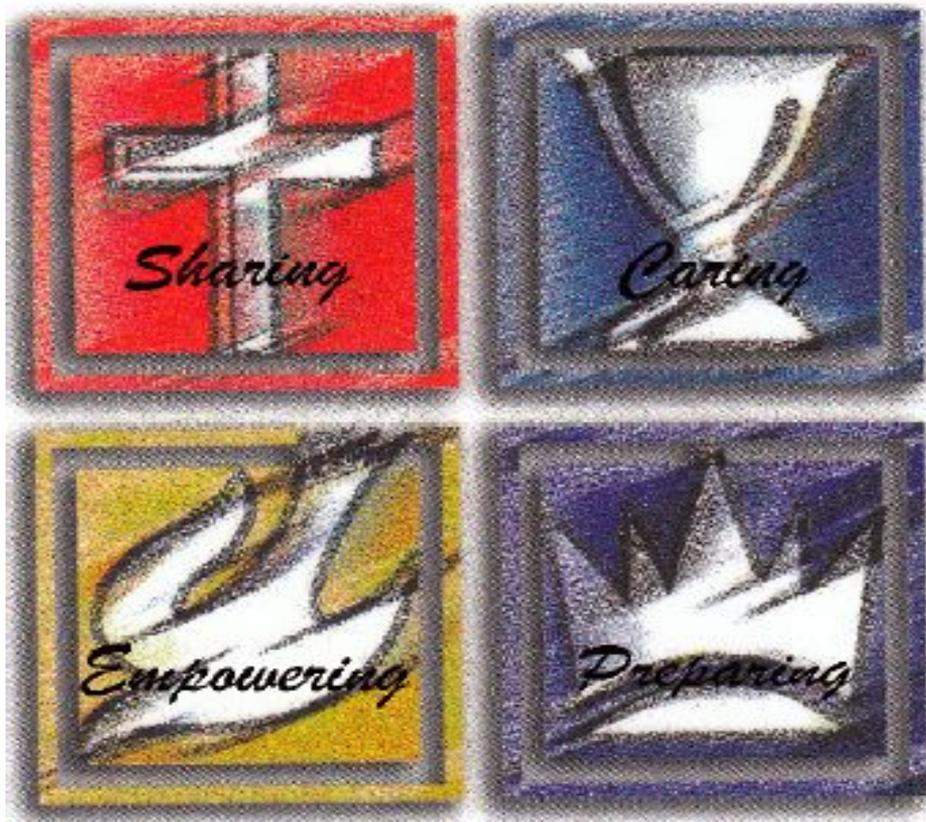


FOURSQUARE **MINISTRY TRAINING**



MODULE EIGHT **THE CHRISTIAN LIFE:** **HEALTHY FAMILY**

LIFE

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Compiled by John Ballantyne www.bluepenguinchurch.co.nz
Acknowledgement: Jon & Sonya Decker. With grateful
thanks.

<p style="text-align: center;">MODULE EIGHT: MATURITY/THE CHRISTIAN LIFE PART ONE: HEALTHY FAMILY LIFE</p>
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SECTION 1: THE LIFE OF LASTING FAMILIES i.e. What makes families last and thrive.

Let's begin by looking at:

A. The Biblical Revelation on Marriage and Family as the BEST view.

This is seen in the context of Creation; and the Covenant of Marriage.

Thesis: As the visible representative of the image and likeness of God, man is made to manifest the nature of God, and extend the rule of God to the rest of Creation... firstly to his spouse..then his own nuclear family..then Church Family.. then his neighbour.

Supporting Scriptures:

Genesis 1:26-28. ²⁶ Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground."

²⁷ **So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.**

²⁸ **God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground."**

Psalm 8 **1** O Lord, our Sovereign, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens. **2** **Out of the mouths of babes and infants you have founded a bulwark of praise because of your foes, to silence the enemy and the avenger.** **3** When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you have established; **4** what are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them? **5** Yet you have made them a little lower than God, and crowned them with glory and honour. **6** **You have given them to rule over the works of your hands;** you have put all things under their feet, **7** all sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the field, **8** the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea, whatever passes along the paths of the seas. **9** O Lord, our Sovereign, how majestic is your

name in all the earth!

Acts 17:28-29

For **in him we live and move and have our being**

as even some of your own poets have said,

“For we are indeed his offspring.

²⁹ Being then God's offspring, we ought not to think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of man.

Male and Female

Adam's aloneness was not psychological, but “incompleteness”. Humanity is made up of maleness and femaleness in union life. All human life is only possible through and with others.

Genesis 2:18-25 ¹⁸ The LORD God said, “**It is not good for the man to be alone.** I will make a helper suitable for him.”

¹⁹ Now **the LORD God had formed out of the ground** all the wild animals and all the birds in the sky. **He brought them to the man to see what he would name them;** and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. ²⁰ So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds in the sky and all the wild animals.

But for Adam no suitable helper was found. ²¹ So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and then closed up the place with flesh. ²² Then **the LORD God made a woman** from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man.

²³ The man said,

“**This is now bone of my bones
and flesh of my flesh;
she shall be called ‘woman,’**
for she was taken out of man.”

²⁴ That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh.

²⁵ **Adam and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.**

Genesis 5:1-2 This is the written account of Adam's family line. When God created mankind, he made them in the likeness of God. ² He created them male and female and blessed them. And he named them “Mankind” when they were created.

Adam and Eve: God meant for the first couple to live as a king and queen in complete harmony and equality.. sharing joint rulership over the paradise which He had made for them. In Christ, God wants to restore that capacity to **rule**.

Family relationships: Marriage and family point to the Divine Life humans can live as a loving unity of persons. The union life within the Godhead is the basis of marriage and covenant. God established how mankind would procreate within the bounds of marriage. His intention was that family relationships would assure a safe, loving environment for children and a civilised society. His desire is for

us to learn to live together in love and unity.

