

DEVELOPING GOD'S ORDER FOR THE HOME

What is the best way for you to show the love of Jesus Christ in your life? God has given you a special way to show that love, a special way to express that love.

The home is the first place we are to show Christ's love, for marriage is compared to His relationship to His church. God's Word says that we can minister all over the countryside, but if we cannot attend to our own houses, it will be difficult to perform outside. Our witness will increase only as our relationships at home increase in love. (1st Timothy 3:4-5) The true expression of Christ's love for the church is shown in the home.

The Breakdown of Authority

Understanding this, we can see where the enemy wants to attack the strongest -- the home. If he can tear it apart, where the love of Christ is to be shown, then he has ruined the witness of the Lord Jesus Christ in the world. It is in the home where the children are to be disciplined in the Lord Jesus Christ and where husbands and wives are to work together in the harmony of the Lord. In this country today the breakdown in authority has been taking place. Children are not taught to honor and respect. Many wives are not honoring and respecting their husbands, and many husbands are not honoring God.

There are five major areas where authority is exercised: in the home, in the church, in government, in employer/employee relationships, and with God. Satan wants to break down the authority structure that is based on God's principles, and he wants to establish his own authority structure. Satan's authority structure always works out of self, where you put yourself above authorities that God has given. You set yourself up as *the authority*.

2nd Timothy 3:1-7 describes what is happening in our world today. "*This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.*" (And we are in the last days.) "...*For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false*

accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away. For this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts, ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth."

We can see as we look around us that all of these qualities are strongly present in our society today. They are in our homes, schools, and churches. "*Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof.*" There are people who say they are Christians, but they do not care to take God at what He says in His Word. (They either don't want to receive it or don't want to do it, one of the two; they may want it but then do not want to do it.) That denies the power of God. God moves in His power in response to faith.

How does faith work? Faith works by hearing and hearing the Word. It works as we take God's principles and do them. We are not to be hearers only but doers of the Word of God. The power of God starts to move when God's people, in faith and in response to His Word, take God at what He says and do what He says.

The book of Jude is powerful. Jude 8 refers to the last days: "*Likewise also these filthy dreamers defile the flesh, despise dominion [power or authority], and speak evil of dignities.*" We see this happening more and more. The authorities of God, whether they are Christian or not, are still God's authorities according to His Word. God works through them, but they are being despised, not being given honor, and not held in esteem even by Christians. Even though this violates God's principles, it is what God said would happen in the last days. We need to be on our guard to recognize that all authority, Christian or unchristian, is from God. We need to respect and honor them.

2nd Peter 2:9 and following, and also Romans 13:1 & 2, bring out and deal with these same principles. You might like to look them up for your own reference.

The only one who will hold a marriage together is Jesus Christ. It is important that He remain the common denominator in at least one of the

parties, but the ideal is always both. That will happen according to the Word of God as long as one of the parties is seeking God.

Family Dynamics

Here are some dynamics that operate in a family: two people in a marriage equals three relationships, for as soon as one enters a marriage, he is no longer his own person. He is no longer committed only to himself: he has a partner *and* a marriage to think about. Therefore, three relationships exist.

When the first little one comes along, seven relationships exist: 1) wife to husband, 2) husband to wife, 3) husband to child, 4) wife to child, 5) child to father, 6) child to mother, 7) child to the marriage. There are now seven relationships immediately present when the first child is born. When another little one comes along, there are 15 relationships. Having a third child moves the family into 32 relationships. It gets crowded!

People wonder why marriages fall apart. If you do not have the Lord Jesus Christ holding the marriage together with 32 personal, dynamic relationships, you will have difficulties. Think about five people seeking their own way. Their little wheels are turning, and they have their own desires. Thus, it is necessary to set up some principles in the home – principles that are recognized and practiced.

We cannot let 32 personal relationships go heading off in their own directions. We have to settle on some practical guidelines from God. You can set up man's way of doing things, but you will still end up, I can guarantee you, with 32 different ways.

When you were single, you could come and go, and you did what you wanted to do. It was just fine because there was no one else necessarily involved. As mentioned before, as soon as you have your first child, many adjustments have to be made in the family. If a mother gives much of her attention to the baby, sometimes the husband feels like he is not needed anymore. Maybe the father and the child become really close. Daddy and his little girl become so close that the wife begins to feel like she is left out.

