences, and demonstrate obedience to the Bible himself. He should not expect his wife to carry every spiritual responsibility while he specializes in announcing that he is the head. A title without corresponding faithfulness is nothing more than an expensive nameplate nailed to an empty office. Leadership involves example, service, instruction, provision, correction, and consistency. The husband who wants biblical respect must begin by taking

biblical responsibility seriously. A Christian home needs a man whose authority is governed by Scripture, not one whose ego requires everybody else to become smaller.

4. Biblical Submission Is Not Spiritual Inferiority or Domestic Slavery

Ephesians 5:22 declares, "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord." Colossians 3:18 likewise commands, "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord." These passages are not particularly difficult to understand, although modern culture has invested considerable energy attempting to explain them out of existence. The instructions concern the marriage relationship and establish a responsibility that Christian wives are commanded to recognize. Submission is not a fashionable word in an age that treats independence as the supreme virtue. Nevertheless, the Christian does not possess permission to discard apostolic instruction because public opinion has become hostile to it. At the same time, the qualification "in the Lord" must not be ignored. Biblical submission operates beneath God's supreme authority. A wife is not commanded to commit sin, conceal wickedness, surrender her conscience, or accept abuse because her husband has discovered a verse he finds particularly convenient. Obedience to Christ remains greater than obedience to any human authority.

The Bible's teaching concerning wives must also be understood alongside its descriptions of godly womanhood. Proverbs 31 presents a virtuous woman possessing wisdom, industry, discernment, initiative, generosity, and strength. She considers a field and buys it. She manages responsibilities, provides for her household, speaks with wisdom, and fears the LORD. This is hardly a portrait of an unintelligent servant waiting for permission to possess a thought. First Peter 3:7 identifies husband and wife as "heirs together of the grace of life." A Christian wife is a believer with personal accountability to God, spiritual gifts, scriptural responsibilities, and opportunities for faithful service. Her marriage does not cancel her understanding, conscience, judgment, or worth. A foolish husband may attempt to use Scripture to silence a wise wife, but Proverbs has already warned the reader about men who despise instruction. Submission does not require a woman to pretend her husband is infallible. It requires her to honor the marriage relationship according to God's revealed order.

There is another danger that deserves correction. Some Christian women are encouraged to measure their entire spiritual value by their marital position, as though an unmarried woman, widow, or woman facing difficult circumstances occupies a second-class place in the household of faith. The New Testament teaches no such thing. First Corinthians 7 recognizes legitimate advantages in remaining unmarried for undistracted service to the Lord, while also affirming marriage as honorable and proper. A woman's worth in Christ is not determined by whether she possesses a wedding ring. Within marriage, however, she

should not despise the responsibilities God has assigned. The believing wife possesses tremendous influence through godliness, wisdom, truthfulness, faithfulness, and her treatment of those entrusted to her care. Proverbs 14:1 declares, "Every wise woman buildeth her house: but the foolish plucketh it down with her hands." A woman can contribute to the strength of her household or undermine it through foolishness. The same is true of a man. God has not given either spouse permission to destroy what both are commanded to honor.

5. Parents Are Responsible for Their Children, Not Ruled by Them

Colossians 3:20 declares, "Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord." Ephesians 6:1 similarly commands, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right." Notice that Paul does not present obedience as a suggestion children may consider after consulting their personal preferences. Parental authority is part of God's established order within the household. Children require instruction because they are not born possessing mature judgment, biblical wisdom, or the ability to distinguish every danger confronting them. Proverbs 22:15 declares, "Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him." The verse identifies the need for correction, not permission for uncontrolled anger or cruelty. Modern parenting frequently reverses the arrangement by treating parental decisions as proposals awaiting approval from the youngest occupant. The child objects, the parent negotiates, the child objects again, and eventually the household discovers that the person least qualified to govern it has acquired veto power over everybody else.

Biblical parental authority, however, is not unlimited personal domination. Colossians 3:21 warns, "Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged." Ephesians 6:4 adds, "And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." These commands expose the difference between godly discipline and sinful harshness. A father can destroy trust by correcting children unfairly, humiliating them, making impossible demands, or allowing his temper to determine their punishment. A mother can likewise undermine spiritual instruction through inconsistency, favoritism, manipulation, or continual criticism. Parents must not confuse the ability to frighten a child with the ability to teach that child righteousness. Correction should be deliberate, proportionate, and governed by biblical principles. It should never become an outlet for adult frustration. Authority is given for the child's instruction and welfare, not for the parent's emotional satisfaction. A parent who demands self-control from a child while displaying none personally has delivered a sermon against himself.

The responsibility of parents extends far beyond correcting undesirable behavior. Deuteronomy 6:6–7 instructed Israel to teach God's words diligently to their children

throughout ordinary life. Although that command was delivered under Israel's covenant, Christian parents receive corresponding responsibilities in the New Testament. Second Timothy 3:15 recalls that Timothy had known the holy Scriptures from childhood, which were able to make him wise unto salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. Parents must teach their children what sin is, why the gospel matters, how to recognize false teaching, and why obedience to God takes precedence over social approval. They must also demonstrate what they teach. A father who demands honesty while routinely practicing deception has undermined his own instruction. A mother who insists upon kindness while filling the household with malicious speech has provided a contradictory lesson. Children may forget individual lectures, but they observe patterns of conduct. The Christian household must therefore practice what it teaches. Otherwise, parental authority becomes a loudspeaker broadcasting instructions that the operators themselves have no intention of following.

6. Whoever Controls the Priorities Controls the Household

Colossians 3:17 reaches into every corner of Christian living with the words, "And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus." That command leaves no legitimate division between spiritual conduct and ordinary household decisions. A Christian family cannot reasonably claim that Christ governs its life while excluding Him from finances, entertainment, speech, friendships, recreation, and daily responsibilities. Consider how household priorities are actually established. What receives the greatest amount of attention? What activities are defended when schedules become crowded? What expenses are considered essential? What happens when church responsibilities interfere with recreation, or when Bible reading competes with another evening of entertainment? The answers reveal more about a family's governing convictions than the religious slogans displayed on its walls. Matthew 6:21 declares, "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." In its immediate setting, Christ was addressing treasures and the proper orientation of the heart. The practical implication is clear. A family's repeated investments of attention and resources expose what its members consider valuable.

This does not mean every Christian household must maintain an identical schedule or abandon ordinary recreation. Scripture does not prohibit lawful enjoyment, responsible employment, education, or proper rest. It does, however, condemn idolatry and require believers to order their conduct according to God's word. First Corinthians 10:31 declares, "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." The Christian should be able to apply that principle to ordinary domestic life without inventing new commandments God never gave. Families need time for instruction, fellowship, worship, work, and necessary responsibilities. They also need discernment concerning

influences that compete for their affections. There is something spiritually ridiculous about a household that possesses enough electronic equipment to monitor activities across the planet but cannot locate fifteen uninterrupted minutes to read Scripture together. The problem is seldom a complete absence of available time. More frequently, the problem is that God's word has been assigned whatever remains after everybody else's preferences have been satisfied.

Psalm 127:1 declares, "Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain." The psalm belongs to Israel's inspired collection of worship and wisdom, and its language must not be converted into a mechanical promise that Christian families will never experience adversity. Its fundamental truth, however, is devastating to human pride. Labor apart from dependence upon God is ultimately vain. A man may work extraordinary hours to provide his family with material advantages while neglecting the people for whom he claims to be working. A woman may become so consumed with maintaining appearances that she neglects the spiritual condition of the household itself. Parents may spend fortunes securing educational opportunities while remaining indifferent to whether their children understand the gospel. Material provision matters, but it cannot substitute for biblical instruction. A beautiful home without godly priorities is still spiritually impoverished. God is not impressed by expensive construction when the people inside have decided they can manage perfectly well without His authority.

7. God's Authority Is Not Limited to One Kind of Household

Not every Christian home consists of a husband, wife, and children living beneath the same roof. Some households are led by widows or widowers. Others involve a single parent, grandparents raising children, an unmarried believer caring for relatives, or a Christian married to an unbelieving spouse. Scripture recognizes that believers live under differing circumstances, and biblical faithfulness must never be reduced to an outward family arrangement. First Corinthians 7 addresses married believers, unmarried believers, widows, and marriages involving an unbelieving spouse. Paul does not teach that the unmarried Christian possesses an incomplete spiritual identity or that a widow has somehow lost the ability to serve God faithfully. Indeed, 1 Corinthians 7:32 speaks of an unmarried man caring for "the things that belong to the Lord." The believer's standing in Christ is not measured by the number of people residing at the same address. A household occupied by one faithful Christian may honor God more sincerely than a crowded house filled with religious pretenders. Spiritual faithfulness is not determined by the size of the family photograph.

Consider the example of Timothy. Second Timothy 1:5 recalls the unfeigned faith that first dwelt in his grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice. Acts 16:1 identifies his mother as a believing Jewish woman and his father as a Greek. Scripture does not provide permission to invent every detail of Timothy's upbringing, but it plainly recognizes the spiritual influence of his mother and grandmother. That should encourage believers who carry substantial household responsibilities without the assistance they desire. A single mother can teach her children Scripture. A widowed father can maintain godly standards. Grandparents can provide faithful biblical instruction. A believer whose spouse does not share the faith can still practice personal obedience to Christ. First Corinthians 7:12–16 supplies instructions concerning such marriages, including the importance of remaining faithful where the unbelieving spouse is willing to dwell together. The text does not promise that a spouse will certainly be converted through another person's efforts. It requires the believer to conduct himself faithfully within the circumstances God has addressed. Nobody needs an imaginary family arrangement before beginning to obey the Bible.

These circumstances also reveal why the local church must take its responsibilities seriously. First Timothy 5 provides instructions concerning widows and family obligations, while Galatians 6:2 commands believers to "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ." The household of faith should not treat struggling families as embarrassing exceptions to an idealized picture of domestic perfection. Nor should it abandon biblical standards in the name of sympathy. Truth and practical compassion belong together. Christians ought to assist those carrying genuine burdens, encourage parents attempting to raise children faithfully, and refuse to make marital status a measure of spiritual worth. At the same time, every believer remains responsible to obey the commands applicable to his actual circumstances. The absence of a husband does not remove God's authority from a home. The absence of children does not make a marriage spiritually meaningless. The presence of difficulties does not cancel the obligation to live faithfully. Christ does not require an impressive domestic arrangement before He can be obeyed. He requires faithfulness from the people who belong to Him.

Conclusion

The question confronting every Christian household is not merely who possesses the final word in a disagreement. The deeper question is whose word possesses the final authority over everybody involved. Joshua declared that his household would serve the LORD. Paul instructed husbands to love their wives as Christ loved the Church, wives to recognize their responsibilities within marriage, children to obey their parents, and fathers to raise their children without provoking them to wrath. These commands establish responsibilities that cannot be discarded because modern society finds them inconvenient. Yet they also forbid

the misuse of authority by anyone attempting to elevate personal preference above the word of God. A husband cannot claim divine authorization for selfishness. A wife cannot claim Christian liberty as permission to despise biblical instruction. Parents cannot demand obedience while rejecting their own accountability to Christ. Children cannot excuse rebellion by appealing to the popularity of disobedience among their companions. Every member of the Christian home must eventually confront the same reality: the LORD is not running a popularity contest. He has spoken, and His word possesses authority.

The practical evidence of that authority appears in everyday decisions. Does the husband demonstrate sacrificial love when nobody outside the household is watching? Does the wife approach her responsibilities with godly wisdom rather than resentment? Do parents instruct their children from Scripture, correct wrongdoing consistently, and acknowledge their own sins when necessary? Are the children taught that obedience to God matters more than receiving approval from the world? Does the household maintain biblical convictions when those convictions become inconvenient or unpopular? These questions cannot be answered by pointing to a church membership record or a framed declaration hanging near the front door. James 1:22 commands believers to be doers of the word rather than hearers only. The Christian family must therefore move beyond religious appearance into actual obedience. That obedience begins with the gospel, continues through the believer's daily walk, and reaches into the smallest responsibilities of domestic life. A family does not honor Christ by merely agreeing with His instructions. It honors Him by submitting to them.

There is a throne in every household, whether the occupants acknowledge it or not. Sometimes pride sits upon it. Sometimes money occupies it. Sometimes the children have seized it, sometimes worldly entertainment has quietly inherited it, and sometimes a domineering adult has mistaken it for his personal property. Whatever occupies that position will eventually determine the direction of the family. The Christian household must refuse every rival claim to the authority that belongs to the Lord Jesus Christ. Psalm 127:1 has already settled the futility of trying to build without Him, and Joshua 24:15 has supplied the proper declaration of allegiance. The necessary question is whether that declaration describes reality or merely decorates a wall. Put the Bible back into the decisions. Put personal responsibility back into the adults. Put proper obedience back into the instruction of children. Put sacrificial love, truthfulness, forgiveness, and holiness into the ordinary conduct of the home. Above everything else, give the Lord Jesus Christ the place that belongs to Him. A house is not Christian because somebody inside claims to be in charge for God. A house demonstrates Christian character when everybody inside understands that God is in charge of them. The real head of a Christian home does not need to fight for His throne. The people living beneath its roof need to stop trying to occupy it.

3 of 10 — The Christian Home — A Husband Who Leads and a Father Who Stays

Key Scriptures: Ephesians 5:25–29; Ephesians 6:4; 1 Timothy 3:4–5; 1 Corinthians 16:13 (KJV)

Introduction

Ephesians 5:25 delivers a command that ought to make every Christian husband put down his newspaper, turn off the television, straighten his backbone, and examine himself before God: "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it." There is enough doctrine in that single verse to expose the bankruptcy of much modern Christian manhood. God did not command husbands merely to possess wives, support wives, supervise wives, or remind wives who is supposed to be in charge. He commanded them to love their wives according to the example of Jesus Christ. That is a considerably higher standard than possessing a wedding ring and knowing which end of the dinner table belongs to you. Christ gave Himself for the Church. He did not stand at a comfortable distance issuing instructions while somebody else carried the burden. He sacrificed Himself. The modern man who wants the authority of a husband without accepting the responsibilities of a husband has mistaken marriage for a promotion into upper management. Scripture has something considerably more demanding in mind. A man is not qualified to lead a Christian home merely because he knows how to announce that he is its leader. He must demonstrate that leadership through obedience, sacrifice, and faithfulness.

There are homes today where the greatest spiritual problem is not the influence of wicked neighbors, corrupt entertainment, or the latest foolishness coming out of the world. The problem is the man sitting in the living room who has quietly resigned from the responsibilities God assigned him. He has time for sports, time for hobbies, time for entertainment, time for his friends, and enough time to examine the mechanical condition of his automobile down to the last suspicious noise. Yet somehow he cannot find fifteen minutes to open a Bible with his family. He can remember statistics from a championship game twenty years ago but cannot remember the last serious conversation he had with his children about their salvation. He knows what is happening in the economy, what is happening in professional athletics, and what is happening to people he has never met on the internet. Ask him what is happening spiritually beneath his own roof, and suddenly the man who knows everything about everything has developed an extraordinary shortage of information. The house may be beautiful, the driveway may be full, and the bank account may be healthy. But a father can provide everything his family wants while neglecting what God commanded him to give.

The Christian home needs something better than the two miserable counterfeits that so frequently pass for manhood. On one side stands the domestic dictator, a fellow who believes headship means everybody else must accommodate his temper, applaud his decisions, and remain permanently impressed with his authority. On the other side sits the permanently occupied recliner, a man who has surrendered every serious responsibility and hopes somebody else will handle the spiritual condition of the household. Neither fellow resembles the man described in Scripture. Ephesians 6:4 commands fathers to bring up their children "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." First Corinthians 16:13 commands believers, "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong." First Timothy 3:4–5 demonstrates the seriousness of household government in relation to the qualifications of a church overseer. Taken together, these passages establish a demanding picture of responsibility, steadiness, courage, instruction, and personal integrity. The Christian home does not need a bully with a Bible or a coward with a television remote. It needs a man who fears God enough to fulfill his responsibilities when nobody is applauding.

1. Christ Gave Himself—He Did Not Merely Give Orders

The first responsibility of a Christian husband is established by the example Paul provides in Ephesians 5:25. The command is not simply to love his wife according to his feelings, upbringing, personality, or cultural understanding of marriage. The standard is the love of Christ for the Church. Paul continues in verses 26–27 by describing Christ's sanctifying work, "that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word," and His purpose of presenting the Church to Himself glorious, without spot or wrinkle. We must rightly divide the passage. The husband is not the redeemer of his wife, cannot cleanse her sins, and possesses no authority to replace Christ as her Saviour. Those redemptive accomplishments belong exclusively to the Lord Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, the comparison establishes the sacrificial character of marital love. Christ's love was demonstrated through costly action, not empty declaration. A husband who continually announces his love while refusing to serve his wife's legitimate needs has confused talking with doing. The Bible measures love by more than the volume of the announcement.

Christ's sacrifice also exposes the foolish notion that biblical headship exists primarily for the husband's personal convenience. Philippians 2:5 commands, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." Paul then describes the humility of the Saviour, who took upon Himself the form of a servant and became obedient unto death. The passage concerns the humiliation and exaltation of Christ, but it also supplies an unmistakable example of humility for believers. A Christian husband should recognize that godly leadership requires willingness to sacrifice time, comfort, personal preference, and selfish

ambition for the good of his household. Sometimes that means working when he would prefer resting. Sometimes it means listening when he would rather speak. Sometimes it means admitting that his decision was foolish. The man who cannot apologize to his wife because he believes an apology will diminish his authority has already revealed how little he understands about spiritual strength. Pride may prevent a man from admitting he is wrong, but it cannot make him right.

There is a remarkable difference between a man who claims authority and a man who accepts accountability. The former is usually preoccupied with his privileges; the latter is concerned about his duties. The first fellow can quote Ephesians 5:22 concerning the wife's submission without hesitation, but his memory becomes surprisingly unreliable when the reading reaches verse 25. Apparently, some Bibles develop a printing defect precisely where the husband's responsibilities begin. Yet the apostle did not give one spouse permission to disobey because the other has failed. Each receives commands that must be answered before the Lord. Colossians 3:19 declares, "Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them." Bitterness, resentment, contempt, and deliberate harshness are not demonstrations of biblical masculinity. They are sins to be confronted. A husband is not called to become the household's most important customer, waiting for everybody else to accommodate his preferences. He is commanded to love after the pattern of Christ. The man who wants to lead like Christ must first learn that Christ wore a crown of thorns before He received the crown of glory.

2. A Husband Must Nourish His Wife, Not Wear Her Down

Ephesians 5:28–29 continues the instruction with striking language: "So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church." Notice the verbs Paul selected. The husband is to nourish and cherish. Nourishing involves attention to another person's welfare; cherishing involves care that refuses to treat the other person as disposable. This is not a command to indulge every preference or surrender biblical convictions whenever disagreement arises. It is a command against selfish neglect. A husband who would never deliberately starve himself should not remain indifferent to his wife's legitimate needs. A man who immediately seeks relief when his own body suffers discomfort should not dismiss his wife's genuine difficulties with irritation. Marriage joins two people in a relationship where the welfare of one cannot properly be separated from the responsibility of the other. Biblical headship is therefore incompatible with habitual indifference.

First Peter 3:7 commands husbands to dwell with their wives "according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the

grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered." This verse is frequently quoted selectively, but the entire statement deserves attention. The husband must exercise understanding, give honor, and recognize the shared spiritual inheritance of believing spouses. The expression concerning the weaker vessel is not permission to ridicule women, deny their intelligence, or treat them as spiritually inferior. It appears in a command requiring the husband to demonstrate consideration. Notice the warning concerning hindered prayers. A man may occupy himself with public religious activities while behaving disgracefully toward his wife, but God does not overlook the contradiction. The fellow who can preach about holiness for an hour while making his household miserable through continual cruelty has not fooled heaven. Religious vocabulary cannot perfume rotten conduct. A man cannot honor Christ publicly while deliberately dishonoring the wife Christ commands him to love.

This also establishes a necessary boundary concerning the misuse of authority. Biblical headship never grants permission for violence, intimidation, sexual coercion, threats, or other forms of abuse. Ephesians 5 commands sacrificial love, not domination through fear. Colossians 3:19 forbids bitterness, while 1 Peter 3:7 requires honor. A husband who uses Scripture to justify mistreatment is not obeying biblical authority; he is twisting it to protect his own sin. The distinction matters because some have confused a wife's responsibility within marriage with an obligation to submit to wicked conduct. Acts 5:29 establishes the higher principle: "We ought to obey God rather than men." A woman does not sin by seeking protection from violence or by refusing to participate in wrongdoing. Likewise, a husband does not surrender legitimate authority by treating his wife with dignity, seeking her counsel, or acknowledging her wisdom. Proverbs 31 describes a virtuous woman whose judgment, industry, and faithfulness benefit her household. The sensible Christian husband recognizes such qualities as blessings, not threats. A man who must diminish his wife to feel important has already demonstrated how little spiritual stature he possesses.

3. Providing for a Family Requires More Than Bringing Home a Paycheck

First Timothy 5:8 declares, "But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel." In its immediate context, Paul is addressing family obligations, particularly the responsibility of relatives toward widows. The expression "if any" is broader than husbands alone, but the principle unquestionably applies to a man responsible for providing for his household. Willful neglect of legitimate family obligations is not a harmless personality defect. Scripture treats it as a serious contradiction of the faith a person professes. Second Thessalonians 3:10 similarly condemns deliberate unwillingness to work, stating, "if any would not work, neither should he eat." That is not a condemnation of the sick, disabled, unemployed despite sincere effort, or others genuinely unable to provide through ordinary employment.

It is a rebuke of deliberate idleness. A man should not expect his family to carry burdens he refuses to shoulder while he enjoys the comfortable privileges of irresponsibility. God never ordained laziness as a spiritual gift.

Nevertheless, financial provision does not exhaust the responsibilities of a Christian husband and father. A man may work sixty hours a week, maintain an impressive income, purchase expensive possessions, and still neglect the souls entrusted to his care. Money can purchase groceries, clothing, shelter, transportation, and educational opportunities. It cannot purchase the personal example of a faithful father. It cannot replace an evening spent teaching a child Scripture, a difficult conversation conducted with patience, or a husband demonstrating genuine concern for his wife. Some men have spent their entire working lives providing everything their families could possibly want, only to discover that what their families needed most was their presence. That does not make honest labor unimportant. It means labor must serve the family rather than become an excuse for abandoning it. The man who knows every detail of his company's operations but knows almost nothing about his children's spiritual condition has become an expert in maintaining one responsibility while neglecting another.

Biblical provision also requires stewardship, honesty, and sound judgment. Proverbs 13:22 declares, "A good man leaveth an inheritance to his children's children." The passage commends foresight and responsibility, although it must not be twisted into a promise that every righteous family will become wealthy. A Christian father should avoid unnecessary debt, reckless financial decisions, dishonesty, and the pursuit of material possessions at the expense of spiritual obligations. First Timothy 6:10 warns that "the love of money is the root of all evil," describing the destructive consequences of covetousness. A man can become so determined to acquire what his neighbors possess that he sacrifices the very household he claims to be supporting. The children receive expensive gifts while their father becomes an occasional visitor who happens to pay the bills. Scripture calls for a better balance. The purpose of earning a living is not to become so occupied with making money that you forget the people for whom you are making it. Provision is necessary, but it must never become a substitute for love, instruction, and spiritual leadership.

4. A Father Must Raise His Children, Not Merely Occupy Their Address

Ephesians 6:4 delivers a direct command to Christian fathers: "And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." Notice that Paul places the responsibility squarely upon fathers. He does not suggest that spiritual instruction belongs exclusively to mothers, Sunday school teachers, Christian educators, or whoever happens to have sufficient free time. Fathers are commanded to participate actively in the upbringing of their children. The word "nurture" concerns their development

under proper care and discipline, while "admonition" emphasizes instruction and warning. A father must do more than establish curfews, pay expenses, and announce punishments when somebody misbehaves. He must teach his children what God has said and explain why obedience matters. A man who can discuss the technical details of his favorite hobby for three hours but cannot explain the gospel to his own son has revealed something unfortunate about his priorities. The problem is not insufficient opportunity to learn. It is insufficient attention to what matters eternally.

The father must also understand that children learn from observation as well as instruction. Deuteronomy 6:6–7 commanded Israel to teach God's words diligently to their children throughout the ordinary activities of life. That passage belongs historically to Israel under the law, but the principle of sustained scriptural instruction agrees with the New Testament command in Ephesians 6:4. A Christian father should use ordinary opportunities to teach truth, answer questions, explain consequences, and demonstrate biblical convictions. If he expects honesty, he must practice honesty. If he expects purity, he must guard his own conduct. If he expects respect, he must refuse to treat others contemptuously. Children possess a remarkable ability to notice contradictions that adults would prefer to keep concealed. A father may deliver an impressive lecture about controlling one's temper, but if he spends the following afternoon throwing objects and shouting at everybody, the practical lesson has already contradicted the verbal one. Children do not merely hear what their fathers preach. They watch what their fathers believe when the sermon is over.

There is another responsibility frequently neglected by fathers who confuse authority with emotional distance. A father must know his children well enough to recognize their struggles, questions, temptations, and spiritual needs. Proverbs 27:23 declares, "Be thou diligent to know the state of thy flocks, and look well to thy herds." Its immediate subject concerns diligent stewardship, not a direct command about parenting, but the wisdom of attentive responsibility is readily applicable. A father should know what his children are learning, who influences them, what troubles them, and whether they understand salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. He should be approachable without surrendering authority and compassionate without excusing rebellion. There must be room for honest questions, personal correction, encouragement, and genuine affection. A child should not have to schedule an appointment three weeks in advance to receive his father's undivided attention. The Christian father is not merely the household's disciplinary officer, summoned when trouble erupts. He should be a steady source of biblical instruction, protection, encouragement, and godly example throughout ordinary life.

5. Ruling Your Own House Begins With Ruling Yourself

First Timothy 3:4–5 describes a qualification for a man who would serve as a bishop: "One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?)" The immediate context concerns the qualifications of a church overseer, not a declaration that every husband automatically possesses the qualifications for pastoral office. Nevertheless, the passage reveals the seriousness with which God regards household government. Notice that Paul connects ruling the household with taking care of the church. Authority and responsibility belong together. A man's domestic conduct provides evidence concerning his character and ability to fulfill greater responsibilities. The qualifications do not describe an angry fellow who frightens everybody into silence. They describe responsible government exercised with gravity, order, and integrity. A household may be quiet because its members are spiritually united, or it may be quiet because everybody fears the next explosion. Those conditions are not the same, regardless of how impressive the silence sounds.