Genesis 4:1 Adam made sexual love to his wife Eve, and she became pregnant and gave birth to Cain. She said, "**With the help of the LORD I have brought forth a man.**"

Genesis 4:16-26 4:16 Then Cain went out from the presence of the LORD, and settled in the land of Nod, east of Eden. 17 **Cain had relations with his wife and she conceived, and gave birth to Enoch**; and he built a city, and called the name of the city Enoch, after the name of his son. 18 **Now to Enoch was born Irad, and Irad became the father of Mehujael, and Mehujael became the father of Methushael, and Methushael became the father of Lamech.** 19 Lamech took to himself two wives: the name of the one was Adah, and the name of the other, Zillah. 20 Adah gave birth to Jabal; he was the father of those who dwell in tents and have livestock. 21 His brother's name was Jubal; he was the father of all those who play the lyre and pipe. 22 As for Zillah, she also gave birth to Tubal-cain, the forger of all implements of bronze and iron; and the sister of Tubal-cain was Naamah. 23 Lamech said to his wives, 'Adah and Zillah, Listen to my voice, you wives of Lamech, give heed to my speech, for I have killed a man for wounding me; and a boy for striking me; 24 If Cain is avenged sevenfold, Then Lamech seventy-sevenfold.' 25 **Adam had relations with his wife again**; and she **gave birth to a son, and named him Seth**, for, she said, 'God has appointed me another offspring in place of Abel, for **Cain killed him.**' 26 To Seth, to him also a son was born; and he called his name Enosh. Then men began to call upon the name of the LORD.

John 17:20-23 (Jesus Prays for All Believers) ²⁰"**My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message,** ²¹**that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you.** May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. ²²**I have given them the glory that you gave me,** that they may be one as we are one— ²³I in them and you in me—**so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.**

B. **Marriage and Family after 'The Fall':** Marriage and Family received the direct and immediate judgement of sin. The "curse" is the just consequence of a violated covenant.

Genesis 3:15-16 And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel. To the woman He said, "I will greatly multiply your pain in childbirth, In pain you will bring forth children; **you will desire to control your husband, but he will rule over you.**"

Sin brings disharmony: Sin unbalanced marriage through its selfish power; and afflicted the parent role with pain. As one who disobeyed God, and now knows both good and evil, man lives with conflict and a divided self where the old nature battles the new. Sin entered the human race through Adam and Eve's disobedience. How quickly the insidious nature of sin manifested itself. Adam and Eve's first-born killed his own brother. Sin, disobedience to god always brings pain and eventually death if godly repentance does not break the cycle.

Genesis 4:1-9: Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, "I have gotten a man with the help of the LORD." ² **And again, she bore his brother Abel.** Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, and Cain a worker of the ground. ³ In the course of time Cain

brought to the LORD an offering of the fruit of the ground, ⁴ and Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions. And the LORD had regard for Abel and his offering, ⁵ but for Cain and his offering he had no regard. **So Cain was very angry, and his face fell.** ⁶ The LORD said to Cain, **“Why are you angry, and why has your face fallen? ⁷ If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is for you, but you must rule over it.”**

⁸ Cain spoke to Abel his brother. And when they were in the field, **Cain rose up and attacked his brother Abel and killed him.** ⁹ Then the LORD said to Cain, “Where is Abel your brother?” He said, “I do not know; am I my brother’s keeper?”

Galatians 5:17: “For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do whatever you want..**but if you are led by The Spirit, you are not under the law.”**

Marriage is hard work: The promise of a Redeemer accompanied God’s judgement. Marriage and family exist with stress and require work, for we are in a redemptive process. We also have to help us..faith, hope, love and the power of The Word and of the Holy Spirit.. and our roots must constantly draw waters from the River of Life!

Galatians 3:13: But Christ has paid for us to be rescued from the curse pronounced by the law. When he was hung on the cross, he took upon himself the curse for our wrongdoing. For it is written in the Scriptures, “Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree.”

Romans 8:18-25: ¹⁸ For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed in us. ¹⁹ For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. ²⁰ For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope ²¹ that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. ²² **For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now.** ²³ And not only the creation, but we ourselves, **who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.** ²⁴ For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? ²⁵ But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

1 Timothy 2:14-15: And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman first who was deceived and became a sinner. **But women will be saved through child-bearing.. if they continue in faith, love, holiness and propriety.**

Jesus brought equality: The Fall caused the dominance of man over woman. This was changed and equalised in the death of Christ. When we view the relationship between Father and Son, we better understand the husband-wife relationship which the Bible describes. They have different **roles**, they function in love and equality; they esteem one another; they are committed to living in harmony and unity.

Give an example of a husband and wife that appear to be living in harmony

C. Building the Generations: The People of God as a Community

God called Abraham: When sin had taken such a hold of the human race that all seemed hopeless; in spite of The Flood; God called forth a man, Abraham, through whom God would start to reveal Himself. Abraham's family tree brought forth the twelve tribes of Israel. These twelve tribes under the leadership of Moses, became the messianic nation through which God would continue the revelation. They were set apart to know that there is only one God, and He alone is to be worshipped..

There are only two kinds of people in this world..those who love Jesus and those who don't.

At Mount Sinai His Covenant of The Law (Torah) was given which contained Blessings for obedience and Curses for disobedience. God's choice mandated that **Godly generations must be built!**

Genesis 12:1-3: The LORD had said to Abram, "Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you.

²**"I will make you into a great nation,
and I will bless you;**

**I will make your name great,
and you will be a blessing.**

³**I will bless those who bless you,
and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth
will be blessed through you."**

Genesis 18:18-19 Abraham will surely become a great and powerful nation, and all nations on earth will be blessed through him. ¹⁹For I have chosen him, so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing what is right and just, so that the LORD will bring about for Abraham what he has promised him."

Deuteronomy 24:5 If a man has recently married, he must not be sent to war or have any other duty laid on him. For one year he is free to stay at home and bring happiness to the wife he has married.

True Living: God is focused on redeeming His fallen children, and restoring them to His original purposes as His sons. Christianity is the way to both an abundant life; and Eternal Life!

John 14:5-6 Thomas said to Jesus."Lord we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?"..Jesus replied.."I am The Way, The Truth and The Life.. and no-one comes to the Father but by Me."

Acts 2:40-47 With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation." ⁴¹Those who accepted his message were baptized, and **about three thousand were added to their number that day.** ⁴²They devoted themselves to the **apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.** ⁴³Everyone was **filled with awe at the many wonders and signs** performed by the apostles. ⁴⁴All the believers were together and had everything in common. ⁴⁵They sold property and possessions to **give to anyone who had need.** ⁴⁶Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with

glad and sincere hearts, ⁴⁷ praising God and enjoying the favour of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

Titus 2:11-14 ¹¹ For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. ¹² It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, ¹³ while we wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ, ¹⁴ who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.

Give an example of Christian families sharing things with one another.

Families that last: The Bible is the handbook for the building of generations. A special sanctifying power is promised to the relatives of Believers. It is clear that God is for families.. healthy loving families that are centered in Him and His ways. He desires that we live godly lives, and give our children a godly heritage from generation to generation.