Authority Principles of God

With that background in mind, let us set down some principles. Here are God's authority structure principles for the home:

"Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ. Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances, as I delivered them to you. But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God." (1st Corinthians 11:1-3) This is God's authority and order for the home.

"Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord." (Colossians 3:20) This is the authority system. The head of the children are the parents.

Jesus Christ was always under the authority of the Father God during His life on this earth. He didn't do or say anything that was not under the direction of His Father. He came not to do His own will but the will of the Father. Jesus is the example, or the model, for our lives in regard to how we respond to the authorities who are over us.

How does this work? Christ is the head of the husband. He is the Lord of the family. All things are to go under His direction in the family.

What is the role of the husband? He is the head of the woman (1st Corinthians 11:3). He is the chief authority of the children.

What is the role of the wife? Genesis 2:18 tells us, *"And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a help mate for him."* She is to be a helper to the husband, second authority over the children, and subject to the man. What does it mean to be subject to the man? It means to be submissive, to respect him, to honor him, to praise him, to love him, to adore him, and to revere him. Here is a key principle of God that is being thrown in a can and swept under the rug nowadays. Many rebellious movements have thrown out the authority structure that God has set up.

In Genesis 3:16 the Lord God was speaking to Eve after the fall. A definite order was set up as a consequence of her disobedience. She would be subject to her husband, and he would rule over her. *"Unto the woman He said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee."*

When women hear that they have someone ruling over them, all kinds of red flags go up. The same thing goes when men know that they have to be under authority some place, too. It is not man's nature to be under authority. What was the sin in the Garden of Eden? What was the desire of Eve? That she might be as God. What was Satan's sin? The same thing. We see from the beginning this rebellion against God and His authority.

Genesis 3:16 describes part of the curse, but we know we have been redeemed from the curse of the law through Christ Jesus and have become heirs to all the promises of Abraham. These are promises of abundance in every way and in every relationship. In no way does it throw out God's principles of authority. Being redeemed from the curse of the law doesn't establish a freedom to do whatever we want. We now walk in accordance with the principles that God set down.

God sets down those principles as a blessing for us. That is why He gave these guidelines, and that is the purpose of the law. After we have been made in right standing through Jesus Christ and received Him as our Lord and Savior, the law becomes a guideline in order that we have all the blessings promised to Abraham.

God's Order

As we walk in obedience to what God says, then His perfect life starts to fill us and guide us. We have prosperity in our homes, in our families, financially, physically, and in every area. We can trust Him to perform what He said He would do.

"Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and He is the savior of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything." (Ephesians 5:22-24) Wives, in God's order, are not subject to God but to their husbands. In no way are we saying that a woman is not to have a relationship with Jesus Christ. In fact, the only thing that will hold her in this order is her relationship to Him. In this order, the man, not the woman, is responsible to the Lord. The woman is responsible to the man. (Read 1st Peter 3:1-6.) As a wife begins to call her husband "lord,"

and treats him as such, her obedience to God's Word will enable her husband to honor God.

This order has been abused at times. In some cases a woman has a right to be concerned about what has happened, but there is nothing wrong with the order. This is God's order. What is wrong is the way that some men have applied it. I have seen men take this and say, "I am the authority, the lord and ruler of this house," and he runs rough-shod over his wife. The man has forgotten who the real authority in the home is. Yet he is still responsible to the Lord Jesus Christ for what he does with that authority. This is where the woman's hope is found. What is the woman's response at that point? In God's order, she does not rebel but does exactly what he says. God will deal with her husband! Believe and obey God, and you will see the results, ladies. (1st Peter 3:1-2)

Children, as long as they are children, are under an authority, but they need to have but one authority. The man is the authority in the home, as he follows the directions of Christ. To have authority going out to a child in two or three different directions is disruptive. The child no longer knows who the boss is. Here is where the woman as the helper assists the man to do what needs to be done with the children. As she is faithful and obedient to God's way, to submit her husband in all things, then God is the one who covers her, and she is under God's protection. God honored Sarah that way. (Read Genesis 12:11-20)

Family Authority Order (1st Corinthians 11:3):

- 1st God
- 2nd Christ
- 3rd Man
- 4th Woman
- 5th Children

The Lord of the home is Christ, and the family is to be walking according to God's principles. The husband is the umbrella or covering for the home. The wife and children are under that umbrella. What is an umbrella's function? It is a shield or protection from the rain. The husband is the protection and shield for his family from the wiles of the

enemy. As wives stay under their husbands' covering, they are under protection.