Before a father attempts to govern his children, he ought to examine his ability to govern himself. Proverbs 16:32 declares, "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city." That is a devastating comparison for the man who boasts about controlling his household while remaining unable to control his tongue. James 1:19 commands believers to be "swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath." Verse 20 explains why: "For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God." A father's uncontrolled temper does not become righteous merely because the person receiving it is younger, smaller, or dependent upon him. Biblical discipline must be guided by wisdom, fairness, consistency, and love. There is no spiritual achievement in winning an argument with a seven-year-old through superior volume. If shouting were evidence of wisdom, the loudest man in town would qualify as Solomon. Scripture places greater honor upon the man who governs his spirit than upon the man who conquers a city.

Self-government also requires personal purity, honesty, humility, and consistency. Titus 2:6 exhorts young men "to be sober minded," while Galatians 5:22–23 identifies temperance among the fruit of the Spirit. A husband who indulges pornography while demanding purity from his family has surrendered moral credibility. A father who practices deception while punishing his children for lying has made hypocrisy part of the curriculum. A man who refuses correction while requiring immediate obedience from everyone else has confused spiritual leadership with personal privilege. None of this means a Christian father will live without sin or never make mistakes. It means that when he sins, he must deal with the matter biblically. First John 1:9 instructs believers concerning confession of sins, and Ephesians 4:32 commands forgiveness. A father who humbly acknowledges wrongdoing does not weaken legitimate authority. He demonstrates that God's word governs him too.

The man who cannot be corrected by Scripture has no business pretending that every correction he gives represents the will of God.

6. Quit You Like Men—Strength Is More Than Making Noise

First Corinthians 16:13 commands, "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong." Paul addressed these instructions to the Corinthian believers generally, not exclusively to husbands and fathers. Nevertheless, the language provides an unmistakable challenge to Christian men concerning courage, vigilance, and steadfastness. The command to stand fast concerns faithfulness to the truth, not the development of an impressive personality or a threatening disposition. Biblical strength is demonstrated through obedience when obedience becomes costly. It is shown when a man refuses dishonesty despite financial pressure, rejects sexual immorality despite temptation, and maintains scriptural convictions despite ridicule. The world frequently measures masculinity through physical appearance, aggression, wealth, conquest, or the ability to intimidate others. Scripture measures the believer's strength through fidelity to God. A man can possess enormous physical strength while remaining spiritually weak enough to surrender his convictions to the first attractive temptation that appears. Broad shoulders are useful for carrying responsibilities, but they cannot compensate for an empty backbone.

The command to watch also confronts fathers who have become careless concerning the influences entering their homes. First Peter 5:8 warns believers to be sober and vigilant because the devil walks about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. That warning applies to Christians generally, but fathers should recognize the importance of spiritual vigilance within their own households. What are the children watching? Who is influencing their understanding of righteousness? What doctrines are they encountering? What friendships are shaping their decisions? What examples are the adults providing? A father who carefully inspects the locks on every door while allowing destructive influences unrestricted access through every electronic device has guarded the furniture more diligently than the family. This does not mean children should be raised in ignorance of the world or taught to fear every unfamiliar idea. It means fathers should provide sound biblical instruction and appropriate boundaries. A guard who sleeps through his watch cannot excuse his failure by explaining how comfortable the chair was.

Strength must also include tenderness, patience, and willingness to bear burdens. First Corinthians 16:14 follows the command to be strong with another instruction: "Let all your things be done with charity." Those two verses belong together. Christian courage and Christian love are not enemies. A father does not become weak because he comforts a frightened child, listens carefully to his daughter, or shows affection to his son. A husband

does not surrender manhood because he treats his wife gently during hardship. Second Corinthians 12:9 records the Lord's declaration to Paul, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness." The immediate setting concerns Paul's personal infirmities and dependence upon divine grace, but the principle destroys the proud assumption that spiritual strength requires pretending to be invulnerable. A godly man recognizes his dependence upon the Lord. He can be firm without cruelty, courageous without arrogance, and tender without abandoning conviction. The strongest man in a Christian household should not be the one everybody fears offending. He should be the one whose faithfulness makes others confident that he will do what is right.

7. The Greatest Test of a Father Is Whether He Remains Faithful

Faithfulness is not demonstrated merely by beginning a responsibility with enthusiasm. It is demonstrated by continuing when the initial excitement has disappeared. First Corinthians 4:2 declares, "Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful." The immediate context concerns stewards of the mysteries of God, particularly the accountability of Christ's ministers, but the requirement of faithfulness expresses a principle applicable to every responsibility entrusted by God. A Christian father must remain dependable through ordinary days, financial uncertainty, marital difficulties, illness, disappointment, and the changing seasons of his children's lives. Some men are enthusiastic about having a family but considerably less enthusiastic about the lifelong responsibilities accompanying one. They enjoy the announcement of fatherhood, the photographs, and the congratulations, but become strangely unavailable when sacrifice is required. A child does not need a father who performs admirably for an audience and disappears when the work becomes inconvenient. He needs a father whose word can be trusted on an ordinary Tuesday when nobody is watching.

There will also be seasons when a father discovers that faithful instruction does not guarantee the response he desires. Children possess personal wills, and growing older brings increasing responsibility for their own decisions. Proverbs 22:6 teaches the importance of training a child in the way he should go, but it should not be treated as a mechanical guarantee that every child raised in a Christian household will necessarily believe the gospel or remain obedient throughout life. Salvation is personal, and spiritual instruction cannot eliminate another person's responsibility before God. A father must therefore avoid two errors: neglecting his duty because he cannot control every outcome, and assuming that every sinful decision made by an adult child proves his own faithfulness was worthless. The proper course is to continue loving truth, praying, maintaining appropriate boundaries, and giving honest biblical counsel. A father may not always receive the response he hopes for, but he remains responsible for his own conduct.

Faithfulness is measured by obedience to God, not by possessing absolute control over other human beings.

Perhaps one of the most important responsibilities of Christian fathers is learning how to remain faithful after they have failed. Every father who examines himself honestly will discover occasions when he should have listened more carefully, spoken more wisely, corrected more fairly, or given greater attention to his family. The answer is neither despair nor stubborn refusal to acknowledge wrongdoing. Proverbs 28:13 declares, "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy." A father who has neglected his household should begin correcting that neglect. A man who has cultivated bitterness should abandon it. One who has behaved harshly should acknowledge his sin and demonstrate genuine change. If he has been absent through selfishness, he should stop defending his absence and become present. Where serious harm has occurred, repentance must include appropriate protection, accountability, and restitution rather than demands for instant trust. God's grace is not permission to continue disobedience. It is reason to abandon it. A man's failures do not become virtues because he refuses to admit them, and his responsibilities do not disappear because fulfilling them requires repentance.

Conclusion

The biblical picture of a husband and father is far more demanding than either modern masculine boasting or modern domestic irresponsibility. Ephesians 5 requires sacrificial love patterned after Christ's relationship to the Church. Ephesians 6 requires fathers to nurture and admonish their children without provoking them to wrath. First Timothy 3 demonstrates the seriousness of godly household government, while First Corinthians 16 commands believers to stand fast in the faith and remain strong. These instructions do not describe a domestic tyrant collecting privileges from frightened occupants, nor do they describe an indifferent man who has abandoned every responsibility except providing occasional financial assistance. They describe qualities of faithfulness, responsibility, courage, patience, integrity, and self-sacrifice. A Christian husband should be a blessing to his wife, not a burden she must continually endure. A Christian father should be actively involved in the instruction of his children, not an unfamiliar authority figure appearing only when punishment becomes necessary. The Bible does not call a man to be the loudest voice in his home. It calls him to be a faithful servant of the Lord whose conduct gives weight to the words he speaks.

There is also a warning here for the man who has become comfortable measuring his success by worldly standards. The world may admire his income, respect his professional achievements, applaud his possessions, and praise his influence. Yet none of those things

can replace the responsibilities God has assigned within his household. A man may establish a successful business and neglect his marriage. He may build an impressive reputation and lose the confidence of his children. He may accumulate property, investments, and possessions while allowing his family to remain spiritually impoverished. Ecclesiastes 12:13 declares, "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man." That statement cuts through the applause of the world and directs attention to what ultimately matters. The Christian father must answer to God for his conduct, not merely to an employer, a customer, or a bank. His household is not an inconvenient responsibility interfering with the important business of life. It is among the important responsibilities for which God will hold him accountable. No professional achievement can excuse deliberate disobedience at home.

The Christian home needs men who will open their Bibles before giving instructions, examine their own conduct before condemning everybody else's, and accept responsibility without demanding applause. It needs husbands who love their wives when marriage requires sacrifice, fathers who instruct their children when patience is necessary, and men who stand upon Scripture when the surrounding world makes compromise attractive. It needs men willing to work, provide, protect, correct, comfort, forgive, and remain faithful through the changing circumstances of life. It needs men who understand that spiritual authority begins with personal submission to Jesus Christ and that genuine strength is demonstrated through obedience rather than intimidation. The man who has neglected these responsibilities should not waste another year defending his failures. He should confess what is wrong, correct what can be corrected, and begin doing what the Scriptures command. His wife needs more than promises. His children need more than presents. His household needs more than religious decorations and occasional speeches about Christian values. A house may have a man whose name appears on the mortgage, but that does not mean it has a father fulfilling his responsibilities. A man can be present in every family photograph and absent from nearly every meaningful moment. He can provide a roof without providing leadership, enforce rules without teaching righteousness, and demand respect without demonstrating faithfulness. The Christian home needs something better. It needs a husband who loves as Christ commanded, a father who leads according to the Book, and a man who stays faithful when staying faithful costs him something. The world has enough men who know how to claim authority. What it desperately needs are men who know how to accept responsibility.

4 of 10 — The Christian Home — A Godly Woman Is More Than the World's Definition of Success

Key Scriptures: Proverbs 14:1; Proverbs 31:10–31; Titus 2:3–5; 1 Peter 3:1–6 (KJV)

Introduction

Proverbs 14:1 delivers a statement that ought to be engraved upon the conscience of every woman who desires to honor the LORD: "Every wise woman buildeth her house: but the foolish plucketh it down with her hands." Notice that Solomon does not describe the wise woman as somebody who merely occupies a house, decorates a house, or possesses a house. She builds it. Nor does he describe the foolish woman as an unfortunate victim of circumstances beyond her control. She tears down what ought to have been strengthened. The contrast is between wisdom and foolishness, construction and destruction, spiritual responsibility and personal negligence. There is enough instruction in that verse to upset several generations of worldly thinking. The modern world has spent considerable time explaining to women what they must accomplish to possess value, what they must reject to demonstrate independence, and what they must pursue to qualify as successful. Meanwhile, the word of God has been sitting there all along, offering something considerably more substantial than the latest fashionable definition of personal achievement. A woman does not become great because the world applauds her accomplishments. She becomes spiritually useful when her life is governed by the wisdom of God.

The Christian home has suffered tremendously from two opposing errors concerning womanhood. On one side stands the worldly philosophy that measures a woman's success almost entirely through professional advancement, financial independence, public recognition, and freedom from traditional obligations. On the other side stands a religious counterfeit that reduces godly womanhood to a collection of domestic chores, outward appearances, and unquestioning silence. One extreme despises the home; the other turns the home into a prison and calls the arrangement biblical. Neither position faithfully represents the complete teaching of Scripture. The virtuous woman of Proverbs 31 is industrious, financially discerning, generous, strong, wise, commercially active, and deeply concerned about her household. She is certainly not presented as an idle ornament sitting beside the furniture. Yet she is also not portrayed as somebody whose worth depends upon abandoning her family to pursue the applause of strangers. She fears the LORD, orders her responsibilities wisely, and exercises tremendous influence through faithful conduct. It is remarkable how often people manage to argue over biblical womanhood without bothering to examine the woman the Bible actually describes.

This study must begin by establishing a principle that modern society and shallow religion frequently overlook: a woman's spiritual worth is not determined by whether she is married, whether she has children, whether she receives a paycheck, or whether her name appears upon a professional title. Salvation is by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, not through marriage, motherhood, employment, or domestic achievement. Ephesians 2:8–9 settles that matter beyond dispute. Nevertheless, the saved woman possesses responsibilities before God, just as the saved man does, and those responsibilities must be understood from Scripture rather than reconstructed according to personal preference. Proverbs supplies wisdom concerning character and conduct. Titus provides apostolic instruction concerning the responsibilities of Christian women. Peter addresses the testimony and inward character of believing wives, including those married to unbelieving husbands. These passages must be studied in their proper settings and applied without confusing Israel's wisdom literature with New Testament Church doctrine. The question is not whether a woman satisfies the world's definition of success. The question is whether she is becoming the woman God instructs her to be.

1. The Wise Woman Builds While the Foolish Woman Tears Down

Proverbs 14:1 establishes the foundation: "Every wise woman buildeth her house: but the foolish plucketh it down with her hands." The passage belongs to Israel's inspired wisdom literature, where practical conduct is continually contrasted with foolishness, pride, dishonesty, laziness, and the fear of the LORD. It is not a promise that every godly woman will possess a comfortable marriage, obedient children, financial security, or freedom from suffering. It is a statement concerning the constructive power of wisdom and the destructive consequences of folly. A house in this context involves considerably more than lumber, furniture, and property. It concerns the household, its order, its relationships, and the influence exercised within it. A woman may live in modest circumstances and build something spiritually valuable through faithfulness. Another may possess a magnificent residence and spend years tearing apart its spiritual foundations through bitterness, dishonesty, selfishness, and rebellion. The difference between building and destroying is not the price of the house. It is the character of the person living inside it.

The foolish woman does not necessarily announce that she intends to destroy her household. Destruction frequently arrives through ordinary habits permitted to continue without correction. Proverbs 21:19 warns about the difficulty of living with a contentious and angry woman, while Proverbs 15:1 teaches that "a soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger." Those principles expose the spiritual consequences of an uncontrolled tongue. A woman can undermine her marriage through continual contempt, poison her children's attitudes through malicious speech, or create unnecessary conflict

by treating every disagreement as an opportunity for warfare. The same sins are equally condemnable in a man. Scripture does not provide husbands with permission to be contentious while rebuking wives for identical conduct. Nevertheless, Proverbs specifically recognizes the destructive influence a foolish woman can exercise. Some people spend thousands of dollars improving their property while allowing bitterness to demolish the relationships inside it. The paint is fresh, the furniture is expensive, and the conversation sounds like two competing armies preparing for battle. Apparently, the kitchen needed new cabinets more urgently than the occupants needed new attitudes.

The wise woman builds differently. Proverbs 24:3 declares, "Through wisdom is an house builded; and by understanding it is established." Wisdom requires more than possessing intelligence or collecting useful information. Biblical wisdom begins with the fear of the LORD and expresses itself through obedience to His revealed truth. A wise woman learns when to speak, when to remain silent, when to correct, when to encourage, and when to refuse participation in foolishness. She understands that faithful conduct must be consistent, not merely impressive during public appearances. She does not confuse kindness with weakness or firmness with cruelty. She can acknowledge wrongdoing without surrendering her convictions and exercise patience without pretending that sin is harmless. Neither does she accept responsibility for every choice made by other members of her household. A wife cannot force her husband to obey God, and a mother cannot manufacture salvation within her children. Her responsibility is to remain faithful in what God has entrusted to her. Wisdom builds with truth, strengthens with obedience, and refuses to destroy tomorrow's testimony for the satisfaction of today's temper.

2. The Virtuous Woman Was Never a Decorative Household Ornament

Proverbs 31:10 asks, "Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies." The passage appears within the words associated with King Lemuel and the instruction his mother taught him. Its closing description of the virtuous woman presents an extraordinary portrait of wisdom expressed through practical responsibility. We must not turn this poetic description into a mechanical checklist by which every Christian woman is condemned for failing to accomplish thirty different activities before breakfast. Nor should we dismiss its standards as irrelevant because the passage belongs to the Old Testament. The text presents principles of diligence, prudence, generosity, strength, and godly character that remain instructive. Notice that the woman's value is described before her activities are catalogued. Her worth is greater than precious stones because her character is precious. The world may measure a woman by appearance, income, popularity, and possessions. Scripture begins with virtue. That is an inconvenient starting point for a culture that has

become exceptionally skilled at manufacturing attractive appearances while paying remarkably little attention to righteousness.

The woman described in Proverbs 31 is anything but idle. Verse 13 declares, "She seeketh wool, and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands." Verse 16 states, "She considereth a field, and buyeth it: with the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard." Verse 18 describes her recognizing that her merchandise is good, while verse 24 records that she makes fine linen and sells it. This woman demonstrates commercial judgment, initiative, industry, and responsible management. She is not portrayed as helpless, unintelligent, or incapable of making important decisions. She considers property, conducts business, produces goods, and contributes materially to her household. That ought to create an uncomfortable moment for people who insist that a godly woman must never possess business interests, exercise financial judgment, or engage in productive enterprise beyond the walls of her home. Apparently, somebody forgot to inform the virtuous woman that she was supposed to sit quietly in a corner until a committee approved her next purchase. The Bible presents a woman whose diligence benefits her household rather than one whose abilities must be artificially suppressed.

Her industry, however, does not exist apart from her household responsibilities. Proverbs 31:15 describes her providing meat for her household, while verse 21 records her preparedness when winter conditions arrive. Verse 27 declares, "She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness." Here is the balance that neither worldly ambition nor narrow religious tradition seems particularly interested in maintaining. The virtuous woman exercises remarkable initiative, but her activities are governed by wisdom and responsibility. She does not neglect her household to manufacture public importance, nor does she treat her domestic responsibilities as evidence that she lacks ability. Her labor serves a purpose greater than personal recognition. The passage does not demand that every woman own a vineyard, operate a business, manufacture clothing, or maintain precisely the same daily arrangements. It reveals the character of a diligent woman who takes her responsibilities seriously. The virtuous woman is not praised because she does everything. She is praised because the things entrusted to her are handled with wisdom, diligence, and the fear of God.

3. Beauty Fades, but the Fear of the LORD Does Not

Proverbs 31:30 delivers the spiritual verdict concerning the virtuous woman: "Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the LORD, she shall be praised." Notice the deliberate contrast. Physical beauty may attract attention, and gracious appearance may produce temporary admiration, but neither establishes the enduring value of godly character. The verse does not condemn cleanliness, attractive clothing, or

appropriate attention to personal appearance. It exposes the foolishness of making outward beauty the foundation of a woman's identity. The human body changes with age. Fashion changes with astonishing frequency. Public admiration can disappear almost as quickly as it arrives. A woman who builds her entire sense of worth upon those things has selected a foundation that cannot remain stable. The fear of the LORD is different. It governs conduct when nobody is watching and continues to matter long after outward attractions have faded. The world can manufacture beauty with cosmetics and cameras, but it cannot manufacture holiness with a mirror.

First Peter 3:3–4 reinforces this principle by directing attention away from outward adornment as the source of a woman's true beauty. Peter writes concerning "the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price." The apostle is addressing believing wives within the broader context of Christian conduct, including the testimony of wives married to husbands who do not obey the word. His emphasis is upon inward character rather than outward display. The passage should not be twisted into an absolute prohibition against every hairstyle, article of jewelry, or respectable garment, as though a woman's spiritual condition could be measured by inspecting her hairpins. Peter's contrast concerns misplaced emphasis. Outward appearance cannot substitute for a heart governed by God. A meek and quiet spirit is not intellectual emptiness or the absence of conviction. It describes a disposition characterized by godly restraint rather than pride, hostility, and constant contention. Scripture values character that the world's mirrors cannot measure.

There is a broader spiritual lesson here concerning the standards women are pressured to satisfy. The world frequently demands perpetual youth, fashionable appearance, professional achievement, financial success, and public recognition, all while changing the requirements whenever somebody invents a new standard. A woman can spend her entire life chasing approval from people who will never be satisfied. Yet the Bible does not instruct her to seek the admiration of every passing generation. First Samuel 16:7 declares that "man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart." The original setting concerns God's choice of David rather than an instruction specifically concerning women, but the principle applies to every believer. God examines what human spectators cannot see. This does not excuse laziness, carelessness, or the neglect of legitimate responsibilities. It establishes the proper measure of spiritual worth. A woman may be elderly, widowed, physically limited, or entirely unknown outside her community and still possess extraordinary godly character. Heaven is not impressed by a face that impresses the world while the heart beneath it remains governed by pride.

4. Biblical Marriage Requires Faithfulness, Not a Battle for Supremacy

Titus 2:3–5 provides direct apostolic instruction concerning Christian women within the churches. Paul commands older women to demonstrate holy conduct and teach good things, including instructing younger women "to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed." These are not commands delivered to Israel under the Mosaic covenant. They belong to New Testament instruction concerning Christian conduct. Consequently, they cannot simply be dismissed as outdated Jewish customs. The passage identifies responsibilities within marriage and the household that Christian women should take seriously. Yet every phrase must be understood according to Scripture rather than personal prejudice. Being discreet concerns sound judgment. Chastity concerns purity. Goodness concerns righteous character. Caring for the home concerns responsible attention to domestic obligations. Nothing in the passage authorizes treating women as unintelligent servants or condemning every form of lawful employment outside the household.

The instruction concerning wives must also be read alongside the commands addressed to husbands. Ephesians 5:25 declares, "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it." Colossians 3:19 adds, "Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them." Biblical marriage does not place every responsibility upon the wife while providing the husband with an impressive collection of privileges. Both spouses are accountable to the Lord. The wife's responsibility to honor the marriage relationship does not relieve the husband of sacrificial love, faithful provision, personal integrity, or godly leadership. Likewise, a husband's failure does not automatically excuse a wife's bitterness, dishonesty, or sinful conduct. Some religious men can recite the verses concerning submission with astonishing enthusiasm, but their memories appear to malfunction when the apostle begins addressing husbands. The trouble is not with the Bible. The trouble is with selective reading. A man who uses Scripture to demand obedience while ignoring Scripture's commands concerning his own conduct is not defending biblical marriage. He is defending himself against biblical correction.

First Peter 3:1–6 addresses Christian wives whose husbands may not obey the word, emphasizing the powerful testimony of godly conduct. Peter explains that such husbands may be won "by the conversation of the wives," referring to the conduct they observe. This is not a promise that every unbelieving husband will certainly be converted through his wife's behavior, nor does it mean that presenting the gospel verbally becomes unnecessary. The passage emphasizes the witness of consistent godliness. Neither does submission authorize violence, sexual coercion, threats, or other abusive conduct. God's commands never require a woman to participate in sin or abandon legitimate protection from harm. Acts 5:29 establishes the higher principle that believers must obey God rather

than men. A godly wife can demonstrate respect without surrendering her conscience, and she can pursue peace without pretending that wickedness is righteousness. Peter's example of Sarah must also be understood within his complete instruction concerning faith, conduct, and trust in God. Biblical submission is a responsibility exercised before the Lord, not a blank check handed to another sinner.

5. A Mother's Influence Can Reach Generations She Will Never Meet

Second Timothy 1:5 records Paul's remembrance of Timothy's "unfeigned faith," which first dwelt in his grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice. Here the Holy Ghost identifies two women whose spiritual influence became part of the testimony of a young man who would serve the Lord in the ministry. Second Timothy 3:15 adds that Timothy had known the holy Scriptures from childhood, which were able to make him wise unto salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. Notice the importance of scriptural instruction. Timothy did not become spiritually useful merely because he possessed a respectable family name. He had been acquainted with God's word from an early age. His mother's and grandmother's faith did not automatically save him, but their example and instruction were instrumental in his upbringing. This ought to encourage every Christian mother who wonders whether the ordinary work of teaching children truly matters. The world may overlook a woman reading Scripture to a child at the kitchen table, but God has never regarded faithful instruction as insignificant.

Motherhood carries responsibilities that cannot be measured adequately through financial comparisons or public recognition. A mother teaches through her words, habits, decisions, correction, affection, and personal example. She influences how children understand honesty, compassion, purity, responsibility, marriage, prayer, and reverence for the Lord. Proverbs 31:26 declares concerning the virtuous woman, "She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness." Notice that wisdom and kindness appear together. A godly mother must not confuse constant criticism with instruction or harshness with spiritual strength. Neither should she excuse rebellion because correction requires patience and firmness. The objective is not to raise children who merely behave respectably when strangers are watching. It is to teach them the truth of Scripture and their personal responsibility before God. Children may forget an elaborate speech, but they frequently remember whether their mother practiced what she taught. A mother's influence is not limited to the words she speaks. It includes the example she leaves behind when she is no longer in the room.

At the same time, motherhood must not become an idol or the sole measure of a woman's spiritual worth. Some Christian women are unable to bear children. Others remain unmarried, experience widowhood, or carry family responsibilities under painful

circumstances. Scripture does not declare such women spiritually inferior. First Corinthians 7 recognizes legitimate opportunities for unmarried believers to serve the Lord, while passages concerning widows reveal their continuing place within the household of faith. Furthermore, mothers must remember that children possess individual responsibility before God. A woman can teach faithfully without possessing the power to guarantee every decision her child will make. That reality should encourage diligence without creating the false expectation that perfect parenting can eliminate human sin. Mothers are responsible to instruct, nurture, correct, pray, and demonstrate godliness. They are not responsible for possessing divine power over another person's heart. The influence of a faithful mother may reach far beyond her lifetime, but its value must never be confused with a claim that motherhood itself provides salvation or guarantees particular outcomes.

6. Older Women Must Teach What Younger Women Are Not Learning

Titus 2:3 commands older women to demonstrate conduct becoming holiness, refusing false accusations and drunkenness, while serving as "teachers of good things." Verse 4 continues by explaining that they are to teach younger women concerning their responsibilities in marriage and family life. Notice that Paul assigns older Christian women an important instructional role. Their maturity is not supposed to produce nothing more than an impressive collection of personal opinions and stories about how much better everything was forty years ago. They are to teach good things. Their instruction must be rooted in holiness and consistent conduct. This is particularly necessary when younger generations receive much of their education concerning womanhood from entertainment, social media, popular personalities, and worldly philosophies. A Christian young woman ought to have access to seasoned believers who can explain Scripture, demonstrate godly character, and provide sound counsel. An older woman who has walked faithfully with God possesses something no fashionable influencer can manufacture overnight: wisdom tested through years of obedience.