2 Timothy 3:15-17 ¹⁵ and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. ¹⁶ **All Scripture is God-breathed** and is useful for **teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness,** ¹⁷ so that the servant of God may be **thoroughly equipped** for every good work.

Isaiah 59:21 "As for me, **this is my covenant with them,**" says the LORD. "My Spirit, who is on you, will not depart from you, and **my words that I have put in your mouth** will always be on your lips, on the lips of your **children** and on the lips of their **descendants**--from this time on and forever," says the LORD.

Acts 16:31 They replied, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household."

1 Corinthians 7:13-15 And if a woman has a husband who is not a believer and he is willing to live with her, she must not divorce him. ¹⁴ For the unbelieving husband has been sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife has been sanctified through her believing husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy.

¹⁵ But if the unbeliever leaves, let it be so. The brother or the sister is not bound in such circumstances; God has called us to live in peace.

1 Peter 3:1-2 Wives, in the same way submit yourselves to your own husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behaviour of their wives, ² when they see the purity and reverence of your lives.

Give an example you know of where there is co-operation and mutual submission within a family.

D. TRANSMITTING THE LOVE OF GOD IN DAILY LIFE. **AS THE ESSENCE OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION.**

The bottom-line for Christian Education between a parent and their child is to

actively transmit the Love of God into the child's heart. The essential basics of living a life of love are demonstrated and communicated through words, actions and deeds by the parents. Respect for authority is imparted at an early age. If children do not grasp this early on then they are destined for a life of rebellion and eventually destruction. Societies around the world are facing disintegration because this vital truth has not been imparted to the current generation.

Deuteronomy 6:4-7 Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. ⁵ Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. ⁶ **These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. ⁷ Impress them on your children.** Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.

Matthew 22:35-40 ³⁵ Then one of them, which was a lawyer, asked him a question, tempting him, and saying, ³⁶ Master, which is the great commandment in the law? ³⁷ Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. ³⁸ This is the first and great commandment. ³⁹ And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. ⁴⁰ On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

Godly Generations: The family generations are God's divinely ordained conveyors of the character of God. If the parents are not loving, then the child will have a distorted view of the character of God. What a tremendous opportunity Godly parents have to impart faith and godliness to their children, and to their children's children.

Exodus 34:6-7 ⁶ And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, "The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, ⁷ maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation."

2 Timothy 1:5 I have been reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois, and in your mother Eunice, and which I am persuaded of, is now found also in you.

Teach the children: Parents are charged with the primary responsibility of bring up their children in the training and ways of the Lord. Today's children are subjected to ungodly influences at school, through television, the internet, texting.. and through many people outside of their home. Parents must carefully monitor the input they are receiving not only at home, but from outside sources, because the time will come only too quickly when they have to make all their own choices for life or death; and impart these to their own children.

Proverbs 4:3-5: For I too was a son to my father,
still tender, and cherished by my mother.

⁴ Then he taught me, and he said to me,
"Take hold of my words with all your heart;
keep my commands, and you will live.

⁵ Get wisdom, get understanding;

do not forget my words or turn away from them.

Ephesians 6:4: Fathers, do not exasperate your children and provoke them to anger; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord and provoke them to love.

Psalm 127: Unless the LORD builds the house,
the builders labour in vain.

Unless the LORD watches over the city,
the guards stand watch in vain.

²In vain you rise early
and stay up late,
toiling for food to eat—
for he grants sleep to those he loves.

³Children are a heritage from the LORD,
offspring a reward from him.

⁴Like arrows in the hands of a warrior
are children born in one's youth.

⁵Blessed is the man
whose quiver is full of them.
They will not be put to shame
when they contend with their opponents in court.

Give an example of children or youth being influenced by worldly values.

Example:

The Place of the Home, Hospitality and Food

-Hospitality: God's people are commanded to offer hospitality without grumbling. We are to welcome others into our homes for meals and fellowship. Some of the greatest opportunities to share Jesus Christ can come over a meal in a loving and warm atmosphere.

Romans 12:13 Share with god's people who are in need. Practice hospitality.

1 Peter 4:9 Offer hospitality to one another with out grumbling.

-Food: Shared food was built into Israel's calendar and became the basis of three annual joyous feasts. God knows how conducive sharing food is for relaxing and bonding with one another.

Exodus 23:10-11 ¹⁰ And six years thou shalt sow thy land, and shalt gather in the fruits thereof ..¹¹ But the seventh year thou shalt let it rest and lie still; **that the poor of thy people may eat: and what they leave the beasts of the field shall eat.** In like manner thou shalt deal with thy vineyard, and with thy oliveyard.

Deuteronomy 16:13-17 ¹³ Celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles for seven days after you have gathered the produce of your threshing floor and your winepress. ¹⁴ **Be joyful at your festival**—you, your sons and daughters, your male and female servants, and the Levites, the **celebrate the festival to the LORD your God at the place the LORD will choose.** For the LORD your God will bless you in all your harvest and in all the work of your hands, and **your joy will be complete.**

¹⁶ Three times a year all your men must appear before the LORD your God at the place he will

choose: at the Festival of Unleavened Bread, the Festival of Weeks and the Festival of Tabernacles. No one should appear before the LORD empty-handed: ¹⁷ Each of you must bring a gift in proportion to the way the LORD your God has blessed you.

Common Meals: 'Bread-breaking' described as a daily, joyous, sharing of food in homes ranked as one of the top four priorities in the early church.. and nothing has changed. Many societies still preserve mealtimes as special respites from life's activities; but in many homes now, there is no sitting down to the table, and meals become a "pit-stop-on-the run".. instead of sharing meals in a loving home and family environment.

Acts 2:42-46 ⁴²They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. ⁴³ Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. ⁴⁴ All the believers were together and had everything in common. ⁴⁵ They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. ⁴⁶ Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. **They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and having favour with all the people.** And the Lord added daily to their number those who should be saved.

Give an example of how your family manages mealtimes.

Example:

Home Fellowship: Homes were, and are the natural and primary places of spiritual activity. Today, many people are perishing for lack of knowledge, and are drawn away from the home to a multitude of external activities; leaving families very little, if any, quality spiritual time as a family.

Mark 14:14 and wherever he enters, say to the master of the house, 'The Teacher says, Where is my guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?'

Acts 12:12 When this had dawned on him, he went to the house of Mary the mother of John, also called Mark, where many people had gathered together and were praying.