Things work fine as long as the husband is under Christ's authority, the wife is under the husband's authority, and the children are under the dad's authority. Frequently, the wife will get out from under that authority.

In Ephesians 5:28-33 the husband is called to love his wife as himself, the reason being that men are basically selfish. That is why God called men to love. The wife, interestingly, in the wisdom of the Lord, is called to respect and honor her husband as to the Lord. Why? Because the Lord knows the hardest thing for a wife to do is to respect and honor. They were created to be helpers to their husbands, but they are often not content to be just helpers; they want to run the show. If a wife goes out from under the authority of her husband, the husband will often say, "Okay, fine, go ahead." He will give the responsibilities to his wife if she wants to take them. Right away there are holes in the umbrella because the man did not take his responsibility, and he allowed his wife to take over.

When she gets out from under the authority, then the enemy can come directly on her. Burdens and pressures that she was not created to bear make her vulnerable at that point. Then the children will often rebel. The children will follow whatever the mother is doing. She is the key in God's whole plan because she is the one who holds the husband and the children together.

If the husband is not a believer, the Lord makes provision for that. Take a look at 1st Corinthians 7:14. It says that the children are sanctified or made holy through the believing partner. God is saying, "I will respect My plan, even when the husband is not walking in the Lord."

Wives, your husband has been given to you as your authority. It doesn't matter whether he is of the Lord or not of the Lord, he is your husband. And, as such, God says, "I have called him your husband, and I have put him there as your head." As a wife is faithful and obedient to her husband, as to the Lord, God in turn says, "I will honor you." What is more, the children are made holy.

Many times the wife will say, "My husband has many holes in his umbrella. (He's just so unspiritual, etc.) I don't see how I can remain here in this house with him any longer." This would be humorous if it were not so true. There is a danger that the wife will take such a sanctimonious attitude to run out from under her husband's protection. She will be thinking all along that her husband is not providing what she needs as far as Christian leadership, when all the time God is recognizing him as the authority. If the wife takes over this responsibility for him, then all the burdens come on her, which lead to a nagging attitude toward the husband.

"He's such a creep. He doesn't do anything right. He's letting me down with the children, and I have all the responsibilities concerning them. He's gone all the time."

The wife will either look down her nose (consciously or unconsciously) at him, or start pushing religion on him. Before long, this rebelliousness becomes a force for separation in the marriage. Many times wives are really desiring to follow the Lord, but they feel they cannot bear it any longer. Why? Because they have stepped out from under the authority of their husbands and consequently all the pressures have fallen on them. Then they may take off. The Word of God says that if an unbelieving partner desires to stay, the believing partner should stay. (1st Corinthians 7:10-14)

It is by obedience to God's order that the blessing will really come. These are His principles. In this life there are many divergent plans, but this is God's plan. Do not be in despair if you find that you have missed following some principles, because there is no perfect marriage. However, a married couple should grow closer and closer together as they are willing and obedient to follow God's plan for a perfect marriage.

Mutual Esteem

The key to a marriage that is really moving in the Lord is mutual forgiveness, esteem, and respect. In Ephesians 5:21 it says to submit yourselves one to another. That statement has been abused and misused. It is not saying an equal authority structure is being set up. It is saying husbands and wives are to move in mutual esteem and respect for each other in the Lord because Christ is the head. This order of God, let us

make this clear, is not a power order. It is an authority and responsibility order intended to help the marriage function as God would have it to function.

Once a wife submits herself to God's order, then she is able to develop herself into the woman that the Lord wants her to be. This is really what this order does -- it frees the wife to be the kind of lady that the Lord created her to be. She begins to see some creative things happening as this is done. It meets the needs of a man just wonderfully too.

The children will see the bond between their parents, which gives them even more reason to honor and respect Jesus Christ. They will see how important Jesus is when Mom and Dad are following Him. Then the whole family is desiring to walk with Jesus. It is just a natural overflow for a child to start to see the love of the Lord.

Have mutual esteem for each other. Wives, have reverence for your husbands because God calls them to be husbands. Husbands, have love for your wives because God calls them to be wives. A wife might say, "I just don't see anything in my husband that I can respect and honor." A husband might say, "I don't see any reason to love her; she does this and that."