The command also challenges older women who have allowed bitterness, gossip, and contentiousness to replace useful service. Titus specifically warns against false accusations. First Timothy 5:13 identifies the danger of becoming idle, wandering from house to house, and speaking things which ought not to be spoken. The immediate passage addresses particular circumstances involving younger widows, but the warning concerning idle gossip applies broadly. A woman can spend years attending church and still become a destructive influence if her conversation continually spreads suspicion, criticism, and unnecessary conflict. The local church does not need a domestic intelligence agency collecting embarrassing information about everybody's family. It needs women who understand the Scriptures and can help younger believers obey them.

Teaching good things requires more than correcting somebody else's failures. It demands personal consistency, patience, humility, and willingness to offer practical assistance. The woman who teaches kindness while humiliating others has contradicted her own instruction. Godly influence begins with a life that demonstrates the truth being taught.

The New Testament also records women whose service extended beyond their immediate households. Acts 9 describes Dorcas, who was "full of good works and almsdeeds which she did," including practical assistance reflected in the garments shown after her death. Acts 16 introduces Lydia, whose response to the gospel was followed by hospitality toward Paul and his companions. Romans 16:1–2 commends Phebe, a servant of the church at Cenchrea, who had been a succourer of many. These examples demonstrate that Christian women can exercise meaningful influence through generosity, hospitality, practical service, encouragement, and ministry assistance. Their service must be understood within the responsibilities and distinctions established elsewhere in the New Testament, but it must not be dismissed as spiritually insignificant. Neither should every woman be expected to accomplish every possible ministry activity simultaneously. Faithfulness is not measured by exhaustion. A woman who serves her household responsibly, assists others as she is able, and maintains godly conduct is not failing because she cannot attend every meeting or volunteer for every assignment. The Lord requires faithful stewardship, not a performance designed to impress people who will never be satisfied.

7. A Woman's Identity in Christ Is Greater Than Her Marital Status

First Corinthians 7 provides essential instruction for understanding the spiritual responsibilities of women whose circumstances differ from the traditional married household. Paul addresses marriage, widowhood, unmarried believers, and the particular concerns associated with each condition. In verse 34, he describes the unmarried woman's opportunity to care for "the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit." The passage must be understood within Paul's discussion of marriage and the advantages of undistracted service, not transformed into a command that every believer must remain unmarried. Nevertheless, it establishes an important truth. A woman does not become spiritually complete through marriage. The believer's standing before God rests upon Jesus Christ. Colossians 2:10 declares, "And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power." Marriage may be a tremendous blessing, but it is not a missing component of salvation. A wedding ring does not complete a soul, and its absence does not reduce a Christian woman to an unfinished project.

The Scriptures contain examples of faithful women whose lives cannot be reduced to the responsibilities of wives and mothers alone. Luke 2:36–38 describes Anna, a prophetess and elderly widow, who served God with fastings and prayers and spoke of the Lord to

those awaiting redemption in Jerusalem. Her circumstances belonged to the historical setting surrounding Christ's first coming, but her faithfulness remains worthy of consideration. Ruth provides another remarkable example of loyalty, industry, courage, and trust in the LORD during widowhood before her marriage to Boaz. Although Ruth's place in the history of Israel and the lineage leading to Christ must not be ignored, her conduct also supplies practical lessons concerning character. These women did not cease to possess spiritual responsibilities when their marital circumstances changed. Nor did they become worthless because they lacked the outward arrangement that society often expects. The same is true of Christian women today who remain single, experience widowhood, or serve God through circumstances they did not choose.

This truth is especially important because religious communities sometimes impose expectations that Scripture itself does not establish. An unmarried woman may be treated as though she has failed to reach adulthood properly. A widow may be overlooked after decades of faithful service. A woman without children may be subjected to careless judgments concerning her usefulness or spiritual condition. Such attitudes are not justified by the Bible. First Timothy 5 recognizes the responsibility of families and churches concerning widows, while First Corinthians 7 acknowledges the legitimate service of unmarried believers. Every Christian woman remains accountable for her personal conduct, doctrine, stewardship, purity, and obedience to the Lord. Those responsibilities do not disappear because her household is different from somebody else's. Nor does freedom from marriage or parenthood justify selfish independence, fornication, or disregard for Christian obligations. The single believer must obey God just as the married believer must. The widow must walk faithfully just as the wife must. Christ did not establish two classes of Christian women, one spiritually complete through marriage and the other waiting for permission to become useful. Every saved woman belongs to Him already.

Conclusion

The biblical picture of godly womanhood is far richer than the narrow definitions offered by either worldly culture or shallow religious tradition. Proverbs 14:1 identifies the constructive influence of wisdom and the destructive consequences of folly. Proverbs 31 presents a virtuous woman whose value exceeds precious stones, whose diligence benefits her household, whose judgment enables responsible enterprise, and whose fear of the LORD surpasses every outward attraction. Titus 2 establishes the importance of holiness, family responsibilities, and older women teaching younger women good things. First Peter 3 emphasizes the inward character of believing wives and the spiritual value of a meek and quiet spirit. None of these passages teaches that a woman's worth depends entirely upon appearance, professional accomplishment, marital status, or motherhood.

Neither do they permit Christians to discard the responsibilities God has plainly established. The Bible does not need to borrow its definition of successful womanhood from the latest fashionable philosophy. It has already supplied a standard grounded in wisdom, faithfulness, purity, diligence, and reverence for the LORD.

The Christian home desperately needs women who understand these truths and refuse to surrender them. It needs wives who honor their marriage responsibilities without accepting the false notion that godliness requires intellectual surrender or toleration of wickedness. It needs mothers who teach their children Scripture, demonstrate personal integrity, and recognize the eternal significance of ordinary faithfulness. It needs older women who instruct younger women rather than filling the church with gossip, criticism, and unnecessary division. It needs unmarried women and widows who understand that their usefulness to Christ has not been cancelled by their circumstances. Above all, it needs women whose inward character agrees with their outward profession. A woman may possess outstanding abilities, considerable education, professional accomplishments, or financial resources, and none of those things automatically makes her ungodly. The decisive question is whether her abilities and opportunities are governed by Scripture. Conversely, a woman may perform domestic responsibilities diligently while remaining bitter, proud, dishonest, or spiritually indifferent. Outward activity cannot substitute for inward righteousness. Godly womanhood is not established by a job description, a marriage certificate, or a public reputation. It is demonstrated through a life submitted to the word of God.

There is no reason for a Christian woman to spend her life trying to satisfy a world that cannot even agree upon what it means by success. The same society that praises independence frequently despises sacrifice. It celebrates ambition while mocking faithful service, admires appearance while neglecting character, and changes its standards so frequently that yesterday's fashionable convictions become tomorrow's embarrassing mistakes. The word of God remains unchanged. Proverbs 31:30 has already delivered the verdict: "Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the LORD, she shall be praised." That is the standard worth pursuing. A godly woman should build rather than destroy, instruct rather than corrupt, serve rather than seek empty applause, and cultivate the inward character that remains valuable when earthly recognition has disappeared. Whether she is married or unmarried, raising children or living without them, young or old, wealthy or poor, her highest responsibility is to honor the Lord Jesus Christ. The world may measure a woman's success by the position she holds, the money she earns, the attention she receives, or the appearance she maintains. God measures what the world routinely overlooks. A woman who fears the LORD, believes His word, and faithfully performs the responsibilities entrusted to her possesses something greater than

worldly success. She possesses a testimony that neither fashion, age, financial circumstances, nor public opinion can take away. The world can applaud a woman today and forget her tomorrow. But a life faithfully lived before God is never wasted.

5 of 10 — The Christian Home — Raise Your Children Before the World Raises Them

Key Scriptures: Deuteronomy 6:6–9; Proverbs 22:6; Ephesians 6:1–4; 2 Timothy 3:14–15 (KJV)

Introduction

Deuteronomy 6:7 contains a command that ought to disturb every Christian parent who has become comfortable allowing somebody else to determine what his children believe: "And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up." Notice that God did not describe the instruction of children as an occasional religious activity to be squeezed into an already overcrowded schedule. He described something that belonged to the ordinary rhythm of household life. Sitting, walking, lying down, and rising up encompass nearly every circumstance in which a family might find itself. God was speaking through Moses to Israel under the law, and the immediate command concerned Israel's covenant responsibilities. Nevertheless, the principle of deliberate spiritual instruction is reinforced throughout Scripture and directly established for Christian parents in the New Testament. Children must be taught. They do not arrive possessing biblical wisdom, sound doctrine, or an automatic understanding of righteousness. If parents refuse to teach their children what God has said, they should not be surprised when somebody else teaches them what God supposedly meant.

There is something remarkable about modern parenting. A father will investigate the safety ratings of an automobile, examine the ingredients in his children's food, install security equipment around the house, and spend considerable money protecting them from dangers that may never occur. Meanwhile, those same children may possess electronic devices through which thousands of strangers have unrestricted opportunities to influence their thinking. The television teaches. The internet teaches. Schools teach. Friends teach. Music teaches. Entertainment teaches. Every advertisement, conversation, and fashionable philosophy communicates something about what matters, what is acceptable, and how life ought to be lived. The child is receiving instruction whether the parents recognize it or not. Some of that instruction may be useful and truthful, but much of it directly contradicts Scripture. The world has no intention of waiting until children reach

adulthood before introducing them to unbelief, immorality, rebellion, and confusion. It begins early, speaks constantly, and rarely asks parental permission. A child left without deliberate biblical instruction is not receiving a neutral education. He is simply being educated by whoever happens to possess his attention.

The Christian home must therefore recover a responsibility that cannot be transferred completely to schools, churches, grandparents, youth ministries, or electronic resources. Ephesians 6:4 commands fathers to bring up their children "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." The responsibility is not merely to produce children who behave respectably in public or remain quiet during church services. It is to instruct them concerning God, sin, salvation, righteousness, obedience, and the difference between truth and error. Parents must learn to correct without cruelty, protect without manufacturing ignorance, instruct without hypocrisy, and love without surrendering authority. They must also recognize that children possess individual responsibility before God. No amount of excellent parenting can regenerate a human soul or guarantee every future decision. Salvation is personal, and obedience cannot be manufactured through parental determination. Nevertheless, the inability to control every outcome does not excuse the refusal to fulfill a clear responsibility. Noah could not make the world believe God's warning, but he could obey the command to prepare his household. Christian parents must likewise begin their work before the storm arrives.

1. God's Word Must Be in the Parents Before It Can Be Taught to the Children

Deuteronomy 6:6 declares, "And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart." That statement appears immediately before the command to teach children diligently. The order matters. God first addressed the spiritual responsibility of the adults who received His commandments. They were to possess the words in their own hearts before instructing the next generation. Moses was addressing Israel, a nation redeemed from Egyptian bondage and brought into covenant relationship with the LORD. Deuteronomy 6 follows the rehearsal of the Ten Commandments and emphasizes Israel's obligation to love the LORD with all the heart, soul, and might. The passage is not a direct presentation of Church Age salvation or a promise that Christian parents can guarantee their children's conversion. Nevertheless, the principle concerning personal conviction before instruction remains unmistakable. A parent cannot consistently teach biblical truth while treating that truth as optional in his own life. The Bible cannot govern the children when the parents have already voted it out of office.

This exposes a particularly serious form of religious hypocrisy. Some parents want children who respect Scripture while they themselves rarely open it. They demand honesty while practicing convenient dishonesty, condemn filthy language while speaking wickedly, and

insist upon respect while constantly demonstrating contempt for others. They expect their children to value church attendance while treating their own spiritual responsibilities as interruptions. Then they become astonished when the children grow older and begin questioning the sincerity of the entire arrangement. Romans 2:21 asks, "Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself?" The immediate context concerns religious hypocrisy among those who possessed the law, but the question reaches directly into the inconsistency of any professing believer who teaches what he refuses to practice. Children may not understand every doctrinal distinction, but they frequently recognize when adults maintain two competing sets of standards. A father who demands obedience to Scripture while openly disregarding it has supplied his children with a practical lesson in hypocrisy.

The answer is not to pretend that Christian parents must achieve sinless perfection before teaching their children. No parent possesses such perfection. First John 1:8 warns, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." The answer is to live honestly beneath the authority of God's word. When a father sins, he should acknowledge it. When a mother speaks wrongly, she should correct it. When parents discover that a household practice contradicts Scripture, they should change the practice rather than manufacture excuses. Children need to witness genuine repentance as well as genuine obedience. They should see that biblical authority reaches the adults and does not exist merely as a convenient instrument for controlling younger people. Second Timothy 2:15 commands the believer to study the word of truth rightly divided. Parents who wish to instruct their children must become students themselves. A parent who refuses to learn cannot remain an effective teacher simply because he happens to be older than his students.

2. Train Up a Child Means More Than Hoping He Turns Out Right

Proverbs 22:6 declares, "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it." This familiar verse belongs to the wisdom literature of Israel and must be handled according to its literary and historical setting. Proverbs teaches the principles of wise conduct and the ordinary consequences of righteousness and foolishness. It does not provide a mechanical guarantee that every child receiving biblical instruction will necessarily become saved, remain obedient, or never depart from the truth. If it did, parental technique would possess power that Scripture assigns to neither parents nor teachers. Nevertheless, the verse emphasizes the importance of deliberate training. The word "train" involves more than occasionally expressing a preference. It suggests instruction that forms habits, establishes direction, corrects errors, and prepares a child for responsible living. Parents who merely hope their children will become righteous while

refusing to teach them have misunderstood the entire business. Hope is no substitute for obedience.

Training requires purpose, repetition, patience, and consistency. A child must learn why lying is sinful, why stealing is wrong, why sexual purity matters, why authority deserves proper respect, and why personal responsibility cannot be transferred endlessly to somebody else. These principles should not be presented as arbitrary parental preferences. They must be connected to the word of God. Proverbs 1:8 declares, "My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother." The parental voices are presented as sources of instruction, not merely as supervisors issuing unexplained restrictions. Children require explanations appropriate to their age and understanding. A young child may need simple instruction reinforced through consistent correction. An older child should increasingly understand the biblical reasons behind household standards. By adolescence, parents should be preparing their children to exercise discernment when they are no longer standing nearby. The objective is not to raise a child who knows how to obey only when somebody is watching. It is to teach a future adult why obedience matters when nobody is watching.

There is also a difference between training a child and attempting to manufacture an exact replica of the parent. Children possess different abilities, interests, strengths, and responsibilities. Parents should not confuse their personal ambitions with the will of God. One child may possess abilities another does not. One may require additional patience in learning a particular responsibility. The Scriptures establish standards concerning righteousness, honesty, purity, and obedience, but they do not command every child to pursue the same occupation, possess the same personality, or fulfill a parent's unfinished ambitions. Ephesians 6:4 requires nurture and admonition "of the Lord," not the endless reproduction of parental preferences. A father who insists that his son must become what the father once wanted to become may be serving his own pride rather than the child's welfare. Biblical training develops character, teaches responsibility, and prepares a child to walk faithfully before God. The parent is responsible for planting and watering according to Scripture, not for pretending he possesses God's authority over the final harvest.

3. Biblical Discipline Is Not a License for Uncontrolled Anger

Ephesians 6:1 begins the New Testament instruction with a direct command: "Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right." Verse 2 continues, "Honour thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise." Paul is addressing Christian households and applying the moral responsibility of honoring parents within New Testament instruction. Children are not granted permission to determine whether obedience is convenient, fashionable, or personally satisfying before deciding whether to

comply. Parental authority is part of God's established order. A household where children control every decision through complaints, threats, and persistent rebellion has surrendered responsibility to those least prepared to exercise it. Nevertheless, parental authority remains subordinate to God. No child is obligated to commit sin merely because an adult demands it. The phrase "in the Lord" matters. Biblical authority exists for righteous instruction and protection, not for granting parents unrestricted power to indulge sinful desires. Children must be taught obedience, but parents must be taught accountability.

Proverbs 13:24 declares, "He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes." The passage emphasizes the necessity of correction rather than permissive neglect. Proverbs 29:15 similarly warns that "a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame." Scripture does not teach that allowing children to indulge every foolish impulse is an expression of love. Correction is necessary because children require guidance concerning the consequences of wrongdoing. Yet discipline must never become an excuse for striking children in anger, humiliating them, terrifying them, or causing injury. Hebrews 12:11 explains that chastening is not joyous for the present, but afterward yields "the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby." The purpose is correction that produces righteous conduct. A parent who punishes merely to satisfy his temper has forgotten that purpose. The Bible does not authorize cruelty simply because somebody has attached the respectable word discipline to it. Correction governed by wisdom seeks the child's good; punishment governed by rage seeks the parent's immediate satisfaction.

Ephesians 6:4 supplies the necessary balance: "And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." Colossians 3:21 adds, "Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged." Those commands destroy the foolish assumption that parental authority excuses every manner of harshness. A father may provoke a child through inconsistent rules, unfair accusations, public humiliation, unreasonable demands, or correction administered in uncontrolled anger. A mother may create similar discouragement through favoritism, constant criticism, or manipulative behavior. Biblical discipline should be proportionate, understandable, consistent, and appropriate to the child's circumstances. Parents should distinguish deliberate rebellion from immaturity, misunderstanding, or an honest mistake. A spilled glass is not equivalent to calculated dishonesty. A sincere question is not automatically rebellion. The parent who cannot distinguish those matters may possess plenty of authority but very little wisdom. A father who demands that his children control their emotions while he throws a tantrum has delivered a remarkably convincing demonstration of what not to do.

4. Your Children Need the Gospel, Not Merely Good Manners

Second Timothy 3:14–15 records Paul's instruction to Timothy: "But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." Timothy had received scriptural instruction from childhood. Second Timothy 1:5 identifies the unfeigned faith associated with his grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice. These women exercised an influence that reached beyond ordinary family manners and entered the spiritual preparation of a future minister of the gospel. Notice, however, that Paul did not declare Timothy saved because his mother possessed faith. The Scriptures were able to make him wise unto salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. Personal salvation remains personal. A child cannot inherit eternal life through a Christian household any more than he can inherit spiritual regeneration through a family photograph.

This distinction is essential because many parents become so occupied with producing respectable children that they neglect the gospel itself. They teach children to dress appropriately, remain quiet in church, address adults respectfully, complete household responsibilities, and avoid public embarrassment. Those may be useful lessons, but none constitutes the new birth. John 3:3 records the Lord Jesus Christ declaring, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." First Corinthians 15:3–4 identifies the gospel concerning Christ's death for our sins, burial, and resurrection the third day. Ephesians 2:8–9 establishes salvation by grace through faith, apart from works. A child must understand that he is a sinner who needs the Saviour. He must not be encouraged to trust baptism, church membership, parental devotion, a repeated prayer, or outward obedience as the basis of eternal life. A well-behaved sinner is still a sinner, and a Christian upbringing is not a substitute for personal faith in Jesus Christ.

Parents must also avoid turning salvation into a performance demanded for adult approval. Children should hear the gospel clearly, have their questions answered honestly, and understand the difference between believing Christ and merely repeating religious language. A father cannot command regeneration through household authority. A mother cannot produce saving faith by creating emotional pressure. Romans 10:17 declares, "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." The responsibility of parents is to present God's truth accurately and faithfully, not to manufacture an impressive conversion report. Once a child professes faith in Christ, instruction must continue. He should learn the difference between salvation and Christian growth, between eternal security and permission to sin, and between his standing in Christ and his daily conduct. Second Peter 3:18 commands believers to "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord

and Saviour Jesus Christ." Spiritual instruction does not end with a profession of faith. That is where an entirely new course of instruction begins.

5. If You Leave the Gates Open, Do Not Complain About the Visitors

First Corinthians 15:33 declares, "Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners." The immediate passage concerns the danger of doctrinal corruption associated with denying the resurrection, but the principle concerning corrupting associations is clearly relevant to the instruction of children. Influence matters. Companions affect attitudes, repeated messages shape expectations, and familiar ideas can gradually appear reasonable even when they contradict Scripture. Proverbs 13:20 declares, "He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed." Parents should therefore know something about their children's friendships, entertainment, reading, online activities, and the ideas continually presented to them. This is not an invitation to become suspicious of every unfamiliar person or imagine that every educational institution is automatically corrupt. It is a call to exercise responsible oversight. Parents who investigate every stranger approaching the front door while handing a child unrestricted access to strangers online have misunderstood where the doors are located.

Digital entertainment presents a particular challenge because it can place enormous quantities of information before children without meaningful adult supervision. A child may encounter pornography, cruelty, dishonest philosophies, predatory individuals, and deliberate attacks upon biblical morality while sitting quietly in a bedroom. The absence of noise does not indicate the absence of danger. Psalm 101:3 declares, "I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes." The statement belongs to David's determination concerning righteous conduct, but the principle is useful for Christians deciding what they willingly place before themselves. Parents should establish appropriate boundaries concerning devices, online conversations, entertainment, and private access to potentially harmful material. These boundaries should change responsibly as children mature. The objective is not permanent ignorance but the development of discernment. A teenager should understand why certain content is sinful or dangerous rather than merely knowing which applications are forbidden. A locked front door is excellent security, but it accomplishes very little if the entire world has been invited through the screen upstairs.

Parents must also demonstrate the standards they establish. A father cannot convincingly condemn corrupt entertainment while privately consuming it. A mother cannot teach moderation while allowing social media to govern her mood, speech, and attention throughout the day. Romans 12:2 commands believers, "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind." Christian parents should demonstrate that principle in their own choices. They must teach children how to evaluate

ideas through Scripture, distinguish genuine evidence from manipulation, and recognize the difference between disagreement and wickedness. Protecting children does not require manufacturing fear of every person who holds a different opinion. It requires equipping them to recognize truth and error. First Thessalonians 5:21 commands, "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good." A child taught only to avoid questions may become vulnerable when difficult questions eventually arise. A child taught to examine those questions according to Scripture is being prepared for responsible conviction.

6. Teach Them Holiness, Honesty, Work, and Personal Responsibility

First Thessalonians 4:3 declares, "For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication." Parents should not wait until their children have already been exposed to immoral conduct before beginning age-appropriate instruction concerning purity. Scripture speaks plainly about sexual sin, marriage, the body, and personal holiness. First Corinthians 6:18 commands believers to "Flee fornication," while Hebrews 13:4 declares, "Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge." Children and teenagers should receive truthful instruction appropriate to their development, without vulgarity, needless detail, or shame attached to innocent questions. They must also understand bodily boundaries, the right to report inappropriate conduct, and the importance of seeking help when somebody behaves improperly. Biblical modesty does not require silence about abuse. A child should never be taught that protecting an adult's reputation matters more than telling the truth about wrongdoing. Purity is not protected by ignorance, and righteousness is not established by pretending temptation does not exist.

Honesty and personal responsibility require equally deliberate instruction. Ephesians 4:25 commands believers to put away lying and speak truth. Colossians 3:9 declares, "Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds." Children must understand that dishonesty is wrong even when the truth carries consequences. Stealing, cheating, blaming others, spreading malicious rumors, and deliberately deceiving parents must be corrected according to biblical principles. Parents should also teach their children to fulfill responsibilities rather than expecting everybody else to accommodate laziness. Proverbs 6:6 directs the sluggard to consider the ant and learn wisdom through its diligence. Second Thessalonians 3:10 condemns those unwilling to work, although the passage does not condemn people genuinely unable to work. Age-appropriate household chores, faithful schoolwork, punctuality, care for possessions, and keeping one's word provide opportunities to develop responsibility. A child who learns that every neglected duty will eventually be completed by somebody else is receiving an education in dependence without accountability.

Respect and self-government are equally important. Proverbs 16:32 declares, "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city." Children should learn to disagree respectfully, receive correction, control their speech, and accept that not every disappointment constitutes an injustice. That instruction must be accompanied by parental example. Adults who scream through disagreements and then demand calm behavior from children have created a rather embarrassing contradiction. Parents should also distinguish proper respect from unquestioning compliance with every adult demand. A child must understand that no person possesses authority to require participation in sin, secrecy concerning abuse, or conduct that violates legitimate safety boundaries. Teaching children to speak truthfully about wrongdoing strengthens rather than undermines godly instruction. Biblical character is not produced by training children to become frightened, silent, and incapable of judgment. A Christian parent should raise a child who knows how to say yes to righteous authority, no to wickedness, and the truth when telling it becomes costly.

7. The World Will Not Wait Until Your Children Turn Eighteen

There is a dangerous assumption that parents can postpone serious spiritual instruction until their children become old enough to understand difficult matters. Unfortunately, the world has no intention of cooperating with that timetable. Children encounter ideas concerning morality, identity, relationships, religion, success, and personal freedom long before adulthood. If parents remain silent, other voices will provide explanations. Deuteronomy 6:7 emphasizes regular instruction woven into everyday life, while Ephesians 6:4 requires fathers to bring children up in the Lord's nurture and admonition. These responsibilities cannot be fulfilled through one dramatic conversation immediately before a child leaves home. They require years of deliberate teaching. A parent who waits until the final year of childhood to begin explaining biblical convictions is attempting to construct a foundation after the building has already been occupied. You cannot leave a field unattended for eighteen years and then complain that somebody else has been planting seeds in it.

As children mature, parental instruction must increasingly prepare them for responsible decisions rather than perpetual dependence. Young children need close supervision and clear boundaries. Teenagers need continued accountability alongside growing opportunities to exercise discernment. Eventually, adult children become responsible for their own decisions before God. Parents may continue offering counsel, prayer, encouragement, and appropriate assistance, but they cannot indefinitely govern another adult's conscience. Galatians 6:5 declares, "For every man shall bear his own burden." That truth belongs within Paul's teaching concerning personal responsibility and must be

understood alongside verse 2, which commands believers to bear one another's burdens. Christian families need both principles. Parents should help their children without attempting to eliminate every consequence of foolish choices. They should maintain love without approving wrongdoing and speak truth without pretending they possess absolute control. The purpose of raising children is not to keep them permanently dependent upon parental decisions. It is to prepare them to exercise responsible judgment beneath God's authority.