1 Corinthians 16:9 The churches in the province of Asia send you greetings. Aquila and Priscilla greet you warmly in the Lord, and so does the church that meets at their house.

Give an example of a family you know who conduct devotions together.

Example:

The Home as a place of ultimate shelter: A home should be a lasting legacy of safety and security. All members should be loved and accepted unconditionally. A home is a place where one may return after breaking all the rules (prodigality). A lasting family will share a deep sense of trust, modelled after our trust in God.

NOTES TO FAMILIES THAT WISH TO ENDURE:

- Use journals, scrapbooks, and/or photo albums to record family events
- Keep traditions of special days and rituals. Do this even if all the family members are unable to attend.
- Keep a prayer portrait book. Include a list of dates of requests and answers.
- When children are older keep circulating the latest news and events updated by each family member.

-Refuse to hold grudges, anger, or rage. Confront, resolve and love again—no matter how long it takes.

Give an example of a tradition that your family practices.

Example:

PERSONAL APPLICATION

1. List the things that determined the health of your family upbringing
2. List one or two good things in your childhood that bring back positive memories.
3. What would you have had your mother or father do differently?

MODULE EIGHT: CHRISTIAN MATURITY **LESSON TWO: TRAITS OF HEALTHY FAMILIES**

To be part of a healthy family is the desire of most everyone. Today it is becoming a distant dream for an increasing number of young people. This teaching today is to seek to protect one of the last sanctuaries of human sanity!

"My family is what I've got.. it sets my limits and my possibilities. Sometimes you get so far away from it, you think you are outside it's influences, then before you figure out what's happening, it will be right beside you, pulling those powerful strings. Some people get strength from their families, some get crushed by them.. and some get a confusing mix. Let's seek the things that make family strong!"

A. The impact of our Family History:

Every country, geographical area, and group has a unique identity and culture. We have all been shaped by our specific family history.

Historically the tasks of family have been:

- To provide protection
- To achieve economic survival
- To pass on religious faith
- To educate it's young
- To confer status.

These elements represented the past, and even though we live in a much more complex world, with higher expectations, the basics don't change.

We need each other: No family is perfect. All are dysfunctional at some time. Families pass through phases and transitions. How members deal with these determines their sense of strength, peace and health.

Mobility of family members is now unprecedented, whether it be national or

international resulting in family members being moved away from their extended members. A few trips a year isn't enough for the support and encouragement of grand-parents for their grand-children.. it has to be supplemented by communicating with methods other than physical presence to be effective. For many people.. there is no contact; and no extended family support.. and here is where The Church for many fills the gap and becomes "Family".. Eternal Family! **The Church must now pick up on many roles that for most are absent..teacher, mentor, intercessor, encourager, and source of Loving friendship.. to assist these in their real needs.**

***Give an example of what our Church is doing to promote healthy families.
Example:***

B. Families according to The Bible.

God has made the family unit, within a Biblical Community as His normal, since Creation.

In the Image of God: Genesis 1:26-27 ²⁶ Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, ^[a] and over all the creatures that move along the ground."²⁷ So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

With the Creation of Intimacy: Genesis 2:18-24. ¹⁸ The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him."¹⁹ Now the LORD God had formed out of the ground all the wild animals and all the birds in the sky. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. ²⁰ So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds in the sky and all the wild animals. But for Adam no suitable helper was found. ²¹ So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and then closed up the place with flesh. ²² Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. ²³ The man said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman,' for she was taken out of man."²⁴ That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh.

With procreation as a high priority: Genesis 1:28. ²⁸ God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground."

Genesis 4:1 Now Adam had sexual relations with his wife, Eve, and she became pregnant. When she gave birth to Cain, she said, "With the LORD's help, I have produced a man!"

C. The Family is a Covenant:

The family is characterised by the relationship of a covenant based on grace, love, acceptance, forgiveness, reconciliation and peace. These are the desired characteristics of a family, according to The Word of God.

Grace: John 13:9-17; 34. “Then, Lord,” Simon Peter replied, “not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!”

¹⁰ Jesus answered, “Those who have had a bath need only to wash their feet; their whole body is clean. And you are clean, though not every one of you.” ¹¹ For he knew who was going to betray him, and that was why he said not every one was clean.

¹² When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. “Do you understand what I have done for you?” he asked them. ¹³ “You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord,’ and rightly so, for that is what I am. ¹⁴ Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet. ¹⁵ I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. ¹⁶ Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. ¹⁷ Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them...**a new Command I give to you, that you love one another as I have loved you.. so you must love one another.**

Love: 1 John 3:14-16 ¹⁴ **We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love each other.** Anyone who does not love remains in death. ¹⁵ Anyone who hates a brother or sister is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life residing in him.

¹⁶ This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters.

Acceptance: John 8:11...10 Straightening up, Jesus said to her, "Woman, where are they? Did no one condemn you?" ¹¹ She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said, "**I do not condemn you, either.** Go. From now on sin no more."

Forgiveness: Ephesians 4:31-32 ³¹ Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. ³² Be kind and compassionate to one another, **forgiving each other**, just as in Christ God forgave you.

Reconciliation and Peace: Hebrews 12:5-7 ⁵ And have you completely forgotten this word of encouragement that addresses you as a father addresses his son? It says, “My son, do not make light of the Lord’s discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, ⁶ because **the Lord disciplines the one he loves**, and he chastens everyone he accepts as his son. ⁷ Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as his children. For what children are not disciplined by their father?”

Give an example of a family practising love, acceptance or forgiveness

Example:

Biblical Application for Today: The Bible says clearly that we need to strive for mutual respect and understanding of each member's development level. This involves the understanding that each family member is created equal; and is aware and understands the roles that they are to assume for their particular age, and life-stage. The Bible has a lot to say about the roles of parents and children.

Ephesians 6:1-4 Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ² “Honour your father and mother”—which is the first commandment with a promise— ³ “so that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.” ⁴ **Fathers, do not exasperate your children;** instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.

D. Behavioural Characteristics of Healthy Families:

(The following are the responses drawn from over 500 Professionals who work with families)

1. The healthy family communicates, and each family member listens.
2. The healthy family affirms and supports one another.
3. The healthy family teaches respect for one another.
4. The healthy family develops a trust.
5. The healthy family has a sense of play, and humour.
6. The healthy family exhibits a sense of shared responsibility.
7. The healthy family teaches a sense of right and wrong.
8. The healthy family has a strong sense of ritual and traditions which they sustain.
9. The healthy family has a sense of interaction among it's members.
10. The healthy family has a shared religious faith in Christ.
11. The healthy family respects the privacy of one another.
12. The healthy family values service to others.
13. The healthy family talks and shares during the mealtime.
14. The healthy family shares leisure time.
15. The healthy family admits to; and seeks help with problems.