Let us note here that in a marriage it isn't about a person deserving the love of the other. A partner doesn't have to become how you want him to be before you respect and honor him. Saying, "He will have to earn my respect and honor," or "She will have to earn my love" is wrong. The following principle of Christ should be working: "*While we were yet in sin, Christ died for us.*" (Romans 5:8) We must start to understand this truth. It does not take a wife's earning the love of her husband. Likewise, it doesn't take a husband's earning respect and honor from his wife. Christ, while we were yet in our sin, died for us on the cross. Notice -- "*while we were yet in our sin.*" In other words, while we were enemies of God, unworthy and separated from God in every way, Christ died that we might be His own. Jesus' obedience to the Word of God sets husbands free to love their wives and wives to respect and honor their husbands.

If you want to win your husband to the Lord or win your wife to the Lord, you love. The husband loves and the wife respects and honors.

Neither of them have to be worthy of it in any way. The love of Christ says they are worthy because God calls them worthy.

Once a wife understands that, she will realize that she can indeed respect and honor her husband because God has put him as the head. Many times a wife will say she chose her husband so she can also choose to leave him. No! Marriage is not based on love as the world understands it. A godly marriage involves commitment to God and one another. In the world there is no commitment.

Love Cannot Be the Basis for Marriage

When couples come to me, I ask them why they want to get married. They often tell me it is because they love each other. That is the worst possible reason to get married! The love of the world is based on sex, physical attraction, money, position, social status, or infatuation. Worldly love is: one day you may love them and the next day you may hate them. It is based on emotions, circumstances, and situations. There is no substance to it. This type of love cannot be the basis for a lasting marriage. There has to be something firmer to hold it together.

Marriage is not based on love as the world understands it, but is based on the love of Christ and recognizing that you have chosen (and God has given you) your husband or wife. You took your husband in marriage as God's representative for you in the family, for better or for worse. It will not be anything but for the better, as you seek God's principles.

It is not love that sustains the marriage, but the commitment of marriage that sustains the love. It is critical that this be understood. If this is not the basis, then things will not fall into place. What will hold a marriage together is the people seeking Jesus Christ and following His principles – and wanting to do this at any cost. They need to be set on keeping their marriage going, for a godly marriage involves commitment. Divorce is not even an option, especially for two Christians. (1st Corinthians 7:10-11) (Matthew 19:1-10) (Malachi 2:11-16).

"What if we don't love each other anymore?" I often hear this as people come to a place where they "feel" that they are no longer compatible. "The woman I married 20 years ago (or five years ago) is not

the woman that I once knew." (One of the partners has changed.) In a marriage, both parties will change, so the marriage cannot be based on what you saw at first in your spouse. Your basis is where you are now. The basis of five years ago (or whenever) will not hold it together anymore.

When you think you no longer love your spouse, it is time to start learning how to love. True love always involves obedience to God's Word. We are commanded to love one another and that starts in the home. When we seek to harm our spouses, we harm ourselves whether we realize it or not -- "*The two shall be one flesh.*" (Ephesians 5:31)

Love is the outcome of a successful marriage -- (1st Corinthians 13). Love is not the beginning basis because the only way a person is able to love as 1st Corinthians 13 describes is by going through the trials and joys of daily life with another and responding in the way that God says to respond.

Read 1st Corinthians 13:4-8. Look at the love qualities of God. They are all formed in us by Him as we respond properly to the other partner in the marriage. People who base their marriage initially on love, as the world understands it, have not gone through what it takes for God to build those qualities inside of them. (When you are courting someone, you put forth your best qualities. You don't really know the other person at that point.) As the marriage continues, then love is developed. People start to see the love of God moving in the home as they respond properly.

All men respond basically the same way to varying degrees. All ladies respond basically the same way to varying degrees. People committed to love, as revealed in a godly marriage, will always seek to bring out the best in their spouses.

"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. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Nevertheless, let everyone of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverences her husband." (Ephesians 5:31-33) Note here that marriage is a mystery. Reinforcing it in your daily life is the way you can chiefly express the love that Christ has for His church. The relationship

between a husband and a wife is the relationship of Christ and His church -- a love mystery which is unfolding and being revealed every new day.