Parents must also confront the painful possibility that a child may reject instruction despite years of faithful teaching. Scripture never grants parents the power to guarantee another person's salvation or future obedience. The parable of the prodigal son in Luke 15 concerns the joy of receiving a repentant sinner and must not be reduced to a mechanical formula for family outcomes. Nevertheless, it illustrates the reality of deliberate departure and the possibility of repentance. When children wander, parents should examine their conduct honestly without assuming that every sinful decision proves they failed in every responsibility. They should continue praying, speak truth when appropriate, refuse to finance destructive behavior, and remain willing to extend forgiveness where repentance occurs. A parent must not rewrite Scripture to excuse rebellion, but neither should he abandon hope or allow bitterness to govern his own conduct. Faithful parenting is measured by obedience to God, not by the impossible achievement of controlling every choice another human being will ever make.

Conclusion

The Christian home must recover the understanding that raising children is a spiritual responsibility rather than a collection of inconveniences to be managed until adulthood. Deuteronomy 6 reveals the seriousness of household instruction under Israel's covenant. Proverbs 22 emphasizes deliberate training in wisdom. Ephesians 6 establishes New Testament responsibilities concerning parental authority, obedience, discipline, and nurture. Second Timothy 3 demonstrates the importance of childhood acquaintance with the Scriptures and their ability to make a person wise unto salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. Together, these passages confront the modern assumption that parents can delegate nearly every aspect of their children's formation and still expect biblical convictions to appear automatically. Schools may provide useful education. Churches should teach sound doctrine. Faithful relatives can exercise valuable influence. Yet none of these removes the primary responsibility God has placed upon parents. A child requires more than food, clothing, shelter, entertainment, and opportunities for advancement. He needs truth. The most expensive education in the world cannot compensate for a childhood in which the word of God was deliberately neglected.

The responsibility begins with parents who are willing to submit themselves to Scripture. A father must become more than a financial provider who occasionally appears to administer discipline. A mother must become more than a supervisor whose primary objective is keeping the household functioning smoothly. Both must recognize opportunities for instruction, demonstrate godly character, correct sin without cruelty, and explain biblical principles before worldly influences establish competing convictions. Children must hear the gospel clearly rather than merely being trained to imitate religious behavior. They should learn honesty before deception becomes habitual, purity before immorality becomes fashionable, responsibility before laziness becomes comfortable, and discernment before corrupt influences become trusted companions. Parents should open the Bible, answer difficult questions, pray with their children, maintain appropriate boundaries, and demonstrate repentance when they themselves have sinned. None of this requires a perfect household. It requires adults who refuse to use their imperfections as excuses for negligence. The Christian home will not be strengthened by another collection of impressive intentions that everybody forgets before Monday morning. It requires the deliberate obedience of people who believe God's word is worth teaching.

The years of childhood are passing whether parents use them wisely or waste them. The world is already speaking, already instructing, already presenting its standards, and already competing for the attention of the next generation. It will gladly tell children what to believe about God, morality, marriage, identity, success, authority, and personal responsibility. The question is whether Christian parents will surrender that instruction through neglect or accept the duty Scripture places upon them. Do not wait until rebellion becomes established before teaching obedience. Do not wait until a child encounters serious temptation before explaining holiness. Do not wait until a teenager begins questioning Christianity before opening the Bible together. Do not assume that attending church occasionally will compensate for a household where God's word receives no practical attention. Begin teaching while the children are young. Continue teaching as they mature. Show them what sincere Christianity looks like in the ordinary decisions of life, and prepare them to stand upon Scripture when parental supervision is no longer present. The world does not need your permission to influence your children. It only needs your absence. Every hour you surrender through negligence becomes another opportunity for somebody else to shape what they believe. The television will preach. The internet will disciple. Their companions will instruct. The culture will provide its commandments, its heroes, its morality, and its version of truth. And when the instruction is finished, the world will not necessarily be the one living with the consequences. Parents, open your Bibles. Teach your children. Correct them wisely. Love them faithfully. Show them the Saviour.

Raise your children before the world raises them, because by the time you discover who has been doing the teaching, the lessons may already have taken root.

6 of 10 — The Christian Home — Put the Bible Back in the Middle of the House

Key Scriptures: Deuteronomy 6:7; Psalm 119:9–11; Colossians 3:16; 2 Timothy 2:15 (KJV)

Introduction

Deuteronomy 6:7 contains a command that ought to shake the dust off a considerable number of Bibles sitting untouched in Christian homes: "And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up." Notice what God did not say. He did not instruct parents to purchase an impressive collection of religious books, subscribe to every ministry newsletter, decorate the living room with Scripture quotations, and then leave the actual teaching to somebody else. He commanded deliberate instruction. The word of God was to accompany the ordinary activities of household life, not remain imprisoned between two leather covers until the next church service. Moses was addressing Israel under the law, and those covenantal responsibilities must not be confused with the doctrinal position of the New Testament Church. Nevertheless, the principle of household instruction is unmistakable and is reinforced by the apostolic commands given to Christian believers. A Bible that never leaves the shelf may decorate a Christian home, but it cannot instruct the people who refuse to open it.

There is something almost astonishing about the modern Christian household. A family may own six Bibles, subscribe to twenty Christian ministries, follow fifty religious accounts, and possess enough electronic resources to establish a respectable theological library. Yet the members of that same household can go through an entire week without reading a single chapter of Scripture together. They can spend hours discussing entertainment, sports, politics, financial concerns, and the latest foolishness circulating across the internet, but mention opening the Bible after supper and suddenly everybody remembers an urgent appointment with something else. The children know which electronic device belongs to them, which streaming service carries their favorite program, and which password unlocks the family entertainment system. Ask where to find the book of Habakkuk, and the entire household may need a search party. The problem is not a shortage of available Scripture. Most American Christians have more access to the Bible

than many generations of believers could ever have imagined. The problem is that access has become a substitute for attention, and possession has been mistaken for obedience.

Colossians 3:16 commands, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom." That is an extraordinary instruction when examined carefully. Paul did not say to let the word of Christ visit occasionally, stop by on Sunday morning, or make a brief appearance whenever circumstances become frightening. He said to let it dwell. The word is supposed to occupy a settled place within the life of the believer. The command applies to Christians, and its practical implications extend naturally into the household. A family cannot claim that Scripture governs its decisions while continually excluding Scripture from its conversations, priorities, and conduct. Children need more than occasional religious lectures. Husbands and wives need more than a collection of familiar verses used to win arguments. Every member of the Christian home needs regular exposure to the truth of God's word, understood in its proper context and applied through faithful obedience. The Bible was never intended to become the emergency equipment of a Christian family, brought out only after everything else has failed. It belongs in the middle of the house before the emergency arrives.

1. God Commanded Household Instruction, Not Occasional Religious Decoration

Deuteronomy 6 begins with Moses instructing Israel concerning the commandments, statutes, and judgments that the LORD had given the nation. Verse 4 declares, "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD." Verse 5 commands Israel to love the LORD with all the heart, soul, and might. Verse 6 then establishes the necessary foundation for parental instruction: "And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart." Only after that does verse 7 command diligent teaching to children. The order is significant. God's word was first to possess the hearts of the adults responsible for transmitting it. This instruction belonged to Israel's covenantal relationship with the LORD, and it must not be transformed into a promise that Christian families are under the Mosaic law. Nevertheless, the spiritual principle remains clear. Parents cannot faithfully communicate biblical convictions they themselves refuse to take seriously. Before a father can teach his children to walk according to Scripture, he must stop treating Scripture as an optional detour in his own life.

The command concerning instruction was deliberately connected to ordinary circumstances. Sitting in the house, walking by the way, lying down, and rising up encompass the familiar activities of daily life. God's word was not supposed to become a separate subject that occasionally interrupted an otherwise secular existence. It was to shape the thinking and conduct of the people. Christian families should recognize the wisdom of that arrangement. Biblical instruction can occur while discussing a difficult

decision, addressing dishonesty, considering a friendship, examining a temptation, or responding to unexpected trouble. A father does not need to transform every evening meal into a three-hour theological conference. A mother does not need a pulpit beside the kitchen table. What is needed is a household where biblical truth is familiar enough to enter ordinary conversation naturally. A family that discusses everything except Scripture has already revealed what occupies the greatest portion of its attention. The issue is not the absence of opportunities. The issue is whether anybody intends to use them.

Deuteronomy 6:8–9 continues with instructions concerning binding God's words upon the hand, placing them as frontlets between the eyes, and writing them upon the posts of the house and gates. These commands formed part of Israel's covenantal instruction and should not be imposed upon the Church as though Christians must reproduce every outward practice associated with the law. The underlying emphasis, however, concerns the continual remembrance of divine truth. Scripture was to govern thought, action, and household conduct. The modern Christian has developed an unfortunate talent for reversing the principle. He places verses on the wall while leaving them out of his decisions. He displays a declaration concerning serving the LORD while allowing entertainment, convenience, and personal preference to govern the family. There is nothing wrong with a Scripture plaque, but an inscription cannot obey God on behalf of the people beneath it. The most impressive verse hanging above the fireplace is worthless as practical instruction when everybody sitting around the fireplace has decided to ignore what it says.

2. Let the Word of Christ Dwell Richly, Not Visit Occasionally

Colossians 3:16 is addressed to believers in the Church Age and therefore provides direct apostolic instruction concerning Christian conduct: "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." The surrounding passage describes the practical conduct appropriate to those who have been raised with Christ. Paul commands believers to put off anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication, and lying, while putting on mercy, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering, forgiveness, and charity. The command concerning God's word belongs within that practical instruction. The word of Christ must not merely inform religious opinions. It must govern the believer's conduct. A Christian household cannot consistently practice those instructions while remaining deliberately ignorant of them. The family that wants biblical results without biblical instruction is attempting to harvest a crop from a field where nobody bothered to plant anything.

Notice that Paul says the word is to dwell "richly." A rich dwelling of Scripture suggests abundance rather than spiritual starvation. This does not require every Christian to possess

formal theological education or memorize entire books before becoming useful. It requires a settled commitment to knowing God's word. Families should become acquainted with the great doctrines of Scripture, the gospel of salvation, the responsibilities of Christian living, and the distinctions necessary for rightly dividing the Bible. Children should understand why Jesus Christ died for sinners, what happened at His resurrection, and why salvation is by grace through faith rather than through religious works. Husbands and wives should understand the commands governing their relationships. Parents should know what Scripture teaches concerning correction, holiness, forgiveness, and spiritual responsibility. A household may possess an enormous quantity of information concerning worldly affairs while remaining remarkably ignorant of these matters. That is not evidence of intellectual limitation. It is evidence of misplaced priority.

The same verse also commands believers to teach and admonish one another. Notice that instruction is not restricted to one individual who possesses a religious title. The local church has appointed responsibilities concerning pastoral teaching, but Christian believers are also expected to communicate truth among themselves. Within the household, that includes husbands and wives encouraging one another through Scripture, parents teaching children, and family members discussing biblical matters honestly. It does not authorize a child to disregard proper parental authority or a spouse to use isolated verses as weapons against the other. Scripture must be handled faithfully. Some people can transform a family Bible study into a domestic courtroom where every passage becomes evidence against somebody else. That may provide an impressive demonstration of argumentative ability, but it is a poor example of Christian edification. The purpose of opening the Bible together is not to discover who can win the next household argument. It is to learn what God has said and submit to it together.

3. Study the Book Instead of Merely Collecting Religious Opinions

Second Timothy 2:15 commands, "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." Paul wrote these words to Timothy in connection with his responsibilities as a minister of Jesus Christ. The immediate context concerns avoiding unprofitable arguments, handling the word faithfully, and opposing false teaching that had already damaged the faith of some. The command is especially important for those who teach publicly, but its principle concerning careful study remains valuable for every believer. The Bible is not a collection of convenient religious statements waiting to be arranged according to personal preference. It contains history, prophecy, doctrine, commandments, promises, warnings, and instructions addressed to particular people under particular circumstances. A Christian family that wants to understand Scripture must learn to read passages in context. A verse removed

from its setting can be made to support nearly anything, which explains why so many people can quote the Bible while teaching something the Bible never said.

Rightly dividing the word of truth requires recognizing distinctions God Himself has established. Israel is not the Church. The Mosaic law is not the believer's rule for obtaining salvation. God's earthly covenant promises to Israel must not be stolen and reassigned to Christians merely because somebody prefers their wording. The Church's heavenly calling, the gospel of grace, the Judgment Seat of Christ, the Rapture, the Second Advent, and the future restoration of Israel must be understood according to their proper biblical settings. This may sound like advanced material for a family discussion, but even children can begin learning basic distinctions when they are explained clearly. They can understand that God commanded Noah to build an ark without concluding that every Christian must become a shipbuilder. They can recognize that Israel received commandments concerning the tabernacle without assuming their family must construct one in the backyard. The Bible becomes clearer when its divisions are respected rather than erased.

Parents must also teach their children the difference between Scripture and religious opinion. The internet contains an astonishing number of people willing to explain the Bible, including some who appear to have been inconvenienced by the necessity of reading it. A confident voice, impressive presentation, or enormous audience does not establish doctrinal correctness. Acts 17:11 commends the Bereans because they "searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so." Their example demonstrates the importance of examining teaching according to God's written revelation. Christian children should learn to ask what the passage actually says, who is speaking, who is being addressed, and how the surrounding verses establish its meaning. They should be encouraged to bring sincere questions to their parents rather than being punished for not immediately understanding a difficult passage. A Christian home should not produce children who can repeat somebody else's convictions without knowing where those convictions came from. It should produce students of Scripture who know how to open the Book and examine the evidence.

4. Hide the Word in Their Hearts Before Temptation Comes Knocking

Psalm 119:9 asks, "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word." The question concerns the conduct of a young person, and the answer directs attention to obedience to God's revealed truth. Verse 11 continues, "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee." The psalm belongs to Israel's inspired Scriptures and repeatedly celebrates the LORD's commandments, testimonies, statutes, judgments, and law. Its original setting must be respected, yet its teaching concerning the relationship between divine truth and righteous conduct remains

instructive for Christians. God's word is not presented as an ornament for intellectual admiration. It is to be received, remembered, and obeyed. A young person who has learned Scripture possesses truth that can confront temptation even when parents are absent. The time to prepare a child for the devil's arguments is before the devil begins presenting them.

Scripture memorization therefore deserves renewed attention within the Christian home. Parents should help children learn passages concerning salvation, truthfulness, purity, obedience, faith, forgiveness, and the promises of God. Young children can begin with shorter verses and gradually learn longer passages as their understanding develops. Older children should learn to recognize how verses fit within their chapters rather than merely collecting isolated statements. A child who memorizes Ephesians 2:8–9 should also understand what salvation by grace through faith means. A teenager who learns First Corinthians 6:18 should understand the biblical command to flee fornication. Memorization without understanding can become little more than an impressive performance, but understanding without remembering leaves important truths difficult to recall when they are needed. There is room for both. A verse hidden in the heart is far more useful during temptation than a verse buried beneath three months of unopened mail on the kitchen counter.

The importance of Scripture becomes especially clear when examining the temptation of the Lord Jesus Christ in Matthew 4. Satan approached the Lord with temptations, and Christ answered with the written word of God. He declared, "It is written," and answered the tempter from Scripture. The account concerns the unique temptation of the sinless Son of God and must not be reduced to the suggestion that Christians possess His divine impeccability. Nevertheless, His use of Scripture demonstrates the authority of God's written revelation. Notice also that the devil quoted Scripture while attempting to tempt Christ. That detail should permanently cure the assumption that every person quoting a Bible verse must be teaching sound doctrine. The Lord answered according to the proper meaning of Scripture rather than accepting the devil's misuse of it. Christian families must teach both the words and their meaning. The enemy does not always arrive carrying a bottle, a filthy magazine, or an obvious invitation to sin. Sometimes he arrives carrying a verse he hopes nobody understands.

5. Family Worship Should Be Faithful, Not a Religious Performance

One reason some families abandon regular Bible reading is that they have imagined it must resemble a formal church service conducted around the dinner table. The father believes he must deliver a polished sermon, the mother feels responsible for arranging everything perfectly, and the children are expected to remain motionless while an hour of religious activity unfolds. Eventually everybody becomes exhausted, and the entire exercise

disappears. Scripture does not command Christian fathers to construct a miniature auditorium in the living room. The household needs regular exposure to the word of God, prayer, and meaningful spiritual conversation. That can begin with a chapter read aloud, a few questions concerning its meaning, and prayer appropriate to the family's circumstances. Deuteronomy 6 emphasized instruction throughout ordinary life, while Colossians 3:16 commands the word of Christ to dwell richly among believers. A family devotion does not become more biblical because the furniture has been rearranged to make the father look like a visiting evangelist.

Consistency matters more than theatrical presentation. A family that faithfully reads Scripture together for a manageable period has established something valuable. The purpose is not to impress neighbors, compete with other households, or maintain a religious schedule so elaborate that it collapses under its own weight. Parents should account for the ages and abilities of their children, the legitimate responsibilities of the household, and the need to keep instruction clear. Younger children may need brief explanations and familiar passages. Teenagers may benefit from discussing doctrine, comparing Scripture with Scripture, and examining questions they encounter outside the home. Adults should also continue learning rather than pretending every question has an immediate answer. When a passage is difficult, there is no shame in studying it carefully before attempting an explanation. The shame comes when adults knowingly replace biblical truth with confident nonsense because they would rather appear knowledgeable than admit they need to study.

Family Bible reading must also avoid becoming an instrument of punishment or resentment. A parent who uses every gathering to humiliate children, reopen old disputes, or deliver personal accusations will eventually make the Bible study itself appear threatening. Ephesians 6:4 warns fathers against provoking their children to wrath while commanding nurture and admonition in the Lord. That does not mean biblical instruction must avoid sin, correction, or uncomfortable truth. Scripture frequently confronts wrongdoing directly. It means correction should arise from faithful application of the passage rather than from an adult's desire to win an argument. A father can teach obedience without turning every verse into a threat. A mother can explain righteousness without continually comparing her children unfavorably with somebody else's family. The Bible should never become the household hammer that one angry person uses to beat everybody else into submission. It is God's word, and it deserves better handling than that.

6. Open the Bible When Questions, Troubles, and Decisions Arrive

A Christian household should be a place where sincere questions concerning Scripture can be asked without unnecessary ridicule or intimidation. Children will eventually ask

about creation, salvation, suffering, death, prayer, prophecy, morality, and the differences between biblical teaching and popular opinion. Some questions will be simple, while others will expose subjects the parents themselves have not studied adequately. First Peter 3:15 instructs believers to be ready to give an answer concerning their hope "with meekness and fear." The immediate passage concerns Christian testimony amid suffering, but the principle of thoughtful, reverent explanation is useful within the household. Parents should answer according to Scripture rather than inventing explanations to escape embarrassment. A child who asks why God permits suffering does not need a confident speech filled with speculation. He needs truth, patience, and appropriate biblical instruction. A question is not rebellion merely because the adult hearing it does not know the answer.

Prayer must also occupy a meaningful place in family life. Philippians 4:6 commands believers, "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God." Families should learn to bring legitimate concerns before the Lord rather than reserving prayer for emergencies or ceremonial occasions. Financial pressures, sickness, difficult decisions, spiritual struggles, and thanksgiving for God's provision all provide opportunities for prayer. Children should hear adults acknowledge dependence upon God without being taught that every request will receive the exact answer they desire. Prayer is not a mechanism for controlling circumstances or compelling the Almighty to approve personal plans. First John 5:14 identifies confidence in prayer according to God's will. A family that prays together should also learn to accept God's wisdom when circumstances remain difficult. The purpose of prayer is not to inform God that the household has already made its decisions and would appreciate His signature at the bottom.

The Scriptures should likewise govern household decisions. Proverbs 3:5–6 instructs, "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." These words appear within Israel's wisdom literature and should not be turned into a promise that Christians will receive supernatural instructions concerning every ordinary choice. Nevertheless, they establish the importance of trusting God rather than relying upon prideful independence. A family considering a financial commitment should examine honesty, stewardship, and responsibility. A young person considering a friendship should understand biblical warnings concerning corrupting associations. A husband and wife facing disagreement should examine the commands concerning love, kindness, forgiveness, and personal accountability. The Bible does not name every automobile, employer, school, or financial arrangement a Christian might encounter. It provides principles by which decisions can be

evaluated. The Christian home does not need a new revelation for every decision. It needs greater obedience to the revelation God has already given.

7. Restore the Bible to Its Proper Place Before the Years Are Gone

One of the greatest enemies of household Bible reading is not open hostility toward Scripture but the gradual surrender of attention to lesser things. Ephesians 5:16 commands believers to be "Redeeming the time, because the days are evil." The immediate setting concerns wise Christian conduct, including walking circumspectly and understanding the will of the Lord. That instruction ought to confront families whose schedules are filled with activities that leave no meaningful room for spiritual responsibility. Work, education, recreation, and necessary household duties all require time. Scripture does not condemn these legitimate activities. The problem arises when lesser priorities continually displace what God has commanded. A father may insist that his family is too busy for Bible reading while ensuring that three hours remain available for entertainment every evening. Apparently, the clock has developed a peculiar theological condition: it works normally for everything except Scripture.

Parents must recognize that the years available for direct instruction are limited. Children grow older, responsibilities change, and opportunities pass. Second Timothy 3:15 recalls Timothy's acquaintance with the holy Scriptures from childhood. That testimony did not emerge because somebody waited until Timothy reached adulthood before mentioning the Bible. Faithful instruction began early. Christian parents should therefore establish reasonable habits while their children are still living beneath their care. They should read Scripture together, encourage personal study, answer questions, and demonstrate the importance of biblical truth through their own conduct. As children mature, they should increasingly learn to study independently, recognizing the difference between personal faith and merely borrowing their parents' religious convictions. The goal is not perpetual dependence upon an adult interpreter. It is developing believers who can approach Scripture responsibly. A parent who never teaches a child to handle the Bible for himself should not be surprised when that child later depends upon strangers to explain what God has said.

The responsibility does not disappear when a household consists of only one believer, a single parent, an elderly couple, or a family whose members live under differing circumstances. Colossians 3:16 is instruction to believers, not a privilege restricted to families possessing an ideal arrangement. A widow can study Scripture faithfully. A single father can read the Bible with his children. A mother whose husband is unbelieving can maintain personal obedience and provide appropriate instruction without pretending she controls another person's heart. A married couple without children can build their conduct

upon God's word. Nor should a family burdened by illness or demanding responsibilities assume that every missed gathering constitutes spiritual failure. The issue is not maintaining an inflexible ceremony. It is cultivating a consistent commitment to Scripture. The Bible does not require a magnificent house, an impressive family photograph, or a perfectly arranged schedule before its truth becomes useful. It requires people willing to open it, believe it, and obey it.

Conclusion

The Christian home must recover something far more important than religious decoration, impressive collections of books, or occasional enthusiastic declarations about the authority of Scripture. It must recover the ordinary practice of reading, studying, discussing, remembering, and obeying the word of God. Deuteronomy 6 demonstrates the seriousness of household instruction within Israel's covenant. Psalm 119 establishes the relationship between God's word and righteous conduct. Colossians 3 commands believers to let the word of Christ dwell richly among them, while Second Timothy 2 emphasizes careful study and the necessity of rightly dividing the word of truth. These passages do not describe Christianity as an occasional religious activity conducted outside the ordinary responsibilities of life. They demand personal attention to divine revelation. A Christian household cannot become spiritually strong by continually neglecting the source of its instruction. A family may possess every modern convenience, educational advantage, and material comfort imaginable, but if God's word has been pushed into a forgotten corner, something essential has been abandoned.

The remedy is not complicated, although it requires deliberate obedience. Parents should begin reading Scripture rather than continually discussing their intention to begin. Husbands and wives should examine their conduct according to the Bible instead of searching for verses that condemn only the other person. Children should be taught the gospel clearly, instructed in sound doctrine, encouraged to memorize Scripture, and prepared to recognize false teaching. Families should pray honestly, discuss difficult passages patiently, and maintain sufficient consistency that biblical instruction becomes familiar rather than exceptional. The local church remains essential for preaching, teaching, fellowship, and the responsibilities God has established within the body of Christ. Yet church attendance cannot excuse deliberate neglect of the Bible at home. A pastor may faithfully preach on Sunday, but he cannot personally govern every conversation that occurs around a family's dinner table throughout the week. The preacher is responsible to feed the flock entrusted to his care. Parents are not thereby excused from opening the Scriptures with the children entrusted to theirs.

There is still time to change the habits of a household that has allowed the Bible to become little more than religious furniture. The father who has neglected spiritual instruction can begin studying today. The mother who feels uncertain about explaining Scripture can begin reading carefully and learning alongside her children. The husband and wife who have permitted entertainment, busyness, and unnecessary distractions to dominate their evenings can establish more faithful priorities. Nobody needs to wait for an elaborate devotional program, an expensive study system, or a perfectly quiet house. Open the King James Bible. Read the passage. Examine its context. Explain what it says. Compare Scripture with Scripture. Pray according to God's word. Correct what needs correcting, encourage what deserves encouragement, and continue learning. The world is already filling homes with voices, opinions, entertainment, and instruction. Christians must decide whether the voice of Scripture will be heard among them. A Bible on the shelf cannot correct a child, strengthen a marriage, expose false doctrine, or instruct a family that refuses to read it. The world will gladly occupy every minute you surrender, and the devil will not complain about a Christian household where the Book remains closed. Put the Bible back in the middle of the house. Not merely on the table, but in the conversations. Not merely on the wall, but in the decisions. Not merely in the hands, but in the heart. A Christian home should be known for more than the Bible it possesses. It should be known for the truth it believes, the doctrine it understands, and the word of God it obeys.

7 of 10 — The Christian Home — Guard the Gates: What Are You Allowing Into Your Home?

Key Scriptures: Psalm 101:3; Proverbs 4:23; 1 Corinthians 15:33; Philippians 4:8 (KJV)

Introduction

Psalm 101:3 contains a declaration that ought to make every Christian parent examine what is coming through the doors, windows, televisions, computers, and smartphones of the modern household: "I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes: I hate the work of them that turn aside; it shall not cleave to me." David was not discussing internet safety, electronic entertainment, or the latest technological invention. He was declaring a personal commitment to righteous conduct before the LORD. Nevertheless, the principle reaches directly into an age when wickedness can be delivered into a living room faster than a man can unlock his front door. The Christian family may possess the finest locks, security cameras, alarm systems, and protective equipment available, yet remain almost completely unguarded against the spiritual influences entering through a glowing screen.