Give examples of when your family practised any of the above characteristics.

Examples:

E. Rules of Family Communications:

(These work well in western cultures, but may need to be revised for some other cultures)

Communication is one of the most critical areas that healthy families must strive to keep from breaking down. Here are some further tips on how to sharpen that skill.

1. Day to day consistency is important. If you don't keep the lines open during normal times, then how will you communicate when there's a crisis?
2. Husband and wife: Make a time daily for communication.
3. Make time with each child personally and individually to communicate.
4. Man has one mouth and two ears.. use them in about that ratio.
5. Teach manners in the home.."please".. "Thank You". Greet each member on arrival or departure. "Hello".. "Goodbye" or when you see them.. "Good morning".. "Good night".. and observe rules of politeness, and common courtesy in the home. *Also teach table manners* so that you save family members from embarrassment in public.

6. Don't make comparisons between family members. Each one is an individual with strengths and weaknesses. Having to live up to the image of another more capable (in some areas) brother or sister who is promoted ahead of the other siblings, will crush them under the burden of trying to copy them. Parents who do this are either unwise or manipulative, and bring division instead of unity. United we stand, divided we fall.
7. Show that honesty and truthfulness are important. Be honest, expect it.
8. When you are wrong say "I am sorry" or "I ask your forgiveness"..I was wrong. Admit it.
9. Build up those who are close and important to you. Sincerely encourage them "Today".. says the Bible. Let them know that your love and acceptance are unconditional. Give praise and recognition for good qualities and achievements. Don't focus only on appearance, sport, performance or achievements. Don't draw attention to appearance factors that the person is not responsible for, or cannot change. Emphasize strengths, not weaknesses.

Give an example of when your family experienced positive communication.

Example:

F. Guidelines for Conflict Resolution: some "DO'S"

- Use common sense in timing and approach. Don't say.."And while we are on the subject.!" Or " and Another thing..!"
- Give the person full eye contact and your full attention. Turn off the T.V. and put the paper down.
- Give grace.. "What it appears to me to have happened, but I may not have it right is....."
- Describe the impact on your feelings.. indicate the impact something may have had on you.."I felt this...".. what are your thoughts on it?" Give them a chance to understand
- Be open to what they are saying.."You may be right".

Some.. "DONTS"

- Don't attack the person. Don't belittle them. Don't mock them. Show respect. Deal with the behaviour, or the attitude.
- Don't say "never" or "always".
- Don't walk away when someone is talking. Don't slam the door.
- Don't try and control by using anger, threats or intimidation. Cool off.
- Don't interrupt. Listen. Hear them out. If you aren't clear on what they are saying.. ask them to describe it another way.
- Don't become defensive, rationalise, make excuses, or accuse.
- Don't just bide your time to say your bit.. really listen to the other

person.

- Don't manipulative with tears, pain or pity.
- Don't bring up past issues.. deal with the present.

G. Additional Rules for Harmonious Home Living:

- Give every family member some space. Everyone needs his or her areas of privacy. Respect the property and possessions of other members. If it's not yours, then ask permission before you use it; and when you've used it, put it back and say "Thank you". Don't let younger children destroy older children's things.
- If you get it out, put it back.
- If you make a mess, clean it up.
- Hang up your clothes.
- Do ONE thing each day to BLESS each other family member.

PERSONAL APPLICATION (James 1:22)

1. According to this lesson, would you classify your family as healthy?
Yes? Or No?
2. List TWO things you would like to do to make your family healthier.
 - a.
 - b.
3. What are the THREE best communication ideas from this lesson that you will use?
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.

LESSON THREE: THE POSITIVES OF PARENTING

Every parent wants to be able to raise up good children. It is their foundational desire. But this does not come easily. The challenges our children face in the answers from the Bible and apply them as time-tested, God inspired principles to today's children, we know that they will not fail. Bible principles help parents make decisions regarding child-rearing that produce healthy kids. Using God's principles in positive ways will lead to proper parenting. We will explore many of the positives for this kind of parenting.

A. PARENTING: THE CRITICAL ISSUE

Family is God's idea. The creation of man and woman and the procreation of children were planned by God. This unit would provide nurture, guidance protection and security. The parents would be the role models. As to values, choices and behaviours.. God would share through the parents, illuminating the child with His Love.

Genesis 1:27-28 So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. ²⁸ God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground."

We live in a fallen world: In this fallen world many things are imperfect: much sadness, pain and suffering occur. This was not God's original plan, yet He keeps on renewing His Covenant with man and woman. He creates new birth. He creates new beginnings. Each birth of a child is the sign that God still believes in life. Children are the freshest from the hand of God—most like His character. Jesus' words are strong about children..

Matthew 18:5-6 ⁵ And whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me.

Causing to Stumble ⁶ "If anyone causes one of these little ones—those who believe

in me—to stumble, it would be better for them to have a large millstone hung around their neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea.

Mark 10:14. “Let the little children come to Me.. for the Kingdom of God belongs to such as these”.

While they are born in sin.. they have not yet reached an age of understanding; and are incredibly open to Jesus and God’s supernatural spiritual world.

Parenting must not be taken lightly: Children and the responsibilities of parenting are not to be taken lightly. Unmarried teenage girls who state openly that they want to have a baby to have something of their own, someone to love, are totally misunderstanding the critical issues of parenthood. Prospective parents need to have a sense of maturity; an inner sense of self-worth; a stable marriage and a growing faith.

Give an example of a parenting skill (good or bad) which you learned from your parents:
Example:

B. UNDERSTANDING THE CHILD’S DEVELOPMENTAL PROCESS:

Baby lambs, like other mammals, are often born quickly and within minutes are able to stand, walk, and seek nourishment. God’s little human lambs are not so. They are born completely dependent on the adults in their lives. They do not operate on evolved instinct, but rather, rely on careful direction and bonding with the mother and father. They are taught. They are born with tremendous potential and definite patterns of physical, emotional and intellectual development.

Where’s the Parenting Manual? Cars come with comprehensive manuals. Appliances have instruction manuals. Babies come with nothing! Fortunately this generation is blessed with great parenting books and resources. Millions of pages have flooded the market, often confusing the parents with too much information. Get acquainted with the authorities in the field of Christian child psychology and development. These names are known internationally and are routinely referred to in Christian education curriculum, and Christian Parenting books. Knowing and understanding the stages of a child’s development will help each parent reach the child’s fullest potential. Misunderstanding, or perishing for lack of knowledge may cause a parent to put unrealistic expectations on a child; register disappointment at their “normal” behaviours; or become unnecessarily anxious when baby doesn’t progress like “everyone else”.