Parents will inspect the credentials of a stranger standing on their porch, but allow another stranger to spend six hours instructing their children through a device they purchased themselves. There is something remarkably foolish about protecting the furniture more diligently than the souls of the people sitting upon it. A locked front door accomplishes very little when the world has been given unrestricted access through every screen in the house.

Proverbs 4:23 declares, "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life." Notice that the command concerns the heart, not merely outward behavior. Solomon's instruction belongs to the wisdom literature of Israel, where the father repeatedly exhorts his son to receive wisdom, avoid wicked paths, and preserve righteous conduct. The immediate context includes warnings concerning evil speech, dishonest behavior, and the necessity of directing one's steps wisely. The principle is unmistakable: what governs the inward life eventually influences outward conduct. That truth is particularly important when considering entertainment, friendships, digital communication, and the repeated messages shaping the thinking of children. The human mind is not an empty storage building where every influence can be deposited indefinitely without consequence. Ideas are received, entertained, compared, accepted, rejected, and eventually expressed through decisions. A family that continually exposes itself to wickedness while assuming no influence will follow has adopted a remarkably convenient theory of spiritual immunity. Unfortunately, Scripture has never promised that Christians become immune to corruption merely because they recognize themselves as Christians.

The Christian home must therefore recover the responsibility of guarding its spiritual boundaries without descending into fear, superstition, or foolish isolation. First Corinthians 15:33 warns, "Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners." Philippians 4:8 directs believers to think upon things that are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report. These passages do not demand that Christians abandon every lawful form of entertainment, reject modern technology, or raise children who are terrified of encountering an unfamiliar opinion. They demand discernment. There is a difference between understanding the existence of wickedness and inviting it to become a permanent household guest. There is a difference between preparing children to recognize error and allowing error to become their principal instructor. There is also a difference between establishing biblical boundaries and pretending that excessive restrictions can manufacture personal holiness. The Christian family needs more than an impressive collection of prohibitions. It needs parents who understand the Scriptures, practice what they teach, and prepare their children to exercise sound judgment. The objective is not to build a home where nobody knows the world exists. It is to build a home where everybody knows the world does not possess final authority.

1. David Refused to Entertain What God Condemned

Psalm 101 opens with David declaring, "I will sing of mercy and judgment: unto thee, O LORD, will I sing." He then expresses his intention to behave wisely, walk within his house with a perfect heart, reject wickedness, and separate himself from corrupt conduct. The psalm is a royal declaration concerning righteous government and personal integrity. Its immediate setting must be recognized before making practical application to Christian households. David was Israel's king, not a New Testament father writing household regulations concerning electronic devices. Nevertheless, his determination to reject wickedness provides a legitimate spiritual example. Notice the personal responsibility in his words: "I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes." David did not begin by listing everything other people must stop watching. He began with his own conduct. That ought to make some parents uncomfortable. It is easy to demand purity from children while maintaining a private entertainment collection that would embarrass the household if its contents became public. The first gate a Christian parent must guard is the one through which his own temptations enter.

David continued in Psalm 101:4, "A froward heart shall depart from me: I will not know a wicked person." The surrounding verses address deceit, slander, pride, and the character of those permitted to serve within his royal administration. The psalm therefore concerns more than visual temptation. It addresses the kind of conduct and influence a righteous man should refuse to cultivate. Christian families can apply this principle without pretending David was writing instructions concerning social media. What voices are repeatedly welcomed into the household? What attitudes are being normalized? What conduct is presented as entertaining, admirable, or harmless? A family may verbally condemn dishonesty while laughing through entertainment that celebrates clever deception. It may teach children to honor marriage while regularly consuming stories that glorify adultery. It may condemn cruelty while enjoying entertainment built almost entirely upon humiliation and revenge. The contradiction should be obvious. A household cannot continually applaud the behavior Scripture condemns and then reasonably expect its children to regard that behavior with biblical seriousness.

The statement "I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes" must not become an excuse for inventing commandments God never gave. Scripture itself records murder, adultery, idolatry, deception, violence, and other wicked acts because truthful instruction sometimes requires examining evil conduct. Reading about David's sin in Second Samuel 11 is not equivalent to celebrating adultery. Studying the wickedness of Ahab and Jezebel is not participation in their idolatry. The distinction concerns how evil is presented, why it is being considered, and whether the heart is being drawn toward approval or obedience. A

Christian may examine false teaching in order to expose it without embracing it. A parent may discuss an immoral cultural trend in order to prepare children to reject it. Discernment requires understanding, not deliberate ignorance. Yet the ability to distinguish instruction from entertainment should not become an excuse for continual indulgence. There is a considerable difference between studying a poisonous snake to understand its danger and bringing one home because its colors are attractive.

2. The Heart Is the Gatehouse of the Christian Life

Proverbs 4:23 commands, "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life." The surrounding chapter repeatedly emphasizes the importance of wisdom, instruction, and careful attention to the direction of one's life. Verse 14 warns against entering the path of wicked men, while verse 27 commands, "Turn not to the right hand nor to the left: remove thy foot from evil." The passage presents a connected pattern: receive instruction, guard the inward life, reject corrupt conduct, and direct one's steps wisely. The command to keep the heart does not suggest that the Christian can obtain salvation through personal vigilance. Salvation in the present dispensation is by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, as Ephesians 2:8–9 plainly establishes. The saved believer is nevertheless responsible for his practical conduct. Romans 12:2 commands Christians to be transformed by the renewing of their minds. The new birth does not give the believer permission to fill his thoughts with wickedness and then complain when his conduct begins resembling what he has been entertaining.

There is a dangerous assumption that repeated exposure to ungodliness remains harmless so long as the person watching it claims not to approve. A man may spend hours enjoying entertainment filled with filthy speech, sexual immorality, blasphemy, and cruelty while explaining that none of it affects him. A young person may continually consume material encouraging pride, rebellion, dishonesty, and contempt for biblical morality while insisting that it is merely entertainment. Yet Ephesians 5:11 commands believers, "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them." A Christian should not confuse familiarity with wickedness and victory over wickedness. The repeated presence of sin can dull the conscience, weaken moral resistance, and make once-offensive conduct appear ordinary. That does not mean every exposure produces the same effect upon every person. It means no believer should assume that his profession of faith has made deliberate spiritual carelessness harmless. The conscience can become accustomed to things it once condemned, and familiarity is a poor substitute for holiness.

Guarding the heart also requires attention to thoughts and desires that cannot be blamed entirely upon outside influences. James 1:14 declares, "But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed." The problem of sin does not originate

exclusively in televisions, computers, books, friendships, or smartphones. Those things may provide occasions for temptation, but the flesh remains an enemy even when every electronic device has been removed from the property. Galatians 5:17 explains that "the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh." A household that attempts to produce righteousness entirely through restrictions has misunderstood the deeper battle. Boundaries matter, but boundaries cannot regenerate the sinner or eliminate the believer's responsibility to walk in the Spirit. Parents should therefore teach children why certain influences are dangerous, not merely announce that the influences are forbidden. You can remove every wicked picture from a room and still have a sinner sitting in the middle of it. The Christian home must address the heart as well as the screen.

3. The Entertainment Industry Is Preaching Whether You Notice It or Not

First Corinthians 15:33 declares, "Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners." Paul was addressing the Corinthian church concerning the resurrection of the dead and the destructive influence of false doctrine. Certain men had denied the resurrection, and Paul exposed the consequences of their teaching. The verse therefore concerns doctrinal corruption in its immediate setting, but its warning establishes a broader principle concerning the influence of corrupt associations and communications. What people repeatedly hear and accept affects their conduct. The entertainment industry understands the power of repeated messages, even when Christian parents appear determined to ignore it. Movies, television programs, music, games, and online personalities communicate assumptions concerning morality, authority, marriage, sexuality, religion, and personal responsibility. Not every program is wicked, and not every unfamiliar idea constitutes spiritual danger. Nevertheless, entertainment is not automatically innocent because somebody has attached a price tag and called it recreation. The world has discovered that it can preach for hours without ever building a pulpit, and millions of Christian families are purchasing front-row seats.

Consider the moral contradictions frequently found in household entertainment. Parents warn children against fornication, then watch programs that portray sexual immorality as amusing and desirable. They teach respect for marriage while enjoying stories built around adultery and betrayal. They condemn filthy speech while laughing at comedians whose entire performances depend upon vulgarity. They instruct children to respect authority while celebrating characters whose principal achievement consists of making rebellion appear attractive. Then, when biblical convictions begin weakening, everybody acts astonished that the household has developed worldly attitudes. The issue is not whether every fictional character must be righteous or every story must avoid portraying sin. Scripture itself records wicked conduct without endorsing it. The issue is whether

entertainment exposes wrongdoing as wrongdoing or invites the audience to enjoy, admire, and imitate it. A family that spends six evenings applauding what God condemns should not expect one Sunday sermon to erase the contradiction automatically.

Philippians 4:8 provides an excellent standard for examining what believers willingly entertain: "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." Paul was instructing Christians concerning godly thinking within a passage addressing prayer, peace, and faithful conduct. The verse does not require every form of entertainment to contain explicit religious instruction. It does require Christians to consider whether their chosen influences agree with righteous principles. Parents should evaluate content before permitting children to consume it, discuss questionable themes honestly, and establish reasonable standards concerning language, sexual material, violence, and blasphemy. They should also recognize that repeated entertainment can occupy time that belongs to more important responsibilities. The question is not merely whether a program is entertaining. The question is what the program is teaching you to enjoy.

4. A Smartphone Can Become a Private Doorway Into Public Wickedness

The modern smartphone is an extraordinary invention. It can provide access to Scripture, useful information, educational resources, communication with loved ones, and practical assistance during emergencies. It can also provide immediate access to pornography, deception, exploitation, dangerous strangers, and influences that would never be welcomed through the front door. The object itself is not morally responsible for the choices made through it. The person using it remains accountable before God. First Corinthians 6:12 declares, "All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any." Paul was not discussing telephones, but his distinction concerning lawful liberty and improper mastery remains instructive. A believer should not willingly become enslaved to an appetite simply because the means of satisfying it happens to fit inside his pocket. A device that was supposed to serve the household should not become the master of everybody living inside it.

Pornography deserves particular attention because it directly contradicts biblical holiness and can create opportunities for exploitation. Matthew 5:28 records the Lord's warning concerning looking upon a woman to lust after her. The original setting belongs to Christ's teaching concerning adultery and the righteousness of the heart. First Thessalonians 4:3 directly commands Christians to abstain from fornication, while First Corinthians 6:18

declares, "Flee fornication." A Christian father cannot condemn sexual impurity while privately feeding his own lust through a screen. A mother cannot dismiss sexually corrupt entertainment as harmless while demanding purity from her children. Parents should establish appropriate device restrictions, keep communication open, and teach children that sexual images, explicit requests, and inappropriate secrecy must be reported to a trustworthy adult. Children should never be blamed for the wicked actions of predators who target them. The answer to digital immorality is not merely hiding the evidence better. It is rejecting the sin and refusing to provide it a comfortable residence.

Online relationships require equal discernment. Proverbs 22:3 declares, "A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself: but the simple pass on, and are punished." The principle concerns wise recognition of danger. Parents should teach children that an attractive photograph, friendly message, or impressive online profile does not establish a stranger's honesty. Personal information, photographs, location details, and private conversations must be handled responsibly. A child should know that threatening messages, requests for secrecy, sexual advances, blackmail, and attempts to arrange concealed meetings require immediate attention from a responsible adult. Parents should respond to such disclosures by protecting the child rather than silencing the matter to preserve appearances. At the same time, not every online friendship is automatically sinister. The issue is discernment, appropriate supervision, and accountability. A stranger does not become trustworthy because he has exchanged the front porch for a profile picture, and a predator does not become harmless because he knows how to use cheerful little symbols at the end of a message.

5. Parents Cannot Condemn in Their Children What They Celebrate in Themselves

Romans 2:21 asks a devastating question: "Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself?" Paul was confronting religious hypocrisy among those who possessed knowledge of the law while failing to practice what they taught. The immediate setting concerns Jewish confidence in the law and the inconsistency of disobedience, but the question exposes hypocrisy wherever it appears. Christian parents are not exempt. A father who demands honesty while lying whenever convenience requires it has undermined his instruction. A mother who condemns malicious gossip while spending hours spreading accusations has delivered a contradictory lesson. Parents who prohibit their children from consuming immoral entertainment while privately indulging in the same material demonstrate that their standards are governed by age rather than righteousness. Children may not understand every theological distinction, but they can recognize when the people enforcing the rules have reserved an exemption for themselves.

This hypocrisy becomes especially damaging when parents use religious authority to conceal personal sin. A father may lecture his son about purity while maintaining an addiction to pornography. A mother may insist upon kindness while repeatedly humiliating people through social media. Adults may prohibit excessive screen time while spending every available moment staring at their own devices. The children observe the contradiction, and eventually the household discovers that its rules have become difficult to defend because the adults refuse to practice them. Ephesians 5:15 commands believers to "walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise." That instruction applies to the parents before they begin applying it to their children. There is no spiritual accomplishment in establishing righteous boundaries for everybody else while secretly cultivating wicked habits. A parent who wants his children to respect biblical authority must first demonstrate that biblical authority possesses jurisdiction over him.

The solution is not to abandon household standards because the parents have failed. It is to repent of the inconsistency and restore obedience. First John 1:9 declares, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." This instruction concerns the believer's confession of sin, not the repeated loss and recovery of eternal salvation. A Christian parent who has indulged wickedness should stop defending it, confess his wrongdoing before God, and correct his conduct. Where his sin has injured others, he should acknowledge that responsibility appropriately. Parents should also remember Ephesians 6:4, which forbids fathers to provoke their children to wrath. Household standards must not become excuses for cruelty, humiliation, or constant suspicion. Correction should be governed by truth, wisdom, and the child's genuine welfare. The answer to hypocrisy is not lowering God's standard until everybody can step over it. The answer is bringing personal conduct back beneath the authority of God's word.

6. Discernment Is Not the Same Thing as Hiding From the World

John 17:15 records the Lord Jesus Christ praying concerning His disciples: "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil." The immediate passage concerns those given to Christ and includes His prayer regarding their preservation and sanctification. Verse 17 declares, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth." Those words expose the difference between biblical separation and fear-driven isolation. Christ did not ask that His disciples be removed from every encounter with the surrounding world. He prayed concerning their preservation from evil and their sanctification through truth. Christian parents must understand that distinction. Children should be protected from genuine danger, but they must also be prepared to live faithfully in a world containing unbelief, false doctrine, temptation, and opposition. A

fortress that never permits its occupants to learn discernment may keep them sheltered for a season without preparing them to stand when they eventually walk outside.

First Thessalonians 5:21 commands, "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good." The surrounding passage concerns Christian conduct and the proper handling of spiritual matters, including prophetic utterances. Its principle of examination rather than blind acceptance is valuable when teaching children to evaluate the messages they encounter. Parents should explain why certain doctrines are false, why particular moral claims contradict Scripture, and why popularity does not establish truth. They should welcome sincere questions and demonstrate how to examine passages in context. A teenager who has never been permitted to question an assertion may eventually encounter a persuasive argument for which he possesses no answer. That does not mean parents should expose young children to material inappropriate for their age. It means instruction must mature alongside the child. The goal is not to raise children who believe Christianity because nobody allowed them to hear anything else. The goal is to teach them why the Bible is true and why competing claims must be judged by it.

The Christian household must also recognize that technology can be used for legitimate and profitable purposes. Scripture can be studied electronically. Families separated by distance can communicate. Useful educational resources can be accessed. Christians can share the gospel, encourage one another, and accomplish worthwhile work through modern tools. First Corinthians 10:31 declares, "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." The principle concerns the believer's conduct, not the moral innocence of every invention. Technology should therefore be evaluated according to its use, influence, and consequences rather than condemned merely because it is modern. A family can reject pornography without rejecting every computer. It can limit social media without abandoning useful communication. It can refuse corrupt entertainment while enjoying wholesome recreation. The problem is not that electricity has discovered a way to carry information. The problem begins when Christians surrender their judgment because the information arrives with bright colors and convenient buttons.

7. Establish the Boundaries Before the Trouble Arrives

Proverbs 27:12 declares, "A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself; but the simple pass on, and are punished." Once again, Scripture commends foresight rather than careless presumption. Parents should not wait until a serious incident occurs before considering household standards concerning technology, entertainment, online communication, and personal safety. Appropriate safeguards may include shared expectations about device use, age-appropriate restrictions, limits concerning private communications with strangers, and regular conversations about questionable material.

Parents should know what platforms their children use and how those platforms operate. They should establish clear instructions concerning dangerous encounters and encourage children to report troubling experiences without fear of being blamed for another person's misconduct. The standards should be understandable and applied consistently rather than changing according to the parent's temper. A family that refuses to establish boundaries until after disaster arrives has confused damage control with preparation.

Such boundaries must be accompanied by genuine instruction. Deuteronomy 6:7 commanded Israel to teach God's words diligently through ordinary household life, while Ephesians 6:4 directly instructs Christian fathers to bring their children up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. These passages establish the importance of teaching rather than merely prohibiting. Parents should explain why sexual immorality is sinful, why dishonesty damages trust, why corrupt companionship is dangerous, and why the believer must guard his thoughts. Children should increasingly learn to recognize manipulation, reject inappropriate requests, protect private information, and distinguish biblical truth from fashionable opinion. As they mature, supervision should be adjusted responsibly to prepare them for independent decisions. Excessive control can become its own form of foolishness when it prevents the development of judgment. A fence may protect a young tree while it grows, but the purpose is to develop roots strong enough to withstand the wind when the fence is no longer there.

Finally, guarding the household requires prayer, scriptural instruction, personal example, and accountability within the local church. Ephesians 6:11 commands believers to "Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil." The passage concerns spiritual warfare through truth, righteousness, faith, salvation, the word of God, and prayer. It does not instruct Christians to invent frightening explanations for every technological development or imagine demonic activity behind every ordinary difficulty. The believer's responsibility is to stand upon what God has revealed. Families should pray for wisdom, teach sound doctrine, maintain honest communication, and refuse deliberate fellowship with wickedness. They should also recognize that no collection of filters, restrictions, or household regulations can substitute for personal salvation and spiritual growth. The strongest protection a Christian family possesses is not the newest security program. It is a household whose members know the truth, respect God's authority, recognize danger, and understand why obedience matters.

Conclusion

The Christian home faces a serious challenge in an age when nearly every form of worldly influence can enter through devices small enough to fit into a child's pocket. Psalm 101:3 establishes the righteous determination to refuse wickedness before one's eyes. Proverbs

4:23 commands diligent care over the heart. First Corinthians 15:33 warns concerning corrupting communications, while Philippians 4:8 directs believers toward thoughts consistent with truth, purity, virtue, and righteousness. These passages do not teach that Christians must fear every invention, abandon lawful entertainment, or withdraw from ordinary society. They require something more demanding: personal responsibility governed by biblical discernment. The family must recognize that entertainment communicates values, repeated exposure influences conduct, and careless access can create genuine spiritual and personal dangers. Yet the answer is not panic. It is obedience. A Christian household does not become safe merely because its occupants are suspicious of the world. It becomes spiritually stronger when its occupants understand Scripture well enough to recognize what deserves rejection and what can be received with thanksgiving.

The responsibility begins with the adults. Fathers must examine their own entertainment, private habits, and use of technology before demanding purity from their children. Mothers must apply the same biblical standards to their own conduct rather than assuming that parental authority provides exemptions from obedience. Husbands and wives should agree upon appropriate household boundaries, discuss questionable influences honestly, and refuse to let electronic distractions consume the attention their families require. Children must be taught that the internet contains useful information as well as dangerous individuals, false teaching, pornography, and wicked conduct. They should know how to identify danger, report inappropriate behavior, and evaluate ideas according to Scripture. The local church should reinforce these principles through sound preaching and teaching, but parents cannot transfer their entire responsibility to the pastor. The preacher may warn against the wolves on Sunday, but parents must still pay attention to what is wandering through their children's bedrooms on Monday.

The front door may be locked, the windows secured, and every security camera functioning perfectly, but none of those things can protect a household whose occupants continually invite wickedness into their thoughts. The modern world has developed extraordinary methods for reaching the eyes, ears, and imaginations of families. It can deliver temptation without knocking, introduce strangers without personal meetings, and repeat its philosophies until familiar error begins sounding like common sense. Christian parents must not surrender their responsibilities because the technology is complicated, the culture is hostile, or the children object to reasonable boundaries. Open the Bible. Examine the entertainment. Establish the standards. Teach discernment. Correct hypocrisy. Protect the vulnerable. Maintain communication. Encourage personal responsibility. Above everything else, remember that the LORD has already spoken concerning the heart, the eyes, the mind, and the conduct of His people. A family cannot spend its evenings welcoming the world's influence, its mornings repeating the world's philosophy, and its

weekends celebrating the world's morality, then act astonished when worldly thinking has become part of the furniture. You do not need to invite every enemy through the front door to surrender the house. Sometimes all you have to do is hand him the remote control. Guard the gates before the trouble enters, because a Christian home should never become the one place where the world can preach without opposition while the Bible sits silently on the shelf.

8 of 10 — The Christian Home — When Marriage Becomes a Battlefield Instead of a Refuge

Key Scriptures: Ephesians 4:26–32; Ephesians 5:25–33; Colossians 3:12–19; 1 Peter 3:7 (KJV)

Introduction

Ephesians 4:26 delivers a command that ought to be posted somewhere between the wedding photographs and the first argument over whose responsibility it was to pay the electric bill: "Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath." Notice that the Holy Ghost does not pretend Christians will never become angry. He commands them not to sin in their anger and warns against allowing wrath to remain unresolved. Verse 27 adds, "Neither give place to the devil." There is enough instruction in those two verses to prevent a remarkable amount of misery in Christian marriages, provided somebody intends to obey them. Unfortunately, some husbands and wives have become experts at quoting Scripture concerning the other person's responsibilities while remaining strangely unfamiliar with the verses addressing their own conduct. They can remember an offense from fifteen years ago with astonishing accuracy but cannot remember the command to forgive. They can rehearse every unkind word ever spoken against them while forgetting the unkind words they spoke themselves. When a marriage becomes a battlefield, the first casualty is often the willingness to admit personal sin.

A Christian wedding does not automatically produce a Christian marriage. Two saved people can stand before a preacher, exchange solemn vows, receive congratulations, pose for photographs, and begin their life together with sincere intentions. Yet those same people still possess flesh that must be resisted, pride that must be humbled, tongues that must be governed, and responsibilities that must be obeyed. Salvation establishes the believer's standing in Jesus Christ, but it does not remove the necessity of daily obedience. Galatians 5:17 declares, "For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other." That conflict does not disappear when a

marriage certificate is issued. A man may be saved and still behave selfishly toward his wife. A woman may belong to Christ and still cultivate bitterness toward her husband. Both may attend church faithfully while making their household miserable through continual accusations, resentment, and hostility. Two Christians can live under the same roof while permitting their flesh to conduct a civil war that neither of them seems particularly interested in ending.

The Christian home was never intended to become a place where the people who promised to love one another spend their days searching for new ways to inflict pain. Ephesians 5:25 commands husbands to love their wives as Christ loved the Church. Colossians 3:19 forbids husbands to become bitter against their wives. Colossians 3:18 instructs wives concerning their responsibilities within marriage, while Ephesians 4:32 commands believers to practice kindness, tenderness, and forgiveness. These are not decorative suggestions designed to make a religious ceremony sound impressive. They are direct instructions governing Christian conduct. Neither do they require a spouse to tolerate violence, coercion, threats, or abuse. Biblical marriage involves accountability to God, not permission for one sinner to terrorize another. The Christian household should be a place where righteousness is practiced, truth can be spoken, wrongdoing is confronted, and reconciliation is pursued according to Scripture. A marriage cannot remain spiritually healthy when its occupants repeatedly wound one another and then insist that the damage is simply part of being married.

1. Be Ye Angry, and Sin Not—Before Anger Becomes the Family Religion

Ephesians 4:26 must be understood within Paul's instruction concerning the Christian's new manner of life. Earlier in the chapter, he commands believers to put off the former conversation of the old man, which is corrupt according to deceitful lusts, and to be renewed in the spirit of their minds. Ephesians 4:24 speaks of putting on the new man, "which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." Paul then addresses lying, anger, corrupt communication, bitterness, and forgiveness. His instructions concern saved people who are to demonstrate conduct consistent with their position in Christ. Therefore, the command to be angry without sinning is not permission to indulge temperamental explosions under the respectable label of righteous indignation. Some people have discovered a remarkably convenient method of excusing their wrath: they simply announce that their anger is righteous. Apparently, every unpleasant outburst becomes holy once the person delivering it declares himself morally justified. Scripture is not impressed. Righteous anger does not give a Christian permission to behave unrighteously while he is angry.

James 1:19–20 commands, "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God." Those words expose one of the great sources of marital conflict. Husbands and wives frequently respond before listening, accuse before understanding, and answer harshly before considering the consequences. One spouse makes a careless remark, the other responds with irritation, and within minutes a minor disagreement has become a comprehensive investigation of every offense committed since the wedding. The original issue disappears beneath a mountain of accumulated accusations. Nobody remembers why the argument started, but everybody remembers precisely what was said during it. Proverbs 15:1 declares, "A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger." A soft answer does not mean surrendering truth or pretending wrongdoing is acceptable. It means refusing to add unnecessary fuel to an already dangerous fire. A married couple that treats every disagreement as a contest requiring a winner should not be surprised when both eventually become losers.

Paul's warning concerning the setting sun establishes the urgency of dealing with anger before it becomes an established condition. The verse should not be twisted into a demand that every serious disagreement must be completely resolved before midnight, regardless of exhaustion, safety, or the complexity of the matter. Its principle is that believers must not cultivate wrath or give it a permanent dwelling place. Verse 27 explains the danger: "Neither give place to the devil." Unresolved hostility provides opportunities for temptation, bitterness, retaliation, and further sin. Married believers should therefore address ordinary offenses promptly, acknowledge personal wrongdoing, and refuse to use silence, contempt, or deliberate humiliation as instruments of punishment. There may be occasions when a difficult discussion should resume after both parties have had sufficient time to respond wisely. That is different from refusing reconciliation out of spite. The devil does not need to destroy a marriage in one afternoon when the occupants are willing to spend twenty years carefully preserving every grievance he can exploit.