C. DEVELOPMENTAL TASKS

A developmental task is a task which arises at or about a certain period in the life of the individual.. and when the child successfully achieves it, happiness is the result; and this then leads on to the next task and success with later tasks. Failure, leads to unhappiness in the individual, disapproval by society, and difficulty with later tasks.

i) Infancy and Early Childhood (ages 0-5)

- Learning to walk
- Learning to take solid foods
- Learning to talk
- Learning to control the elimination of body wastes
- Learning sex differences and sexual modesty
- Achieving physiological stability
- Forming simple concepts of social and physical reality
- Learning to relate oneself emotionally to parents, siblings and other people
- Learning to distinguish right from wrong and developing a conscience

NOTE: These first five years of a child's life are the most important for laying foundations and values, establishing self-esteem and building trust. As children move along the stages, there are certain predictable changes in behaviour, swinging back and forth, repeating cycles. These are normal and should be treated with understanding.

Proverbs 22:6 Train a child in the way they should go, and when they are old they will not turn from it.

ii) Middle childhood (ages 6-12)

- Learning physical skills necessary for ordinary games
- Building wholeness attitudes towards oneself as a growing organism
- Learning to get along with age-mates
- Learning an appropriate masculine or feminine social role
- Developing concepts necessary for everyday living
- Developing conscience, morality and a scale of values
- Achieving personal independence
- Developing attitudes towards social groups and institutions

iii) Adolescence (ages 12-19)

- Achieving new and more mature relationships with age-mates of both sexes
- Achieving an appropriate gender-based masculine or feminine role

- Accepting one's physique and using the body effectively
- Achieving emotional independence of parents and other adults
- Achieving assurance of economic independence
- Selecting and preparing for an occupation
- Preparing for marriage and family life
- Developing intellectual skills and concepts necessary for civic competence
- Desiring and achieving socially responsible behaviour
- Acquiring a set of values and an ethical system as a guide to behaviour.

Proverbs 29:15 The rod of correction imparts wisdom, but a child left to himself will disgrace his mother.

Building Trust. You will find in the material following that we will list the primary tasks of parenting. This is where many parents fail, leaving these tasks to extended family, baby sitters, church, school, counsellors, social workers, or worse-- others; and even their own peers. Of course each one of the above has a role with the child; but it is not to parent. When the child has parents who fail to assist in that child's development, the child will have in them an absence of trust, belonging and bonding. This leaves the child vulnerable to falling into the next net of similar children who form gang, oppositional, and socially negative behaviours, which don't stop unless there is Divine intervention.

D. THE PRIMARY TASK OF PARENTING: SOCIALISATION.

What is socialising? (general and basic)

- Developing a sense of trust
- Developing a bond of nurture and security
- Teaching basic skills such as walking, talking, dressing and feeding themselves
- How to become a 'family' member.. nuclear, church, extended and community.

What is 'socialisation?' (support and control)

- Support: Provide emotional support (love, affection, warmth, acceptance and nurturing)
- Control: Parents may seek to limit or change their child's behaviour by coercion, which consists of threats of punishment or force.
- Inductive leaning: This is based on setting consistent limits. Explaining the reasons for the limits. Requesting that the child comply. Praising the child's compliance as reinforcement.

Three styles of parenting may appear here:

- i) **Authoritative:** High levels of esteem and emotional support, yet form expectations. Discipline is discipling, guiding and verbalising each step.
- ii) **Permissive:** Provide support, but exercise little control or consistency. The child doesn't take it seriously.
- iii) **Authoritarian:** low support with punitive control. Mean. This builds wall between the parent and the child.

***Give an example of the kind of parenting style you grew up with:
Example:***

E. SOCIALISATION AND SOCIAL CLASS

In the past.. class status was confined to the job or position of the father (lower, middle, upper). The child seemed to be parented according to "rules" of the social class peers of Mum and Dad, even though the child's desires or potential may be totally different. As education and independence have increased throughout this age, many children have broken away from the mould to pursue their own dreams.

Socialisation and gender: Parents tend to socialise their girls differently from their boys. Girls: emotional, weaker, submissive, "be-ers". Boys stoic, strong, powerful, "do-ers". Jesus breaks the mould and sets us free as individuals.

***Give an example of the differences you have seen between how boys and girls socialise:
Example:***

**F. SOCIAL ISSUES THAT PREVENT PARENTS
FROM FUNCTIONING EFFECTIVELY:**

- **Unemployment:** Puts a terrible cramp on development and lifestyle
- **Poverty:** Lack of ability to develop properly
- **Divorce:** Universally (whether Christian or secular), it is devastating for children young and old alike. Recovery may occur eventually.
- **Substance abuse:** Very prevalent in all kinds of families. Parents will do anything for drug money. This is one of the most tragic influences on children today. They will then repeat. What parents do in moderation, their children will do to extreme.
- **Crime and violence:** Are often directly linked to substance abuse
- **War and terrorism:** today there are entire nations that are

ravaged by war; and others impacted by terrorism.. but wherever these are found orphans without any form of family identity emerge.

Give an example of how any of the above influenced the parents who raised you:

Example:

The impact: Behind the dismal statistics of children affected by the power of communities; and individual homes where children are vulnerable through social issues, and the stresses of this become embedded in their psyche.. one disenfranchised mother was heard to answer a question asked of her.. "***What collective impact do you think these things have on these children?***" She said... "***There are no children here.. they have seen and lived through too much to be children***".

Personal Application

1. How have your early years of childhood affected your perspective of family life?
2. Looking back.. what parenting skills would you change?
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.

James 1:22.. "Be not hearers of The Word, but be doers as well!"

LESSON FOUR: PARENTING AND SELF ESTEEM

Self-esteem plays a tremendous role in the social development of every human being. It all starts when we are small children. Let's look at God's principles of self-esteem, to see how to have capable, well-balanced children. We will discuss the ideas of **self-concept** (the way one perceives one-self), and **self-esteem** (the value one places on one-self). The stability of the next generation depends on how the parents of this generation exercise sound judgement in raising responsible and resourceful children.

A. GOD LIKES HOW HE MADE US:

We are wonderfully made:

Psalm 139:13-18. For you created my inmost being;

you knit me together in my mother's womb.