2. Bitterness Is the Poison That Makes Yesterday's Sin Today's Problem

Ephesians 4:31 commands, "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice." Notice the progression of sins Paul identifies. Bitterness settles into the heart, wrath and anger erupt through conduct, clamour turns disagreement into disorder, and evil speaking spreads corruption through the tongue. These sins can become familiar occupants of a marriage when neither spouse is willing to confront them. Bitterness is especially destructive because it preserves offenses long after the original occasion has passed. A husband may treat his wife according to grievances she has attempted to correct years earlier. A wife may continually

revive her husband's acknowledged failures whenever a new disagreement arises. The marriage becomes less a present relationship than a courtroom where old evidence is repeatedly introduced. Some couples have been married twenty years but are still fighting the same argument from their second anniversary. Apparently, the case has been granted permanent residence on the household docket.

Hebrews 12:15 warns believers to look diligently "lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled." The immediate context concerns perseverance, holiness, and the spiritual dangers confronting believers. Its warning illustrates how bitterness can extend its influence beyond the person cultivating it. Within marriage, resentment rarely remains confined to one private corner of the heart. It affects speech, decisions, affection, trust, and eventually the atmosphere experienced by children and other family members. A bitter spouse may begin interpreting every action through suspicion, assigning evil motives where none have been established. Genuine wrongdoing must be confronted truthfully, but suspicion is not evidence, and resentment is not discernment. First Corinthians 13:5 declares that charity "thinketh no evil." This does not require pretending that proven wickedness is innocent. It forbids the selfish and malicious disposition that delights in assuming the worst. Bitterness is a strange possession: the person holding it believes he is preserving evidence against somebody else while the poison steadily consumes his own conduct.

Colossians 3:12–13 provides the Christian alternative: "Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye." The passage addresses believers and grounds their conduct in their position before God. Forgiveness is not an optional luxury reserved for marriages experiencing unusually pleasant circumstances. It belongs to Christian obedience. Nevertheless, forgiveness must not be confused with declaring that wrongdoing never occurred, removing every consequence, or automatically restoring trust without evidence of change. A spouse can relinquish vengeance while maintaining necessary boundaries against repeated dishonesty or harm. Repentance must be more than an apology delivered whenever consequences become uncomfortable. The words "I forgive you" do not mean that sin has suddenly become righteousness, and the words "I am sorry" do not constitute repentance when the offender intends to repeat the offense before breakfast.

3. When the Tongue Becomes a Weapon, the House Becomes a Battlefield

Ephesians 4:29 commands, "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers."

This command reaches directly into the ordinary conversations of married believers. The Christian is not permitted to use his tongue as an instrument of destruction merely because the person receiving his words happens to be his spouse. Some husbands speak to their wives with a harshness they would never dare display toward a customer, employer, or stranger. Some wives address their husbands with contempt they would consider unacceptable from anybody speaking to themselves. The household receives the worst behavior because its occupants assume familiarity provides permission for carelessness. Yet marriage does not suspend the commands of Scripture. A wedding ring is not a license to say things that would be sinful if spoken to anybody else. Words should communicate truth, provide necessary correction, and contribute to spiritual edification rather than merely deliver emotional injury.

Ephesians 4:25 commands believers to put away lying and speak truth with one another. Honesty is therefore essential to marital communication. A husband cannot build trust while concealing financial decisions, maintaining secret relationships, or deliberately misrepresenting his conduct. A wife cannot establish faithfulness through deception, manipulation, or calculated half-truths. Yet biblical honesty must not become an excuse for unnecessary cruelty. Some people announce that they are merely telling the truth when they are actually enjoying the opportunity to wound somebody. Ephesians 4:15 speaks of "speaking the truth in love," while Proverbs 12:18 warns, "There is that speaketh like the piercings of a sword: but the tongue of the wise is health." Truth and love are not competing requirements. A difficult fact can be communicated firmly without mockery, humiliation, or contempt. If the only way a person knows how to tell the truth is by using it as a club, he needs to examine his heart before congratulating himself upon his honesty.

Financial pressure, exhaustion, conflicting expectations, and ordinary disappointment frequently expose the quality of a couple's communication. A husband and wife may disagree concerning expenditures, work responsibilities, relatives, children, or necessary changes in household arrangements. Those differences require honest discussion, not automatic warfare. Proverbs 18:13 declares, "He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him." A spouse should therefore listen before delivering a verdict, distinguish facts from assumptions, and refuse to use old failures as weapons against present concerns. Difficult matters should be addressed when conversation is possible rather than deliberately introduced at moments calculated to provoke maximum distress. Neither spouse should recruit children as messengers, witnesses, or allies in an adult dispute. When communication repeatedly collapses, trustworthy assistance may be necessary. A Christian marriage does not require two people who agree about everything. It requires two people who understand that disagreement never cancels their responsibility to obey God.

4. Husbands Must Love Like Christ, Not Rule Like Tyrants

Ephesians 5:25 declares, "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it." The command is addressed directly to Christian husbands, and the standard is considerably higher than the average man's personal definition of satisfactory behavior. Christ sacrificed Himself for the Church. He did not establish His headship through selfishness, intimidation, or neglect. Ephesians 5:28 adds, "So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself." A husband who demands respect while continually treating his wife with contempt is not demonstrating Christlike leadership. He is contradicting the very passage he claims establishes his authority. A man who can quote the wife's responsibility to submit but cannot remember his own responsibility to sacrifice has apparently discovered a Bible that becomes strangely difficult to read whenever the commands turn toward him.

Colossians 3:19 commands, "Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them." First Peter 3:7 instructs husbands to dwell with their wives according to knowledge, giving honor unto the wife, and recognizing their shared inheritance in the grace of life. Peter even warns that a husband's conduct can hinder his prayers. That ought to concern any man who imagines that religious activity compensates for mistreating his family. Spiritual leadership requires patience, faithfulness, understanding, and personal accountability. A husband should not use his position to avoid correction or demand that his wife silently endure his continual wrongdoing. Nor should he abandon responsibility because leadership requires difficult decisions. Biblical headship is not the privilege of being the household's least accountable occupant. It is the responsibility of demonstrating Christlike conduct when selfishness would be considerably easier.

A husband must also recognize the difference between providing materially and loving faithfully. A man may purchase an impressive house, maintain an excellent income, and supply every modern convenience while remaining emotionally and spiritually absent from his marriage. His wife may possess an attractive kitchen and an expensive automobile yet rarely experience his undivided attention. Ephesians 5:29 describes the husband's responsibility through the words "nourisheth and cherisheth." Those terms cannot be satisfied merely by paying household expenses. A husband must give attention to his wife's legitimate concerns, remain faithful to his vows, demonstrate affection, and carry his share of responsibility. He must also be willing to confess wrongdoing rather than continually defending himself. A man can spend a fortune constructing the house and still neglect the marriage that was supposed to make it a home. The Lord did not command husbands merely to maintain property. He commanded them to love their wives.

5. Marriage Is a Covenant, Not a Disposable Contract

Ephesians 5:31 declares, "For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh." Paul is drawing upon the creation account in Genesis 2:24 and applying that foundational truth within his instruction concerning Christian marriage. The union is not presented as a temporary arrangement maintained only while both parties remain entertained. Marriage establishes an intimate relationship involving faithfulness, responsibility, and enduring obligations. Hebrews 13:4 declares, "Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge." The modern habit of treating marriage as disposable whenever disappointment appears is contrary to the seriousness Scripture assigns it. A marriage vow is not a subscription agreement that can be cancelled whenever the monthly benefits become less exciting. Christians should enter marriage understanding that love requires more than enthusiasm during favorable circumstances.

Faithfulness includes much more than avoiding physical adultery. It requires honesty, purity, appropriate boundaries, and refusal to cultivate relationships that threaten marital trust. First Thessalonians 4:3–4 commands believers to abstain from fornication and possess their vessels in sanctification and honor. A husband who secretly pursues sexual relationships through electronic communication is not preserving marital fidelity merely because he has avoided a physical meeting. A wife who deliberately cultivates romantic intimacy outside her marriage cannot excuse the conduct by claiming the relationship remains technically innocent. The heart and conduct must both be governed by Scripture. Neither spouse should normalize pornography, deception, or sexual betrayal. A marriage cannot be protected merely by drawing a boundary around physical adultery while permitting every other form of unfaithfulness to operate freely inside it.

Marriage also requires understanding the responsibilities associated with physical intimacy. First Corinthians 7:3–5 addresses the mutual obligations of husbands and wives, emphasizing that neither spouse possesses exclusive authority over the marriage relationship. The passage teaches mutual responsibility, not permission for sexual coercion, intimidation, or the disregard of another person's safety and dignity. Genuine marital faithfulness cannot be produced through threats. Likewise, affection should not be deliberately weaponized to punish, humiliate, or manipulate a spouse. Christian marriage must be governed by love, consideration, purity, and personal responsibility. When difficulties arise concerning physical intimacy, spouses should address them honestly and respectfully rather than allowing resentment to accumulate. The marriage covenant creates responsibilities for both people. It does not transform either person into property, and it certainly does not provide a religious excuse for selfishness disguised as marital authority.

6. Children Are Learning About Marriage by Watching Their Parents

Ephesians 6:4 commands, "And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." Although this instruction concerns parental responsibility, its implications reach directly into the manner in which husbands and wives treat one another. Children learn about marriage long before they understand wedding vows or read Ephesians 5. They observe how their parents speak during disagreements, whether promises are honored, whether affection is demonstrated, and whether wrongdoing is acknowledged. A child who repeatedly witnesses contempt may begin regarding contempt as ordinary marital conduct. One who observes faithful love, respectful disagreement, and sincere repentance receives a very different example. Parents may explain biblical marriage with perfect accuracy on Sunday, but their children are watching the practical examination throughout the rest of the week. A household's private conduct frequently teaches more powerfully than its public declarations.

Children should never be recruited into marital warfare. A father must not attempt to turn his children against their mother, and a mother must not use them as instruments of retaliation against their father. Adult disagreements should not become competitions for the children's loyalty. Colossians 3:21 warns fathers against provoking their children to anger, lest they become discouraged. Continual hostility can burden children with conflicts they are neither responsible for creating nor equipped to resolve. Parents should not demand that children carry private messages, conceal wrongdoing, or judge which adult deserves victory. Where serious abuse occurs, children must be protected rather than instructed to preserve appearances. A child is not a marriage counselor, a courtroom witness recruited by an angry parent, or a soldier enlisted in somebody else's domestic war. The Christian household should provide instruction and protection, not place adult burdens upon immature shoulders.

Parents must also demonstrate that reconciliation involves actual conduct rather than empty religious language. When a father has spoken harshly, his children should be able to observe appropriate acknowledgment and correction. When a mother has acted unfairly, she should demonstrate the humility she expects from them. Ephesians 4:32 commands believers to forgive one another as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven them. Children should see forgiveness practiced without being taught that serious wrongdoing carries no consequences. They should learn that truthfulness matters, apologies require sincerity, and trust is strengthened through consistent faithfulness. A family that regularly witnesses adults correcting their conduct receives valuable instruction concerning Christian responsibility. The finest marriage lesson parents can give their children is not the claim

that they never disagree. It is the demonstration that disagreement does not grant permission to abandon righteousness.

7. Reconciliation Requires Repentance, Not Religious Pretending

Second Corinthians 7:10 declares, "For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death." Paul was addressing the Corinthians concerning their response to correction, and the passage distinguishes genuine godly sorrow from grief concerned merely with consequences. That distinction is valuable when confronting serious wrongdoing within marriage. A husband who apologizes only because his behavior has been exposed has not necessarily demonstrated repentance. A wife who expresses regret merely to end an argument may continue cultivating the same sinful conduct. Genuine repentance involves acknowledging wrongdoing and turning from it. Proverbs 28:13 declares, "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy." An apology without a willingness to change is often nothing more than a polite announcement that the next offense has already been scheduled.

Romans 12:18 commands, "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men." Notice the qualifications. Paul recognizes that peace does not depend entirely upon one person's willingness. A Christian spouse should pursue righteousness, refuse unnecessary retaliation, and remain willing to address genuine offenses. Yet one person cannot manufacture reconciliation while another remains determined to continue wrongdoing. Forgiveness does not require concealing criminal behavior, accepting violence, or removing necessary safeguards. When threats, coercion, or abuse occur, immediate protection takes priority over preserving the appearance of an undisturbed household. Involving appropriate authorities, obtaining a place of safety, and seeking trustworthy assistance may be necessary. Romans 13:1–4 recognizes the legitimate function of civil authority in restraining wrongdoing. God never commanded Christians to protect a violent person's reputation at the expense of those being harmed.

Where wrongdoing has caused serious damage, restoration requires more than an emotional conversation followed by promises. Galatians 6:1 instructs spiritual believers to restore one overtaken in a fault "in the spirit of meekness," while warning those involved to consider themselves lest they also be tempted. Restoration must be governed by truth and careful judgment. Appropriate pastoral assistance can be valuable, but spiritual leaders must never pressure endangered spouses to return to unsafe circumstances or conceal abuse. Professional assistance and lawful intervention may also be necessary. Trust must be rebuilt through demonstrated faithfulness, not demanded as proof that forgiveness has occurred. Where both spouses are willing to repent and obey Scripture, genuine

reconciliation may be pursued. Where one remains abusive or persistently dishonest, necessary boundaries must remain. A marriage is not restored because everybody has agreed to stop discussing the damage. Restoration begins when the wrongdoing is confronted and righteous conduct replaces it.

Conclusion

The Christian marriage must be governed by something stronger than changing emotions, personal pride, financial convenience, or public appearance. Ephesians 4 commands believers to put away bitterness, wrath, anger, corrupt communication, and malice while practicing kindness and forgiveness. Ephesians 5 establishes the husband's responsibility to demonstrate sacrificial love patterned after Christ's relationship to the Church. Colossians 3 commands mercy, humility, patience, and faithfulness, while First Peter 3 requires husbands to honor their wives. These are not optional principles reserved for couples who happen to enjoy unusually pleasant circumstances. They are instructions for Christian conduct. A marriage cannot become righteous merely because both spouses possess salvation testimonies and attend church services. Saved people must still obey the Scriptures. The husband must confront his selfishness, the wife must confront her own sinful conduct, and both must recognize that marriage does not suspend personal accountability before Jesus Christ.

There is no justification for treating marriage as disposable whenever ordinary disappointment appears. Neither is there biblical justification for requiring a person to endure violence, coercion, or abuse under the mistaken belief that preserving appearances constitutes faithfulness. Scripture calls believers to truth, holiness, sacrificial love, forgiveness, and responsible conduct. Those obligations must be understood together rather than selectively employed to defend whichever spouse possesses the louder voice. Husbands and wives should address disagreements before resentment becomes established, communicate honestly rather than through accusations, and refuse to make children participants in adult disputes. They should pray, study the Scriptures, seek wise assistance where necessary, and demonstrate repentance when they have sinned. A Christian marriage does not need two people competing to establish which one is always right. It needs two believers who recognize that God's word is right even when it condemns their own behavior. That principle can correct an astonishing amount of domestic foolishness.

A Christian home should be a place where the people living inside are protected by righteous conduct rather than continually wounded by those who promised to love them. The world already contains enough hostility, dishonesty, temptation, and selfishness without husbands and wives deliberately importing those same sins into their marriage.

There will be disagreements, financial pressures, personal disappointments, and circumstances neither spouse anticipated when the wedding vows were exchanged. Those difficulties do not grant permission to abandon biblical responsibilities. When anger appears, refuse sinful wrath. When bitterness begins growing, confront it before it spreads. When wrongdoing occurs, require truth and genuine repentance. When forgiveness is appropriate, extend it without pretending that trust can always be restored instantly. When danger exists, protect those who are vulnerable. Above everything else, remember that the Christian marriage exists beneath the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ. A wedding ceremony may unite two people before witnesses, but it cannot force those people to walk faithfully afterward. A marriage certificate cannot produce kindness. A wedding ring cannot manufacture honesty. A beautiful house cannot conceal spiritual destruction forever. If the husband and wife continually sharpen their tongues against one another, the home will eventually resemble a battlefield no matter how attractive the furniture becomes. Put down the weapons of pride, bitterness, cruelty, and retaliation. Open the Book. Obey what God has commanded. Let truth govern the marriage, let righteousness govern the conduct, and let sacrificial love replace selfishness. The Christian home was never intended to become the place where love goes to die. It should be a place where the commands of Jesus Christ are taken seriously enough that love has room to live.

9 of 10 — The Christian Home — When the Storm Finally Hits the House

Key Scriptures: Job 1:13–22; Psalm 46:1–3; Romans 8:28; 2 Corinthians 4:8–18 (KJV)

Introduction

Job 1:13–22 records one of the most devastating sequences of calamities ever experienced by a man of God. In the space of a few moments, Job received reports of stolen livestock, murdered servants, destroyed possessions, and finally the deaths of his sons and daughters. One messenger had scarcely finished speaking before another arrived carrying additional disaster. The man who had possessed extraordinary wealth, a large household, and a respected position in his community suddenly found himself confronting losses that no amount of money could reverse. Yet the opening chapter establishes something that must never be forgotten: Job was not suffering because he had secretly abandoned God. Job 1:1 describes him as "perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil." His suffering was not evidence that his righteousness had been imaginary. That ought to silence some of the religious experts who believe every tragedy can be explained by

locating a secret sin somewhere in the victim's life. Sometimes the storm strikes the house precisely because the devil knows there is a man inside who fears God.

There is a dangerous misunderstanding circulating through modern Christianity that a family walking faithfully with the LORD should expect its circumstances to remain generally comfortable. The husband works honestly, the wife serves faithfully, the children receive biblical instruction, the household attends church, and everybody assumes that the arrangement should produce a reasonably trouble-free existence. Then the physician delivers an unexpected diagnosis, the employer announces layoffs, the bank account begins disappearing, or a telephone call brings news that changes everything. Suddenly the family discovers that biblical convictions preached during comfortable seasons must now be practiced under circumstances nobody wanted. There are no convenient illustrations when the suffering belongs to your own household. The hospital is real. The bills are real. The empty chair is real. The tears falling across the kitchen table are real. Scripture never promised that obedience would exempt believers from such experiences. Second Timothy 3:12 declares, "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." A Christian family does not prove its faith by avoiding every storm. Its faith is revealed by what happens when avoidance is no longer possible.

The Christian home must therefore be prepared for something more demanding than ordinary disagreements, changing schedules, and inconvenient household repairs. It must be prepared to trust God when circumstances become frightening, when prayers appear unanswered, when faithful service becomes costly, and when the future cannot be understood. Psalm 46:1 declares, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." Notice that the verse does not announce the absence of trouble. It identifies the LORD as the refuge of His people in the midst of it. Romans 8:28 assures believers that God works according to His purpose, while Second Corinthians 4:8–9 describes servants of Christ who were troubled, perplexed, persecuted, and cast down without being finally destroyed. These passages provide something stronger than cheerful religious slogans. They establish reasons for confidence rooted in God's character and eternal purposes. The house founded upon the Rock is not the house where the rain never falls. It is the house whose foundation remains when everything above ground begins to shake.

1. Job Lost Everything Except the God He Trusted

Job 1 begins by establishing the man's character before describing his catastrophe. He was an upright man who feared God and turned away from evil. The chapter also reveals a heavenly conversation concerning Job, including Satan's accusation that Job served God because of the material blessings he enjoyed. Satan argued that removing those blessings would cause Job to curse God. The reader is permitted to know something Job himself was

not told during his suffering. That distinction matters. Job did not stand beside the heavenly throne receiving explanations about every event before it occurred. He received the messengers and their terrible reports without access to the information recorded in the opening chapter. His trial demonstrates the difference between knowing God's character and understanding God's immediate dealings. Faith does not always receive an explanation before it is required to obey. Sometimes the believer must trust the Author while the page before him appears to contain nothing but calamity.

The sequence of disasters in Job 1:13–19 deserves careful attention. The Sabeans attacked, taking oxen and asses and killing servants. Fire fell from heaven and consumed sheep and additional servants. The Chaldeans carried away the camels and killed more servants. Finally, a great wind struck the house where Job's children were gathered, and the building collapsed upon them. Every report intensified the tragedy. These events were not minor interruptions in a prosperous man's schedule. They involved violent death, financial ruin, and overwhelming personal grief. Nor should we carelessly transfer Job's unique historical circumstances to every Christian family and announce that Satan must personally be conducting an identical heavenly contest whenever trouble appears. The narrative reveals a particular trial involving Job. Its legitimate application concerns faithfulness when suffering cannot be explained through immediate circumstances. Job did not need somebody informing him that things could always be worse. The next messenger had already taken care of that observation.

Job's response is among the most extraordinary declarations in Scripture. Job 1:20 records that he arose, rent his mantle, shaved his head, fell upon the ground, and worshipped. Verse 21 declares, "the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD." Verse 22 adds, "In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly." Notice that Job's worship did not eliminate his grief. He tore his garment and shaved his head, outward expressions of profound mourning. Scripture does not present him as a man who received news of his children's deaths and cheerfully continued his afternoon. His pain was genuine, but he refused to accuse God foolishly. That is a distinction modern Christians desperately need to understand. Trusting the LORD does not require pretending the loss was insignificant. A man may kneel in tears and still possess stronger faith than somebody standing nearby delivering cheerful speeches about how everything is wonderful.

2. Every Tragedy Is Not God's Punishment for Some Secret Sin

The book of Job also exposes the cruelty of assigning moral guilt to suffering people without biblical evidence. Job's three friends initially sat with him in silence for seven days because they saw that his grief was very great. Unfortunately, when the speeches began, their confidence exceeded their understanding. They repeatedly reasoned that Job's

extraordinary suffering must indicate extraordinary wickedness. Their theology was attractively simple: righteous people prosper, wicked people suffer, and therefore anybody suffering terribly must have committed some terrible offense. There was only one difficulty with the system. God had already identified Job as an upright man. In Job 42:7, the LORD rebuked the friends because they had not spoken of Him the thing that was right as Job had. A religious explanation does not become biblical merely because the person delivering it speaks confidently and remembers several verses. Job's friends possessed enough certainty to fill a theological library and not enough understanding to comfort the man sitting in front of them.

The Lord Jesus Christ corrected similar reasoning in John 9:1–3. When His disciples encountered a man blind from birth, they asked whether the man or his parents had sinned to cause his blindness. Christ answered, "Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him." The Lord was not teaching that the man and his parents were sinless human beings. He was rejecting the proposed explanation for that particular blindness. Likewise, Luke 13:1–5 warns against assuming that victims of tragic events were greater sinners than others. Certainly Scripture teaches that sin has consequences and that God may discipline His children. Hebrews 12 addresses divine chastening. But no Christian possesses authority to declare that every illness, bankruptcy, accident, or bereavement is punishment for some undisclosed offense. The Bible gives believers permission to examine themselves. It does not appoint them detectives of imaginary sins whenever somebody else's life becomes painful.

This distinction is particularly important within Christian families experiencing serious adversity. A husband loses employment, and somebody immediately suggests that his spiritual priorities must have been wrong. A wife becomes seriously ill, and an acquaintance begins investigating whether she has sufficient faith. Parents suffer the death of a child, and an insensitive religious visitor offers a confident explanation concerning God's supposed displeasure. Such conduct can add cruelty to suffering while pretending to provide spiritual insight. First Corinthians 4:5 warns against judging matters before the appointed time, when the Lord will bring hidden things to light. Believers should confess known sins and receive biblical correction where wrongdoing is established. They should not manufacture guilt where Scripture provides no evidence. When a family is bleeding, the first responsibility of Christian brethren is not to arrive carrying a theological magnifying glass and a collection of accusations. It is to speak truthfully, show compassion, and refuse to claim knowledge God has not given them.

3. The House on the Rock Was Still Struck by the Storm

Matthew 7:24–25 records the Lord Jesus Christ describing a wise man who heard His sayings and obeyed them. The man built his house upon a rock. Then Christ declared, "And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock." The immediate setting is the conclusion of the Sermon on the Mount, delivered during Christ's earthly ministry to Israel and concerned with hearing and obeying His teaching. We must not erase that context or pretend the passage is exclusively an architectural lesson about Christian family life. Nevertheless, the contrast between a sound foundation and a foolish one provides an unmistakable practical application. Notice what happened to the wise man's house. The rain descended. The floods came. The winds blew. Obedience did not cancel the weather. The wise man's advantage was not that he had received a private exemption from storms. It was that he had taken the foundation seriously before the storm arrived.

The foolish man in Matthew 7:26–27 heard Christ's sayings but did not obey them. He built upon sand, and when the same destructive forces arrived, his house fell. The difference was not the outward appearance of the structures during favorable weather. The difference was what supported them when circumstances became severe. This is why biblical instruction within the Christian home must begin before calamity strikes. A family should learn to pray before the hospital visit, practice honest communication before unemployment creates financial pressure, and establish scriptural convictions before worldly demands make compromise attractive. A husband and wife should understand forgiveness before exhaustion transforms ordinary disagreements into bitter accusations. Children should hear about the Lord's faithfulness before they encounter suffering that raises difficult questions. The man who waits until the roof collapses before examining the foundation has confused emergency repairs with responsible construction.

A family built upon biblical principles will still encounter circumstances that threaten its peace. The difference appears in how the occupants respond. Do they immediately turn against one another, or do they remember their responsibility to practice Christian love? Do they abandon prayer because an answer has not arrived, or do they continue seeking the LORD? Do they conceal difficulties to preserve appearances, or do they speak truthfully and seek legitimate assistance? First Peter 1:6–7 addresses believers experiencing manifold temptations and describes the trial of faith as more precious than perishing gold. Peter was writing to suffering believers, not promising that every Christian household would enjoy uninterrupted prosperity. Trials can reveal whether a profession of faith possesses substance beyond comfortable circumstances. A foundation is not proven by how impressive the house looks beneath a cloudless sky. It is proven when the wind begins tearing at everything that was built upon it.

4. God Is Our Refuge, Not Our Guarantee Against Trouble

Psalm 46:1 declares, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." The psalm continues by describing extraordinary upheaval, including the earth being removed, mountains carried into the sea, and waters roaring with destructive force. Its setting concerns confidence in the LORD as the protector of His people, with particular reference to the city of God and His presence among them. The passage must not be converted into a guarantee that every Christian family will escape physical danger or financial hardship. Its practical lesson, however, is powerful. God's faithfulness is not measured by the temporary stability of earthly circumstances. A family may lose its possessions without losing access to the throne of grace. A believer may enter a hospital without leaving the care of the LORD. A refuge is not necessary because the weather is pleasant. It becomes precious because danger is real. The Christian who trusts God during trouble is not denying the storm. He is acknowledging One greater than the storm.

Prayer becomes especially important when circumstances exceed human understanding. Philippians 4:6–7 commands believers to bring their requests before God through prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, promising that the peace of God will keep their hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Notice that the passage does not promise that every request will receive the exact answer desired. It directs believers toward dependence upon God rather than surrender to consuming anxiety. A family facing serious illness should pray while also obtaining appropriate medical care. A household confronting financial difficulty should pray while examining its responsibilities and available options. Parents troubled by a child's rebellion should pray while maintaining truth, love, and necessary boundaries. Prayer is not a substitute for obedience, honest effort, or legitimate assistance. Some Christians appear to believe that trusting God means refusing to use the common sense He expects them to exercise. The Bible never commanded a man to ignore the leaking roof while praying for dry furniture.

Trusting God also permits honest grief. Psalm 56:8 records David speaking of his tears before the LORD. Psalm 13 opens with David asking, "How long wilt thou forget me, O LORD? for ever?" These passages do not portray unbelieving men who had abandoned their faith. They reveal servants of God bringing painful circumstances before Him. The Psalms contain lamentation alongside praise because the life of faith includes occasions when sorrow cannot be dismissed with cheerful conversation. Christian parents should understand this when their children experience frightening circumstances. A child grieving a loved one's death does not need to be told that tears indicate insufficient faith. A wife confronting serious illness does not need a husband demanding that she maintain a pleasant expression to demonstrate spiritual victory. There is a time to speak, a time to

listen, and a time simply to remain present. Faith does not become stronger by pretending that suffering is painless. It becomes stronger by refusing to abandon God when suffering is undeniable.

5. When the Roof Begins Falling, Do Not Start Fighting One Another

Severe adversity often exposes weaknesses that ordinary prosperity has concealed. Financial hardship may reveal selfish spending, poor communication, or disagreement concerning priorities. Illness may place unexpected responsibilities upon a spouse who has never carried them before. Bereavement may leave family members struggling to understand how ordinary life can continue. Such circumstances do not automatically produce sin, but they provide opportunities for the flesh to express itself. Galatians 5:17 declares that the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh. A husband may become irritable because he feels helpless. A wife may become resentful because she is exhausted. Children may respond to frightening changes with confusion or anger. The solution is not to pretend these difficulties are insignificant. It is to refuse to make one another enemies. When the storm is beating against the house, the family does not need somebody inside throwing bricks through the remaining windows. Christians must remember that hardship does not cancel the commands governing their conduct.

Ephesians 4:31–32 commands believers to put away bitterness, wrath, anger, clamour, evil speaking, and malice, and to practice kindness and forgiveness. Those instructions become especially important when exhaustion and uncertainty threaten household unity. Husbands and wives should communicate honestly about necessary decisions rather than using difficulties as opportunities for accusation. Children should receive explanations appropriate to their ages without being made responsible for adult burdens. Family members should divide practical responsibilities fairly according to their abilities and circumstances. Galatians 6:2 commands, "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ." That principle requires more than expressing sympathy while somebody else performs all the work. When a spouse is ill, assistance with ordinary duties becomes part of faithful service. When finances become strained, unnecessary spending should be examined rather than defended through pride. Christian love is not merely what a family says when everybody feels well. It is what its members do when somebody needs help.

The Christian home should also recognize the importance of receiving assistance from faithful brethren when genuine needs arise. James 2:15–16 confronts the uselessness of offering religious words to a needy brother or sister while refusing necessary practical help. First John 3:17 similarly questions the love of a person who possesses this world's goods but closes his compassion against a brother in need. The local church should therefore become a source of meaningful encouragement and assistance to suffering families. That

may involve meals, transportation, financial help where appropriate, childcare, visits, or simply remaining available during a difficult season. Families should not confuse humility with refusing every legitimate offer of help. Neither should assistance be used to control or humiliate those receiving it. A brother who needs groceries does not become more spiritual because somebody delivered an impressive sermon about trusting God while leaving his refrigerator empty. Biblical compassion recognizes needs and responds according to truth and ability.

6. All Things Work Together for Good—But That Does Not Mean All Things Feel Good

Romans 8:28 declares, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." This is one of the most precious assurances given to believers in the New Testament, and also one of the most frequently mishandled. Paul does not declare that all things are morally good, personally pleasant, or immediately understandable. Death is an enemy. Sin is wicked. Betrayal is wrong. Suffering can be agonizing. The verse does not transform evil into righteousness merely because God remains sovereign over His creation. Furthermore, Paul identifies the people to whom the promise applies: those who love God and are called according to His purpose. The passage belongs within his teaching concerning the believer's standing in Christ, present suffering, the Spirit's intercession, and future glory. The promise is not that everything happening to a Christian is enjoyable. The promise is that nothing can overthrow God's purpose for those who belong to Him.

Romans 8:29 explains that purpose through the believer's conformity to the image of God's Son. The surrounding passage is not promising that every financial loss will eventually produce greater wealth, every illness will end in physical healing, or every broken relationship will be restored according to personal preference. It concerns God's eternal purpose for those He has justified and will glorify. Romans 8:30 carries the discussion forward to glorification, establishing the security of God's saving purpose. This distinction is essential when ministering to suffering families. A man who loses his employment should not be assured that a better-paying position will certainly appear next month. Parents grieving a child should not be told that the tragedy guarantees some identifiable earthly reward. Scripture provides something greater than optimistic predictions about circumstances. It establishes the believer's position within the unfailing purposes of God. The Almighty is not obligated to make every chapter of your earthly life pleasant in order to demonstrate that the ending is secure.

Romans 8:35 asks, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" Paul then identifies tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, and sword. Notice the nature of the experiences he names. These are not imaginary difficulties. They are circumstances in

which earthly security may collapse. Yet Romans 8:38–39 declares that neither death nor life, nor other powers or created things, can separate believers from the love of God in Christ Jesus. Here is the believer's security when worldly assurances fail. A family may face poverty without being abandoned by Christ. A saved person may die without forfeiting eternal life. A Christian may experience circumstances he cannot explain without losing the righteousness received through faith. Eternal security does not mean earthly circumstances will remain secure. It means the salvation God has provided in Jesus Christ cannot be overturned by the disasters that trouble this present life.

7. Our Light Affliction Is Preparing an Eternal Weight of Glory

Second Corinthians 4:8–9 records Paul's description of the afflictions endured in the service of Christ: "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed." The immediate context concerns the apostolic ministry, the treasure of the gospel carried in earthen vessels, and the sufferings experienced by those proclaiming Christ. Paul was not delivering a sentimental speech concerning ordinary inconveniences. His ministry included persecution, danger, exhaustion, and the continual prospect of death. Yet he understood that God's power was being demonstrated through human weakness. The Christian family can draw legitimate encouragement from this testimony without pretending that every household hardship is identical to apostolic suffering. Paul did not claim that serving Christ made life comfortable. He testified that God's faithfulness remained sufficient when comfort had become a distant memory. That is a considerably stronger testimony than promising that trouble never comes.

Second Corinthians 4:16 declares, "For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day." The contrast between outward deterioration and inward renewal provides encouragement for believers confronting illness, aging, physical weakness, and difficult circumstances. The body remains subject to suffering and death, even after the soul has received salvation. Romans 8:23 explains that believers await "the redemption of our body." The Christian therefore should not mistake physical decline for evidence that salvation has failed. Nor should families imagine that sincere faith guarantees immediate deliverance from every medical condition. Paul himself experienced affliction that God did not remove according to his request. In Second Corinthians 12:9, the Lord declared, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness." Sometimes the Lord demonstrates His power by removing the burden. Sometimes He demonstrates the sufficiency of His grace while the burden remains.

Paul continues in Second Corinthians 4:17–18 by contrasting present affliction with eternal glory: "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." He then directs attention toward unseen eternal realities rather than temporary visible circumstances. Paul was not suggesting that suffering feels light to the person enduring it. His own record establishes otherwise. He was comparing the limited duration of present affliction with the immeasurable greatness of eternal glory. This perspective becomes especially precious when death enters a Christian household. First Thessalonians 4:13–18 instructs believers concerning those who sleep in Jesus and the future resurrection of the dead in Christ at the Lord's coming. Christian grief is therefore distinguished from hopelessness, not from sorrow itself. The believer may stand beside a grave with tears in his eyes and resurrection truth in his heart. The tears testify that love has suffered loss. The hope testifies that death does not possess the final word.

Conclusion

The Christian household must abandon the foolish assumption that faithfulness guarantees uninterrupted comfort. Job feared God, yet experienced extraordinary loss. The wise man's house in Matthew 7 was founded upon rock, yet the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds beat against it. Psalm 46 identifies God as a refuge in trouble rather than promising His people exemption from every difficulty. Romans 8 establishes the believer's security within God's eternal purpose, while Second Corinthians 4 places present suffering beside the surpassing glory of eternity. These passages expose the emptiness of religious teaching that treats financial prosperity, physical health, or favorable circumstances as the necessary evidence of divine approval. A family may enjoy extraordinary blessings without possessing much spiritual depth, and another may endure tremendous suffering while demonstrating remarkable faithfulness to Christ. The measure of a Christian home cannot be reduced to the amount of trouble that has managed to avoid its address.

When the storm arrives, the Christian family must practice what it professed before the clouds appeared. Husbands and wives should refuse to make one another enemies under pressure. Parents should provide honest instruction and reassurance grounded in Scripture rather than pretending children cannot recognize serious trouble. Families should pray, seek appropriate assistance, care for vulnerable members, and remain willing to accept help from faithful brethren. They should confess genuine wrongdoing without inventing imaginary sins to explain every painful circumstance. They should remember that grief is not unbelief, that tears do not cancel faith, and that unanswered questions do not place God under obligation to surrender His throne. The family gathered around a hospital bed

may not understand why events have unfolded as they have. The widow entering an empty house may not possess an explanation for her loss. But the absence of an explanation does not establish the absence of God. His word remains true when the circumstances are heartbreaking.

There will come a day when every Christian home confronts circumstances beyond the ability of its occupants to control. No amount of careful planning can prevent every illness, financial emergency, bereavement, disappointment, or painful change. The question is whether the family has learned to stand upon Scripture before those events arrive. Build the foundation now. Teach the children now. Practice forgiveness now. Learn to pray before the emergency. Develop habits of honest communication before fear begins turning ordinary disagreements into accusations. Above everything else, remember that Jesus Christ remains faithful when earthly circumstances become uncertain. The storm does not ask whether the mortgage is paid, whether the family has finished its devotions, or whether everybody feels prepared for another difficulty. It simply arrives. The rain falls upon beautiful houses and modest ones. The wind strikes prosperous families and struggling ones. The floods do not consult a church membership directory before approaching the foundation. But when everything begins shaking, the family that has learned to believe God's word possesses something the storm cannot wash away. Job lost his possessions, his children, and the comfort of ordinary life, but he did not lose the God he worshipped. The Christian may lose health, wealth, comfort, and even earthly life itself, but he cannot lose the eternal salvation secured in Jesus Christ. Let the rain descend. Let the winds blow. Let the floods beat against the house. The Rock has not moved. And when the storm finally hits the Christian home, that is the truth upon which the family must stand.

10 of 10 — The Christian Home — What Will Remain When Your Children Are Gone?

Key Scriptures: Psalm 78:4–7; Psalm 127:3–5; Proverbs 13:22; 2 Timothy 1:5; 3 John 4 (KJV)

Introduction

Psalm 78:4 contains a declaration that ought to make every Christian parent stop looking at the calendar long enough to consider what will remain when the calendar has finally finished its work: "We will not hide them from their children, shewing to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, and his strength, and his wonderful works that he hath done." There is something wonderfully serious about those words. The men responsible for teaching the next generation understood that the truth they possessed was not supposed to be buried with them. God had spoken, God had acted, and the children coming

afterward needed to know what He had done. The Christian home must recognize the same responsibility, properly understood according to Scripture. Children do not remain children. The little boy who once needed help tying his shoes eventually walks out the front door carrying responsibilities his parents can no longer manage for him. The little girl who once listened to Bible stories at bedtime eventually faces decisions nobody else can make in her place. The years move forward whether parents use them wisely or squander them. One day the toys will be gone, the bedrooms will be quiet, and the question will no longer be what you provided for your children, but what you prepared them to believe.

There is something remarkably deceptive about the ordinary appearance of family life. A husband and wife establish a household, children arrive, responsibilities multiply, and the days become filled with meals, appointments, schoolwork, employment, household repairs, and the thousand small obligations that accompany raising a family. Everybody is busy, and the years appear to stretch endlessly into the future. Then, almost without warning, the children begin preparing to leave. The school projects disappear from the kitchen table. The bicycles are no longer scattered across the driveway. The familiar voices that once filled the house become occasional telephone calls. Parents discover that the season they thought would last forever has passed with astonishing speed. Some families have spent those years accumulating possessions, maintaining appearances, financing recreation, and pursuing achievements that look impressive in photographs. Yet they have neglected the very matters that might have strengthened the next generation spiritually. A parent can spend eighteen years preparing a child's wardrobe, education, and career while giving remarkably little attention to preparing that child's soul. The world calls that success. The Bible requires us to examine the foundation.

This final study in the Christian home series confronts the responsibility of leaving behind something greater than material possessions, family traditions, professional accomplishments, or an impressive collection of memories. Psalm 127:3 declares, "Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD: and the fruit of the womb is his reward." Proverbs 13:22 speaks of a good man leaving an inheritance to his children's children. Second Timothy 1:5 remembers the genuine faith of Timothy's mother and grandmother, while 3 John 4 declares, "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth." These passages address different people under different circumstances, and their proper settings must be preserved. Nevertheless, together they illuminate the importance of responsibility, instruction, faithfulness, and spiritual influence. The objective is not to manufacture children who merely imitate their parents' religious habits. It is to teach the word of God faithfully, demonstrate genuine Christian conduct, and prepare the next generation to stand upon truth when parental supervision has ended. The greatest inheritance a

Christian family can offer is not a house its children can occupy, but biblical truth upon which they can build when that house is gone.

1. Tell the Generation to Come What God Has Done

Psalm 78 begins with Asaph calling the people to hear his instruction and consider the things received from their fathers. Verse 3 declares, "Which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us." Verse 4 continues with the commitment not to hide those things from the next generation. The historical setting concerns Israel and the LORD's mighty dealings with His covenant people. The psalm recounts God's works, Israel's repeated unbelief, divine judgment, mercy, and the consequences of forgetting His commandments. It is not a New Testament command requiring Christian households to reproduce Israel's national covenant arrangements. Yet the responsibility of communicating God's revealed truth remains thoroughly consistent with New Testament instruction. Notice that Asaph did not suggest the next generation would automatically possess the knowledge of its fathers through ancestry. Somebody had to teach them. Truth does not pass from one generation to another through the bloodstream. It must be communicated, understood, believed, and obeyed. A family Bible may survive a hundred years without a single descendant learning what is written inside it.

Psalm 78:5–6 explains that God established a testimony in Jacob and appointed a law in Israel, commanding the fathers to make His works known to their children, "That the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born; who should arise and declare them to their children." Notice the deliberate movement across generations. The fathers received instruction, the children were to learn it, and those children were eventually expected to teach those who came after them. The purpose was not merely preserving historical information. Verse 7 explains that the coming generation should set its hope in God, remember His works, and keep His commandments. This was Israel's covenantal responsibility, and it should not be confused with salvation by grace through faith in the present dispensation. Nevertheless, Christian parents should recognize the serious danger of allowing scriptural knowledge to disappear between generations. A family that refuses to teach its children the truth is not preserving religious freedom for them. It is leaving them spiritually unprepared for whatever teacher happens to arrive next.

The warning becomes sharper in Psalm 78:8, where Asaph speaks of a stubborn and rebellious generation whose heart was not right with God. The remainder of the psalm repeatedly demonstrates the tragedy of forgetting what the LORD had done. Israel witnessed extraordinary manifestations of divine power, yet successive generations continued turning toward unbelief and disobedience. This history should cure the assumption that spiritual privileges automatically produce spiritual faithfulness. A child

may grow up hearing sermons, attending church, and possessing access to Scripture while never personally believing the gospel. Parents must therefore do more than preserve a religious atmosphere. They must teach the actual words of God, explain their meaning, and demonstrate their authority through consistent conduct. The Christian household cannot assume that yesterday's convictions will somehow survive tomorrow without deliberate instruction. A generation that receives an unopened Bible may inherit the book without inheriting any understanding of its contents. And a family that forgets why it believed the truth will eventually produce descendants who cannot explain why they should believe it at all.

2. Children Are a Heritage, Not Personal Property

Psalm 127:3 declares, "Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD: and the fruit of the womb is his reward." This psalm, attributed in its heading to Solomon, begins by declaring that unless the LORD builds the house, those who labor to build it labor in vain. The passage then speaks of the futility of anxious labor apart from dependence upon God and concludes by recognizing children as a blessing. Its original setting belongs to Israel's inspired wisdom and worship literature, and it should not be converted into a promise that every Christian will marry, produce children, or experience uninterrupted domestic happiness. Nevertheless, the description of children as an heritage of the LORD establishes their significance. They are not inconveniences that accidentally interrupt a more important pursuit of personal comfort. Neither are they trophies provided to enhance parental reputation. Children are not possessions to be displayed, projects to be completed, or miniature servants expected to fulfill the ambitions their parents never accomplished. They are human beings entrusted to parental care and accountable to God.

Psalm 127:4 continues, "As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of the youth." The comparison is striking. An arrow is not manufactured merely to remain forever in the quiver. It is prepared for a purpose beyond its present resting place. Parents should recognize the practical wisdom of that illustration without inventing doctrines the passage does not teach. Children must be prepared for responsibilities that eventually extend beyond their parents' direct supervision. They need instruction in truthfulness, diligence, purity, biblical doctrine, personal judgment, and responsible conduct. They should learn how to recognize false teaching, evaluate friendships, fulfill obligations, and respond to circumstances without expecting somebody else to make every decision. Some parents become so concerned with keeping children comfortable that they never prepare them to become responsible adults. Others become so concerned with control that they cannot bear the thought of children eventually making independent decisions. A quiver is useful

while an arrow is being prepared, but the purpose of preparation is not to keep the arrow permanently locked inside it.

The same passage requires parents to remember that children are distinct persons with responsibilities before God. Fathers and mothers possess genuine authority during childhood, but they do not possess divine authority to determine every future conviction, marriage, occupation, or personal decision of an adult child. Ephesians 6:4 commands fathers to raise children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, while Ephesians 6:1 requires children to obey their parents in the Lord. Those responsibilities must be respected without converting parental authority into permanent ownership. A father may teach his son Scripture for twenty years, but the son must eventually answer to God for his own belief and conduct. A mother may pray faithfully for her daughter, but she cannot personally exercise saving faith on that daughter's behalf. The proper goal is faithful preparation, not perpetual control. A Christian parent has succeeded in an important responsibility when a grown child knows how to open the Bible and seek the truth without needing a parent standing beside him to supply every answer.

3. Leave an Inheritance That Cannot Be Sold at an Estate Auction

Proverbs 13:22 declares, "A good man leaveth an inheritance to his children's children: and the wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just." The verse belongs to the wisdom literature of Israel and recognizes the value of responsible provision that extends beyond one generation. Scripture does not condemn the acquisition of lawful possessions, prudent savings, or the desire to leave material resources for one's descendants. First Timothy 5:8 establishes the seriousness of providing for one's household, while Proverbs repeatedly commends diligence and warns against wastefulness. A Christian father should not despise financial responsibility under the mistaken belief that spiritual concerns eliminate practical obligations. Nevertheless, money is only one possible form of inheritance, and it is certainly not the most enduring. A man can leave his children a fortune and still leave them spiritually bankrupt. He can provide enough money to purchase houses, automobiles, and property without providing the biblical wisdom necessary to govern any of them.

Consider how much attention families devote to possessions that will eventually change hands. They maintain property, protect investments, prepare documents, and discuss who should receive particular belongings after their deaths. Such planning may be entirely appropriate. But what arrangements have been made concerning the spiritual instruction of the next generation? Does the family know the gospel? Have the children been taught the distinction between salvation and Christian service? Can they explain why Scripture must be rightly divided, why the believer is saved by grace through faith, and why the promises

given to Israel must not simply be transferred to the Church? Have they witnessed genuine forgiveness, honest labor, marital faithfulness, and personal integrity? Some parents prepare detailed instructions concerning the distribution of their possessions while leaving almost no evidence that they considered the spiritual preparation of their heirs. The inheritance is carefully arranged, the executor has been selected, and the family silver has been accounted for. Meanwhile, nobody seems particularly concerned about whether the children know the difference between the gospel of Christ and a collection of religious works.

Material inheritance also possesses limitations that spiritual instruction does not share. Wealth can be lost through foolish decisions, economic hardship, theft, unexpected expenses, or the ordinary passage of time. Ecclesiastes 5:13–14 describes riches kept to the hurt of their owners and wealth that perishes through evil travail. First Timothy 6:7 declares, "For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out." The immediate context warns against covetousness and misplaced confidence in riches. Christian parents should therefore teach their children the proper use of possessions rather than allowing possessions to become the measure of success. A child who inherits money without character may squander what generations labored to acquire. A child who receives biblical instruction and develops responsible habits possesses principles useful in prosperity and adversity alike. Money can be divided among heirs, but truth does not become smaller when it is shared. A father may leave one house to one child, yet he can teach every child the same Scriptures without diminishing anybody's inheritance.

4. Timothy Received Something Greater Than a Famous Family Name

Second Timothy 1:5 contains one of the most encouraging testimonies concerning godly family influence in the New Testament: "When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also." Paul was writing to Timothy, his beloved fellow laborer, concerning faithfulness in the ministry and the responsibilities associated with sound doctrine. The reference to Lois and Eunice identifies two women whose genuine faith formed an important part of Timothy's spiritual background. Notice the word "unfeigned." Their faith was not presented as a religious performance designed to impress their neighbors. It was sincere. These women were not praised because they possessed enormous wealth, commanded public attention, or occupied impressive positions in society. Their faithfulness mattered because it was genuine and became associated with the spiritual instruction of the next generation. The world may forget a godly grandmother's

name, but heaven has never been confused about the value of a woman who believes the Book and faithfully teaches it.

Second Timothy 3:14–15 continues the testimony: "But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." Timothy had received scriptural instruction from childhood, but Paul did not teach that his mother's faith automatically saved him. The Scriptures were able to make him wise unto salvation through faith in Christ. This distinction is essential. Christian parents cannot transfer eternal life through family association, church attendance, baptism, or respectable conduct. Ephesians 2:8–9 establishes salvation by grace through faith, not works. First Corinthians 15:3–4 identifies the gospel concerning Christ's death for our sins, burial, and resurrection. Children must personally believe that gospel. A godly family can place the Scriptures before a child, but it cannot believe the gospel for him. Salvation is not inherited like the grandfather's pocket watch.

There is another lesson in Timothy's upbringing that deserves attention. Acts 16:1 identifies his mother as a believing Jewish woman and his father as a Greek. Scripture does not provide every detail of the household, and we should not manufacture a complete family history from its silence. Nevertheless, the Bible plainly recognizes the spiritual influence of his mother and grandmother. This is important for single parents, widows, grandparents, and believers whose households do not resemble an idealized family photograph. Faithful instruction is not rendered worthless because circumstances are difficult or because one adult refuses spiritual responsibility. A mother can teach Scripture diligently. Grandparents can exercise godly influence. An unmarried believer can encourage younger Christians through faithful service. Paul himself addressed Timothy as his son in the faith, demonstrating the significance of spiritual relationships beyond physical ancestry. God has never required a magnificent family arrangement before permitting somebody to be faithful. He requires obedience from the people who know Him, wherever His providence has placed them.

5. There Is No Greater Joy Than Children Walking in Truth

Third John 4 declares, "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth." The apostle John was addressing Gaius, a beloved believer whose faithful conduct brought him encouragement. In the immediate context, John's reference to his children concerns those associated with his spiritual care and instruction, not necessarily his biological descendants. That distinction must be preserved. The verse is not a direct promise that every Christian parent's children will remain faithful. Nevertheless, John's joy reveals the

tremendous value of seeing those who have received spiritual instruction continue walking according to truth. Notice that he did not merely rejoice that they possessed correct religious vocabulary. He rejoiced that they walked in truth. Biblical knowledge must become practical conduct. A man can memorize an astonishing number of Bible verses and still require considerable correction concerning the verses he refuses to obey. Knowledge is necessary, but knowledge that never reaches the feet has not completed its proper work.

Christian parents should recognize that spiritual preparation requires more than training children to perform respectably while adults are watching. Children should understand why the gospel matters, why honesty is required, why sexual purity must be maintained, and why the Bible possesses authority over personal preference. They should learn to distinguish the believer's eternal standing in Christ from the daily responsibility to walk faithfully before Him. Colossians 2:6 declares, "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him." That instruction belongs to Christians whose salvation is already established through faith. The walk follows the reception of Christ; it does not purchase salvation. A parent who confuses outward obedience with regeneration may produce a polished religious performance while failing to teach the most important doctrine of all. The objective is not merely to raise children who know how to look Christian when the pastor visits. It is to prepare them to recognize and obey biblical truth when nobody from the church is anywhere nearby.

This responsibility also reaches into the example parents provide concerning the local church and Christian service. Hebrews 10:24–25 exhorts believers to consider one another, provoke unto love and good works, and not forsake assembling together. Children should witness faithful participation in the life of a sound local church rather than being taught that Christianity consists entirely of private opinions and occasional religious entertainment. They should see parents supporting biblical preaching, treating brethren with charity, rejecting false doctrine, and fulfilling legitimate responsibilities. They should also recognize that church attendance cannot substitute for personal salvation or household obedience. A father who behaves disgracefully at home cannot repair his testimony merely by occupying a familiar pew. A mother who spreads gossip throughout the congregation has not demonstrated holiness through perfect attendance. The Christian home and the local church should reinforce one another through sound doctrine and godly conduct, not compete to determine which location receives the family's most impressive religious performance.