¹⁴I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made;

your works are wonderful,

I know that full well.

¹⁵My frame was not hidden from you
when I was made in the secret place,
when I was woven together in the depths of the earth.

¹⁶Your eyes saw my unformed body;
all the days ordained for me were written in your book
before one of them came to be.

¹⁷How precious to me are your thoughts, God!
How vast is the sum of them!

¹⁸Were I to count them,

they would outnumber the grains of sand—
when I awake, I am still with you.

Psalm 127:3-5 Children are a gift from the LORD;

they are a reward from him.

⁴Children born to a young man

are like arrows in a warrior's hands.

⁵How joyful is the man whose quiver is full of them!

He will not be put to shame when he confronts his accusers at the city gates.

B. PARENTAL MODELLING OF SELF-ESTEEM.

A child learns to do, feel and experience from what he sees from his parents. If a parent acts respectfully and treats him with esteem, the child learns to model those behaviours. Self-love (..*"and love your neighbour as you love yourself"* = *self-love*), then becomes the model for his behaviour.

i) **The first few years:** During the first year or so of his life it is the mother or mother figure(s) who responds, in greater or lesser degree, to the expressed needs of the child.. for milk or other nourishment; for warmth; for dryness, and general body comforts; for love, for laughter; for a general feeling of value, worth, satisfaction and well-being.

ii) **Learning to Trust:** In the first year of life, a child learns to varying degrees, either a basic sense of trust, or of mistrust. Some researchers believe that this first sub-conscious feeling level begins to form how the child later will conceptualise God.

*Give an example early in your life when you experienced being loved and accepted:
Example:*

C. LOOKING BACK AT THE PARENT'S SELF-ESTEEM

"Mirror, mirror on the wall..." The parent is a psychological mirror that the child uses to form his identity. Children value themselves to the degree they have been valued. The core of self-esteem is formed by the time the child is **eighteen months old!** As his world expands, other influences are added.. both positive and negative.

Consider your early years:

In a quiet place and time write down some memories of your early years and the way you felt about yourself. Reflect carefully on why you had some of those feelings. What influence do these have on your life today?

Ages 0-2

Ages 3-6

Ages 7-11

Ages 12-14

Ages 19-25

D. A BIBLICAL BASIS FOR SELF-ESTEEM:

The Bible contains timeless affirmations that help establish our self-esteem. When we discover how to parent our children according to the principles of The Word, it sets us free from Dr. Spock and all the other contemporary fads.

Matthew 19:19 Honour your father and mother and your neighbour as yourself

Proverbs 17:6 Children's children are a crown to the aged, and parents are the pride of their children.

1. Changing definitions: To many the very phrase "*self-esteem*" has a suspicious ring, because during the "me" decade of the 1980's and following; morality and objective absolute values have been scrapped and replaced by a self-serving "my opinion, and action on the situation is my life-styles" are the fruit. Culturally we have learnt the **price of everything and the value of nothing**. The Word shows us that we have been made poor by our wealth; and bored by our leisure.

Does this mean "the self" is to be despised? No, from the Christian point of view humanity has great dignity. We are made in the image of God; and brought into a Covenant of Fellowship through Jesus our Creator with God and each other. From this we see that **we are worthy to both give and receive love**. This is the basis by which all Christians should approach life!

*Give an example early in your life when you experienced self-esteem.
Example:*

2. We are Valuable:

That Jesus died to give His Blood to both eternally kill us, and destroy the power of our sin to separate us from God.. shows that we are of inestimable value to an infinite God. To malign or belittle humanity is an affront to our Lord God who intended us to be His regents in the created order.

John 13:34-35 "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. ³⁵By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you

love one another.”

Romans 8:32-33 He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? ³³ Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies.

3 Our Personal value is rooted in God. Genuine Christian self-esteem has its source in *the gracious, sacrificing Love of Christ*. If we move away from this we become un-biblical in the way we relate to God and each other. The demonic substitute is *"my own earned goodness" (self-worship)*.. and if we move into this we are "suppressing the Truth by unrighteousness".. and coming to worship "the creature instead of the Creator".. **man is not to be worshipped.. but God alone!**.. the false measure that dominates this Age.

Romans 1:18,25 For the wrath of God is revealed from Heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness..

For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshipped and served the creature, rather than the Creator, who is Blessed forever. Amen.

4 The Cure: The cure for false self-esteem is NOT self-contempt (*which can easily become a form of pride*), but faith in God. We are God's own children.. an entirely new Creation.. a new creature.."very good!" The Bible alone is a trustworthy foundation upon which we can base true self-esteem. The Creator of this Universe knows us intimately, personally, and completely.

2 Corinthians 5:17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation, the old is gone, the new is here!

Genesis 1:31 God saw all that He had made and it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning.. the sixth day.

5. We are loved unconditionally.

God cares about our needs and anxieties because we are His Covenant children. He is willing to turn our failures and liabilities into victories through us crying out for the Helping ministry of the Holy Spirit to anoint us, and bring God's Word and principles hurriedly to our mind that we might be refreshed and restored to the depth of our soul; and be our "old-self-in-Christ again". He does this lovingly, willingly, powerfully and unconditionally, because He wants us to know Him better and better, and have an ever-increasing closeness, intimacy and faith and trust in Him. What greater treasures of comfort could we instill in our children!!

Luke 12.. don't worry about your life... consider the birds, how God feeds

them.. you are much more valuable than birds..

1 John 3:3 Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knows us not, because it knew him not.

1 Peter 5:7 cast all your anxieties on Him for He cares for you!

Romans 8:28 we know that all things work together for good to those who love God and are called according to His purpose.

Revelations 21:1-4 Then I saw "a new heaven and a new earth," for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. ²I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. ⁴'He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death' or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."

5 Actions speak louder than words: How can we teach the Biblical foundation of self-esteem to our children? Actions speak louder than words. Much is "caught" before it is understood to be "taught". Young minds are like sponges and highly observant. Their self-esteem always comes initially from outside themselves! Their perception of God is mediated by their parents. It is important that parents copy God who loves them first, to do the same to their children.