6. When Adult Children Walk Away, Parents Must Remain Faithful

One of the most painful experiences a Christian parent may encounter is watching an adult child reject convictions that were faithfully taught throughout childhood. The parent remembers the Bible readings, the conversations, the prayers, and the instruction given over many years. Then the son or daughter begins pursuing a different course, perhaps abandoning church, rejecting sound doctrine, entering an immoral relationship, or openly opposing the gospel. Such circumstances can produce grief, disappointment, and searching questions concerning parental responsibility. Proverbs 22:6 teaches the importance of training a child in the way he should go, but it must not be turned into a mechanical guarantee that every child receiving instruction will necessarily make righteous decisions throughout adulthood. Proverbs communicates wisdom concerning the ordinary course and consequences of life. It does not grant parents divine control over another person's will. A father can teach the truth faithfully without possessing the power to force an adult son to love it.

The account of the prodigal son in Luke 15 provides useful instruction concerning rebellion, consequences, and restoration, although the parable's immediate setting concerns the Lord's response to criticism over His reception of sinners. The younger son deliberately departed, wasted his substance, and experienced the consequences of his conduct. His father did not accompany him into the far country to finance every foolish decision. When the son returned, however, the father received him with joy. The parable must not be reduced to a universal formula guaranteeing that every wandering child will eventually return. Its central message concerns repentance and the joy of receiving the lost. Nevertheless, it illustrates the difference between maintaining love and approving rebellion. Parents may continue caring about an adult child while refusing to endorse wickedness or remove every consequence of irresponsible decisions. Love does not require a father to finance the far country, and faithfulness does not require him to pretend the pigpen is a respectable place to establish a permanent residence.

Parents must also avoid allowing grief over an adult child's choices to become bitterness against God or hostility toward the child. Galatians 6:5 declares, "For every man shall bear his own burden," establishing personal responsibility within a passage that also commands believers to bear one another's burdens. Both principles matter. Parents should examine genuine failures honestly, confess known sins, and correct whatever responsibilities remain within their ability. But they must not assume guilt for every independent decision another adult makes. Nor should they abandon truth merely to preserve an appearance of family harmony. Second Timothy 2:24–25 instructs the servant of the Lord to avoid striving and demonstrate patience and meekness in correction. That spirit is valuable when speaking with wandering family members. Parents can pray, remain approachable, provide truthful counsel, and maintain necessary boundaries without surrendering biblical

convictions. The departure of an adult child does not release a Christian parent from the responsibility to walk faithfully before God. Neither does it prove that every earlier act of faithful instruction was wasted.

7. Build What Will Still Matter After the House Is Empty

The Christian family must eventually confront the difference between what is temporary and what possesses eternal significance. Houses deteriorate, possessions wear out, careers end, family circumstances change, and the people who once occupied every room eventually depart. James 4:14 asks, "For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away." The passage warns against proud confidence in future plans made without acknowledging the will of God. That warning deserves attention from families who continually postpone spiritual responsibilities because they imagine unlimited opportunities remain ahead. Parents assume they will begin reading Scripture together when life becomes less demanding. They intend to discuss salvation when the children are older, address serious problems next year, and establish faithful priorities after the current financial pressure disappears. The calendar is remarkably patient with human excuses, but it never grants another childhood to parents who have already allowed the first one to pass.

First Corinthians 3:11 declares, "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." The immediate context concerns Paul's teaching about Christian ministry, God's building, and the future testing of a believer's work. We must not confuse this passage with a promise that a parent can guarantee salvation to his descendants through careful household construction. Nevertheless, Christ remains the only foundation upon which salvation and faithful Christian service can properly rest. The gospel must occupy the central place in the household. Children should know that Christ died for their sins, was buried, and rose again the third day. They should understand that eternal life is received through faith rather than earned through family standards or religious achievements. Those who believe should then be instructed concerning spiritual growth, sound doctrine, and practical obedience. A Christian household built around everything except Jesus Christ may possess an impressive reputation, but the foundation is missing the very Person who makes Christianity possible.

The final responsibility of parents is therefore to prepare the next generation without pretending they possess control over eternity. They should teach the Scriptures, demonstrate genuine faith, preserve sound doctrine, practice forgiveness, and make decisions that place obedience above convenience. They should establish honest priorities concerning money, education, employment, entertainment, and Christian service. They should teach children to work responsibly, treat others truthfully, reject false doctrine, and

remain faithful when obedience becomes costly. Parents must also recognize that their own lives are moving toward the judgment of Christ. Second Corinthians 5:10 declares that believers must appear before the judgment seat of Christ to receive according to the things done in the body. This is the judgment of the believer's service, not the Great White Throne judgment of the lost or a reconsideration of salvation by grace. The Christian parent will not answer for possessing the most impressive household on the street. He will answer for his own conduct before the Lord who entrusted him with responsibilities worth taking seriously.

Conclusion

The Christian home is temporary in its present earthly arrangement, but its influence may continue long after the original household has disappeared. Psalm 78 demonstrates the importance of teaching the next generation what God has revealed. Psalm 127 recognizes children as an heritage of the LORD and illustrates the responsibility of preparation. Proverbs 13:22 commends thoughtful provision extending beyond one generation, while the testimony of Lois and Eunice demonstrates the significance of genuine faith communicated through scriptural instruction. Third John 4 reveals the extraordinary joy associated with seeing those who have received spiritual teaching continue walking in truth. These passages must not be confused or stripped from their proper settings, but their collective practical instruction is unmistakable. The Christian family should be concerned with more than producing respectable children, accumulating possessions, and maintaining a pleasant reputation. It should be concerned with whether biblical truth has been faithfully taught, personally demonstrated, and entrusted to those who come afterward. A household's greatest achievement cannot be measured solely through the property it leaves behind, because property is not the only thing capable of surviving its owners.

There will eventually come a day when the voices of childhood are no longer heard throughout the house. The rooms that once contained toys, schoolbooks, sports equipment, and clothing scattered across the floor will become quiet. Parents may look around and remember the ordinary days they once considered exhausting. The meals, conversations, corrections, prayers, and evenings spent together will belong to the past. What will remain? Perhaps the children will remember an impressive house, enjoyable vacations, expensive presents, and the opportunities their parents provided. There is nothing inherently wrong with such memories. But will they also remember a father who opened the Bible and obeyed it? Will they remember a mother whose faith was genuine rather than theatrical? Will they recall parents who practiced forgiveness, admitted wrongdoing, honored marriage, and placed the LORD above worldly approval? Will they

know where to turn when temptation appears, when suffering arrives, and when false teaching begins sounding attractive? The greatest tragedy is not an empty nest. It is an empty spiritual inheritance left by parents who possessed every opportunity to teach the truth but continually found something else more important to do.

Noah built an ark before the rain started. He believed God concerning things not seen as yet, and Hebrews 11:7 records that he "prepared an ark to the saving of his house." The historical account concerns God's judgment through the Flood and Noah's obedience to a specific divine command. It must not be transformed into a promise that Christian parents can guarantee the salvation of their descendants through family regulations. Nevertheless, the example establishes a principle that should govern every Christian household: prepare according to God's word before the storm arrives, and do not wait until the danger becomes visible to begin taking divine instruction seriously. Parents must build upon Scripture while their children are young, instruct them while opportunities remain, and demonstrate genuine faith through the ordinary conduct of life. There is no substitute for personal salvation through Jesus Christ, no guarantee that every child will make righteous decisions, and no earthly possession capable of preserving a family forever. But there is a responsibility to teach truth faithfully, and there is an eternal Saviour worthy of the household's complete allegiance. The Christian home does not need to leave behind a monument to human accomplishment. It needs to leave behind the testimony of people who believed the Book and lived accordingly. One day somebody else will own the house. Somebody else will sit at the table. The furniture will be replaced, the photographs will fade, and the names on the mailbox will change. But the Scriptures taught in that home may still be remembered, the gospel proclaimed there may still be believed, and the example of genuine Christian faith may continue influencing lives long after the original occupants are gone. Build the ark. Teach the children. Honor the LORD. Prepare them to stand when the world begins shaking. And when the last child has walked out the door and the house has finally become quiet, may it be said that the people who lived there did more than raise a family. They faithfully pointed another generation to Jesus Christ.

The Christian Home — Building an Ark Before the Rain Starts

Conclusion — When the Rain Has Fallen, the Children Have Gone, and Only the Foundation Remains

Genesis 7:16 records one of the most solemn moments in the account of Noah's Flood: "and the LORD shut him in." The work of preparation had ended. The ark had been

constructed according to the commandments of God. Noah had believed what the surrounding world could not see, obeyed what unbelieving men undoubtedly considered unreasonable, and prepared his household for a judgment that had not yet appeared. Then the door closed. The rain began falling, the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the world that had continued its ordinary activities suddenly discovered that God's warnings were not idle threats. The ark was no longer an unusual construction project standing upon dry ground. It had become the difference between preservation and destruction. There is a lesson here that every Christian family ought to consider before another year disappears from the calendar. The value of preparation is not always apparent while the weather is pleasant. It becomes painfully obvious when preparation is no longer possible. Noah did not build because he enjoyed working with lumber. He built because God had spoken. The Christian home must be approached with that same seriousness. Not because every family faces an identical historical judgment, or because parents possess the power to guarantee their children's salvation, but because the word of God has established responsibilities that cannot be postponed indefinitely. The years of opportunity are passing, the world is not becoming more interested in biblical righteousness, and the household that refuses to build upon Scripture will eventually discover what it has been trusting instead.

Throughout this series, we have confronted a truth that modern Christianity often finds inconvenient: a household does not become Christian merely because its occupants claim the name of Christ. It does not become biblical because somebody hangs Joshua 24:15 above the fireplace, purchases an expensive family Bible, or attends church whenever the schedule permits. Those things may be perfectly respectable, but respectability is not righteousness. Joshua declared, "but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD." That declaration involved allegiance, not decoration. Ephesians 5 and 6 establish actual responsibilities for husbands, wives, parents, and children. Colossians 3 requires Christian conduct that reaches into relationships, speech, forgiveness, and the ordinary duties of life. The Christian home is not a religious exhibit designed to impress visitors. It is a place where the authority of Jesus Christ must be demonstrated when the visitors have gone home. A family may possess beautiful furnishings, impressive educational achievements, financial stability, and a reputation for respectable living while remaining spiritually impoverished. The real condition of a household is revealed when disagreements arise, when correction becomes necessary, when somebody has sinned, when forgiveness is difficult, and when obedience to Scripture interferes with personal convenience. A house built upon sand may look perfectly satisfactory until the weather changes. The foundation is not judged by the decorations resting upon it. It is judged by whether it can support what has been built.

The question of authority therefore remains central to everything we have examined. Who is actually governing the home? Is it the Lord Jesus Christ, whose word establishes the responsibilities of every believer, or is it whichever family member possesses the strongest personality, the loudest voice, or the greatest ability to make everybody else miserable? Some households have surrendered authority to the children. Others are ruled by a husband's temper, a wife's resentment, financial ambition, electronic entertainment, or the constant fear of what the neighbors might think. The arrangements differ, but the fundamental problem remains the same: somebody or something has occupied a place that belongs to God. Colossians 3:17 declares, "And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus." That word "whatsoever" leaves very little room for a Christian who wants divine authority restricted to Sunday morning. A man who demands obedience from everybody in the house while refusing obedience to God has not established biblical government. He has merely appointed himself the household's most important rebel. Likewise, a family that allows every occupant to establish independent moral standards has not discovered a superior form of Christian liberty. It has abandoned the very authority necessary for spiritual order. The Christian home must be governed by Scripture, and that government begins with every believer recognizing his personal accountability to Christ.

The responsibility of husbands and fathers deserves particular attention because biblical leadership has been thoroughly distorted by both worldly rebellion and religious pride. Ephesians 5:25 commands, "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it." That is not a command to dominate, intimidate, or demand admiration. It is a command to demonstrate sacrificial love after the example of Jesus Christ. A Christian husband should provide for his household, maintain personal integrity, protect his marriage, govern his temper, and participate actively in raising his children. He should be dependable when circumstances become difficult and willing to acknowledge wrongdoing when Scripture exposes it. Ephesians 6:4 commands fathers to bring their children up "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." The man who has mastered every subject related to his profession but cannot explain the gospel to his own children needs to reconsider what he has been studying. The father who spends every evening pursuing entertainment while his wife carries nearly every spiritual responsibility has confused occupying a house with leading one. A man does not become the spiritual head of his household by announcing his position. He demonstrates the seriousness of that position by accepting the responsibilities God attached to it. The Christian family does not need a domestic dictator with a Bible in one hand and a list of demands in the other. Neither does it need a permanently occupied recliner whose principal contribution is informing

everybody that he is tired. It needs men who believe God enough to lead through obedience, sacrifice, courage, patience, and personal faithfulness.

The influence of wives and mothers is equally significant, although the world has developed an astonishing collection of contradictory definitions concerning what makes a woman successful. Proverbs 14:1 declares, "Every wise woman buildeth her house: but the foolish plucketh it down with her hands." Proverbs 31 presents a virtuous woman whose industry, judgment, generosity, strength, and fear of the LORD reveal a character far greater than the shallow stereotypes promoted by either worldly culture or careless religion. She is not portrayed as an unintelligent ornament whose entire usefulness consists of remaining quiet beside the furniture. She works, considers, purchases, provides, instructs, and exercises wisdom. Yet her activities remain governed by godly responsibility rather than the endless pursuit of public applause. Titus 2 calls Christian women to holiness, wisdom, and faithful instruction, while First Peter 3 emphasizes inward character that possesses great value in the sight of God. The world may measure a woman's success by the attention she receives, the position she occupies, or the money she earns, but Scripture measures something that cannot be purchased with a salary or displayed through a fashionable appearance. The Christian home needs women whose faith is genuine, whose words communicate wisdom, whose conduct demonstrates righteousness, and whose influence strengthens those entrusted to their care. This remains true whether a woman is married or unmarried, raising children or living without them, young or elderly, enjoying favorable circumstances or carrying burdens that others rarely see. A woman's worth in Christ is not established by a marriage certificate. Her faithfulness is demonstrated through obedience to the Lord who saved her.

Then there are the children, those temporary little occupants who somehow manage to consume enormous quantities of food, produce extraordinary amounts of laundry, misplace nearly everything they own, and eventually become adults before their parents are prepared to admit it. Psalm 127:3 declares, "Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD: and the fruit of the womb is his reward." There is nothing insignificant about raising the next generation. Children must be instructed concerning honesty, purity, responsibility, respect, work, friendship, doctrine, and their personal need for salvation. They must be corrected without cruelty, protected without being trained to fear everything, and taught to recognize wickedness without being left ignorant of the world in which they will eventually live. Most importantly, they must hear the gospel of Jesus Christ clearly. A Christian upbringing cannot regenerate a soul. The child who knows every church song, remembers every family rule, and behaves admirably in public still needs personal salvation through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. A well-behaved child is not necessarily a saved child, and a religious household cannot substitute for the new birth. Parents must therefore teach the Scriptures

rather than merely enforce respectable behavior. They should prepare children to make righteous decisions when parental supervision is absent, because the objective of Christian instruction is not to manufacture permanent dependence upon the parents. It is to equip the next generation with the truth necessary to recognize its own responsibilities before God.

That brings us to the Book itself, the one possession many Christian households display prominently while consulting it far less frequently than the instructions supplied with their electronic equipment. Colossians 3:16 commands, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom." Second Timothy 2:15 instructs the believer to study and rightly divide the word of truth. These are not suggestions that can be satisfied through owning several attractive Bibles. Scripture must be read, understood, remembered, and obeyed. Fathers should open the King James Bible with their families. Mothers should teach their children what God has said. Husbands and wives should discuss doctrine rather than using isolated verses as weapons against one another. Children should be encouraged to ask sincere questions and learn how to examine Scripture in its proper context. Israel must not be confused with the Church, the law must not be mistaken for salvation by grace, and God's promises must not be removed from their proper dispensational settings merely because a convenient interpretation sounds attractive. A family that possesses the Bible but never studies it has access to the answers while continually refusing to read the questions correctly. The local church remains essential for sound preaching, fellowship, and Christian service, but the pastor cannot personally supervise every conversation around the dinner table. Parents cannot delegate their entire responsibility to a Sunday school teacher and then act astonished when their children know more about popular entertainment than the gospel of Christ. The Christian home must put the Book back where it belongs: at the center of its instruction, decisions, convictions, and daily conduct.

Nor can the Christian family continually welcome worldly influences and pretend that those influences will never affect its thinking. Psalm 101:3 declares, "I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes." First Corinthians 15:33 warns, "Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners." Philippians 4:8 directs believers toward things that are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and virtuous. These principles expose the foolishness of protecting a household from physical intruders while permitting corrupt entertainment, pornography, false doctrine, and destructive relationships unrestricted access through electronic devices. Technology itself is not the enemy. It can communicate the gospel, provide useful instruction, and accomplish legitimate purposes. The problem arises when believers surrender their judgment because the temptation arrives through an attractive screen. The world does not need permission to preach from your church pulpit when it already possesses unrestricted access to your living room. Parents must establish

reasonable boundaries, teach discernment, protect vulnerable children, and demonstrate the same standards of purity they expect others to maintain. A father cannot condemn sexual immorality while privately feeding his own lust. A mother cannot demand respectful speech while using social media as a convenient instrument of malicious accusation. Biblical separation begins with personal obedience. The Christian home must remain sufficiently acquainted with the world to recognize its dangers without becoming so fascinated by the world that wickedness begins looking normal.

Marriage itself must also remain a place where biblical conduct is practiced rather than merely discussed. Ephesians 4:26 commands, "Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath." Verse 32 requires kindness, tenderness, and forgiveness. Colossians 3:19 commands husbands to love their wives and not become bitter against them. These instructions matter because two saved people can make their household miserable when pride, resentment, dishonesty, and selfishness are permitted to govern their relationship. Some couples have developed the unfortunate ability to preserve offenses longer than the original evidence could possibly survive. They can remember every harsh word spoken fifteen years earlier while remaining unable to recall the last occasion they acknowledged personal wrongdoing. The marriage becomes a battlefield where both sides keep excellent records of the enemy's failures and remarkably incomplete records of their own. A husband and wife who spend their lives trying to win every argument may eventually discover that they have won the arguments and lost the companionship they promised to cherish. Christian marriage requires confession, genuine repentance, faithful communication, appropriate forgiveness, and a willingness to correct sinful conduct. It does not require tolerating violence, coercion, abuse, or deliberate harm. God's commands concerning marital responsibilities never authorize wickedness. A Christian home should not become a place where the people who promised to love one another continually inflict injury and then demand that everybody call the arrangement normal. The word of God must govern the marriage before bitterness becomes an established resident.

And when the storms finally arrive, the family must remember that faithful obedience does not purchase an exemption from suffering. Job feared God and eschewed evil, yet experienced financial ruin, bereavement, physical affliction, and circumstances he could not explain. Psalm 46:1 declares, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." Romans 8:28 assures believers that God works according to His eternal purpose, not that every painful circumstance will immediately become pleasant. Second Corinthians 4 reminds us that the outward man may perish while the inward man is renewed day by day. The Christian household may encounter sickness, unemployment, financial hardship, rebellion, disappointment, and death. Such circumstances do not

automatically prove personal disobedience or insufficient faith. Neither should believers assume that trusting God requires pretending suffering does not hurt. Job mourned. David wept. Paul experienced affliction. The Lord Jesus Christ Himself wept at the tomb of Lazarus. Tears do not cancel faith, and grief does not establish unbelief. The family standing together through hardship must refuse to turn against one another, continue praying, provide practical assistance, seek appropriate help, and remember that God's promises remain true when circumstances become impossible to understand. The house founded upon rock was still struck by rain, wind, and floods. The difference was the foundation. Christianity does not provide a guarantee that the storm will miss your address. It provides eternal truth upon which believers can stand when the storm reaches the front door.

But perhaps the most searching question of this entire series concerns what will remain when the ordinary season of family life has finally passed. Children will grow older. Parents will age. The busy household that once seemed permanent will gradually change. There will come a day when the last school assignment has been completed, the last childhood birthday has been celebrated, and the familiar sound of children running through the house has become a memory. Somebody else may eventually occupy the bedrooms, sit at the table, and repaint the walls. The furniture will wear out, the photographs will fade, and the possessions that once seemed so important will be distributed, sold, discarded, or forgotten. James 4:14 reminds us that life is "even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away." That is not sentimental exaggeration. It is the biblical assessment of earthly life. A family may spend decades building a comfortable residence only to discover that the people who made it a home were never going to remain there permanently. What, then, was the household preparing them for? Did the parents merely provide entertainment, education, possessions, and opportunities for worldly advancement? Or did they faithfully instruct their children concerning salvation, truth, righteousness, and the responsibilities that accompany walking with God? The answer will matter long after the family photographs have become old enough that nobody remembers precisely when they were taken.

Second Timothy 1:5 recalls the "unfeigned faith" associated with Timothy's grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice. Second Timothy 3:15 explains that Timothy had known the holy Scriptures from childhood, which were able to make him wise unto salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. There is a legacy worth considering. Those women were not commended because they possessed extraordinary wealth, impressive social influence, or a famous family name. Their genuine faith and their association with Timothy's scriptural upbringing became part of the inspired record. Yet even that testimony must not be twisted into the claim that faithful parents can guarantee every future decision of their children. Adult sons

and daughters remain personally responsible before God. Some will embrace the truth they were taught. Others may reject it, drift into error, or make decisions that cause profound grief. Parents must continue speaking truth, praying faithfully, maintaining appropriate boundaries, and extending love without approving wickedness. They must acknowledge genuine parental failures without assuming responsibility for every independent choice another adult makes. The work of a Christian parent is to teach the truth faithfully, not to possess divine power over the future. A child may depart from the convictions of a godly household, but that departure does not make the Scriptures false or excuse the parent's abandonment of personal obedience. Faithfulness remains the responsibility even when the outcome is painful.

The Christian home must also remember that its deepest foundation cannot be established through family standards alone. A father may possess excellent convictions, a mother may demonstrate remarkable diligence, and children may receive sound instruction, but none of those things can remove a sinner's guilt before God. Jesus Christ remains the only Saviour. First Corinthians 15:3–4 declares that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, was buried, and rose again the third day. Ephesians 2:8–9 establishes salvation by grace through faith, not by works. That gospel must never become a secondary consideration beneath arguments about household organization, entertainment restrictions, educational arrangements, or the proper distribution of domestic responsibilities. Such matters deserve biblical attention, but none can substitute for the new birth. A family may possess every outward characteristic of conservative Christianity and still contain lost people who have never personally trusted Jesus Christ. A father cannot save his children through strict rules. A mother cannot regenerate them through religious devotion. A household cannot purchase eternal life through faithful attendance, financial contributions, or an impressive moral reputation. Salvation belongs to the sinner who receives Jesus Christ by faith. Once saved, the believer should walk in obedience, grow in grace, and fulfill the responsibilities God has given. But the foundation must remain Christ Himself, not the family's ability to maintain an attractive religious appearance.

And now the question returns to the beginning, where an old man stood upon dry ground constructing a vessel because he believed what God had said. Noah built before the rain. He obeyed before the warning became visible. He prepared while there was still opportunity to prepare. The Christian home must learn that lesson without confusing Noah's historical deliverance with a promise of automatic salvation for Christian families. Build while the children are young. Build while the marriage can still be strengthened. Build while the Bible can be opened around the dinner table. Build while there is time to correct wrong priorities, abandon sinful habits, restore neglected responsibilities, and establish

convictions that will remain when circumstances change. Do not spend your life accumulating possessions while neglecting the people who will eventually inherit them. Do not become so occupied with providing a comfortable house that you forget to cultivate a godly home. Do not demand that your children respect a Bible you have never seriously studied. Do not expect your spouse to practice virtues you continually refuse to demonstrate. Do not postpone obedience until the schedule becomes convenient, the finances improve, or the world becomes more sympathetic toward biblical truth. The time to build is now. The time to teach is now. The time to examine the foundation is while the household still possesses opportunities that cannot be recovered once they have passed.

One day the rain will have fallen, the winds will have blown, and the storms of earthly life will have tested everything the family claimed to believe. One day the children will be gone, the rooms will be quiet, and the ordinary responsibilities that once filled the house will belong to the past. Perhaps the parents will look back upon years of faithful service with gratitude. Perhaps they will remember failures that required repentance and difficulties that demanded extraordinary patience. Perhaps they will have watched some children continue faithfully in the truth while others departed from it. Whatever the circumstances, the final measure of Christian responsibility will not be the family's wealth, reputation, photographs, possessions, or ability to maintain appearances. The believer will answer to Jesus Christ for his own conduct and service. Second Corinthians 5:10 declares, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ." That is a sobering reality for every Christian who has spent years explaining what other people should do while neglecting his own responsibilities. The Lord will not be impressed by the number of Scripture plaques hanging in a home where the occupants refused to obey the Scriptures printed upon them. Nor will He overlook sincere faithfulness merely because the household lacked worldly distinction. A modest home where God's word was believed, taught, and practiced may leave a testimony that outlasts the finest possessions money can purchase.

So let the final word of this series return to Joshua 24:15: "but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD." Not merely when serving Him is convenient. Not merely when the children are obedient, the marriage is peaceful, the bank account is healthy, and the world approves. Not merely when the storms have passed and everybody feels religious again. Serve Him when the work is difficult. Serve Him when obedience requires sacrifice. Serve Him when the children ask questions that demand serious biblical answers. Serve Him when marriage requires forgiveness, when parenthood requires patience, when suffering requires endurance, and when the future cannot be understood. Serve Him because He is the LORD, because His word is true, and because Jesus Christ is worthy of the allegiance of every believer living beneath the roof. The Christian home is not a monument to perfect people. It is a household of imperfect people who have been called to submit themselves

to a perfect Saviour and an infallible Book. The world may change its standards a thousand times. The children may grow up and establish homes of their own. The house may eventually belong to strangers, and the names upon the mailbox may disappear from human memory. But the word of God will remain, the gospel of Jesus Christ will remain, and every act of genuine obedience will matter before the Lord who sees what the world overlooks. Noah built an ark before the rain started. Build your Christian home before the storms arrive. And when the rain has fallen, the children have gone, and the last earthly chapter of that household has been written, may the testimony remain that the people who lived there did more than occupy a house, raise a family, and accumulate possessions. They believed God. They opened His Book. They taught His truth. They trusted His Son. And while they had the opportunity, they endeavored to serve the LORD. For the greatest Christian home is not the one that impresses the world while it stands. It is the one whose foundation remains faithful to the word of God when everything temporary has passed away.