Give the example of the first time that love and self-esteem were communicated to you by a family member:

Example:

E. THE IMPORTANCE OF SELF-ESTEEM

- i) **Doing our best** Children believe that their parents are all-knowing, just and all-powerful, therefore "right" about everything (whether it is helpful or harmful to their children). Children wait for their parents to pass judgement on all that they do. Finally being able to tie up a shoelace gives a child a thrill of excitement and accomplishment.. but if parent *discourages* by saying.."Is that the best you can do?".. the child is discouraged from trying again.. having learnt that their best is not good enough. Completion of essential tasks in the future will be compromised if a culture and mentality of discouragement persists.
- ii) **Thoughtless barbs** "Aren't you ashamed of yourself?" "When are you going to grow up?" "Don't you know any better?" "what's wrong with you?" "That was really dumb!" "You're bone lazy.. you loved to help once.. not now.. what's got into you?" Thoughtless barbs will seriously **damage the tender spirit of the child**. Worse than that.. the child will arrive at their own false conclusions.."I can't please anyone".."I'm stupid".."I'm a waste of space".."There must be something wrong with

me, but I don't know what it is, so I'd better not get too close to anyone else, in case they pick it, and reject me too". Children who have excessively over-anxious parents.. "Watch out!".. "be careful" will end up fearful, and find it hard to exercise faith, and will lack confidence in this "hostile" world that is being projected to them. "Don't do this.. that!".. may even make them feel guilty about playing, so later they don't enjoy relaxation, but feel as though they must continually work for some sub-conscious drive they can't explain.

Give an example of a time that you experienced a thoughtless barb from someone.

Example:

- iii) **Never good enough** Children who innately think they are bad may find it difficult to accept love or forgiveness, even from God. They may feel.. "God won't answer my prayers because I am bad". If children do not receive positive feedback, they will still seek feedback, so will then get it through negative actions. Delinquent teens will conclude.. "I'll never be good enough, so I might as well be bad". The epidemic of teen suicide is tragic evidence of the damage caused by lack of self-esteem. Many precious children have died because they lived convinced that "no-one could love me".. and were blind to it when people did.
- iv) **Self-fulfilling prophecies** The above mentioned messages to children are self-fulfilling prophecies. Children who think they are bad, stupid or ugly will live up to that image. Once the pattern is set.. *they will set the lifestyle that reinforces it for them.. and accumulate evidence of their sense of inferiority.* Critical peers will assist in this process. Parents who are "over-achievers" and offer too much "constructive criticism" can be equally damaging.
- v) **The good news** The good news is that children who receive love, attention and affirmation from their parents become healthy and well adjusted. Self-fulfilling prophecies can work in a positive way as well as negative. Children who understand the love of God and feel valued act as if they are valuable. These happy children have developed self-esteem.

F. **BEHAVIOURAL TRAITS IN LOW SELF-ESTEEM**

Just because we live in a negative world do we have to be negative? Let's take a look at some of the symptoms. Were you treated this way? Do you treat your children this way?

<u>VERBAL</u>	<u>NON VERBAL</u>
Criticism	Withdrawal
Swearing	Hitting/biting
Attacking	Perfectionism
Negative talk	Over-achiever
Put-downs	Depression

Lying Bragging Justifying Dirty talk regret	Jealousy Rigidity Super-sensitivity Indecision Guilt
---	--

Be Realistic Excessive presence of these traits indicates emotional pain and illness. Healthy self-esteem is based on realistic appraisal and feels equal to others. Unhealthy self-esteem is based on unrealistic appraisal and feels inferior to others. Thank about this: *The way we perceive ourselves, accurately or not, influences all our behavioural interactions with others.*

*Give an example of verbal or non-verbal action that emotionally hurt you.
Example:*

THE THREE INTER-TWINED DIMENSIONS OF ESTEEM		
BELONGING	WORTH	COMPETENCE
<i>Having a sense of security and identity with others who love, accept and support me.</i>	<i>Being affirmed as a person of value; being cherished and respected</i>	<i>Gaining a sense of achievement; and being affirmed as an able person.</i>

G KEEPING SELF-ESTEEM HEALTHY

Reaffirm these four Vitamin A's every day..

Acknowledge: Mission: You have a special type of job(s) to do on Earth

Creation: You were created because God really wanted you, otherwise you would not exist..and planned for you, and made you in His image.

Purpose: There is a great purpose for my life..Glorify Jesus!

Destiny: It goes right through this life into Eternity.

Accept: Physical beauty:.. learn to love your natural look

Emotional: stable, moody, melancholy etc.

Intellectual: I.Q., E.Q., Skills

Change where necessary: If interfering with growing, seek professional help.

Affirm: Physically: Give yourself a hug. Hug Jesus. Hug Father & Holy Spirit
Verbally: Internal talk should be positive and agree with what

God says about you; not the devil.

Warm fuzzy: Treat yourself once in a while.

Accentuate: Support Group. Get in one that is Christ centered.

The positives and the Majors: They help you keep perspective in your growth journey.

John 8:32.. "you will know the Truth and the truth (which is good news), will make you free"

H HOW TO DEVELOP A BIBLICAL HEALTHY SELF-IMAGE

1. Ask Jesus Christ to be your Lord and develop a personal relationship with Him
2. Seek to plant yourself in the Lord's House each week, so that you grow as a Christian with your brothers and sisters.. Christ's visible Body.
3. Rely on Holy Spirit to water your mind, and actively work with you to help you in every way you can find.
4. Renew your mind; and purpose to change your life according to that which you find by being in the Lord's House, and reading the Bible each day..preferably in a way that includes getting you through the Bible in a year. Journal each day. Write down the Scripture that sticks out from the others and write it down. Observe what God is saying to you. Work out what you have to do and do it (James 1:22). Pray for help.
5. Deal with guilt according to the Scripture.
6. Be open and honest with yourself, others and with Father as you talk to Him daily.
7. Develop several close friendships.
8. Analyse your negative tendencies (worry, judgementalism, poorly expressed anger etc.) and work towards eliminating them from your lifestyle by reading resources that will help, and applying them.

I. LETTING OFF ESTEEM

Use the following chart of "old beliefs", and new beliefs and help your children move from low esteem to full esteem while learning skills in creative conflict resolution.

From Low Esteem

To Full Esteem

1. Children should be seen and not heard and always listen to adults	Children need to be seen and heard again and again. When adult's listen to children their self-esteem grows
2. Children must be trained to	Children are eager to co-operate

behave and obey because they are naturally unruly	and need the positive influence of a strong role model
3. Adults must appear strong and in control at all times	No adult has all the answers. Sometimes vulnerability is strength
4. Children must be punished when they misbehave otherwise how else will they learn	Children need to be approached with honesty and love when they do some thing that isn't working, so they can learn self-acceptance
5. Children must be punished or shamed when they disobey so they can learn to stop it.	To err is human. To correct children with patience and love is divine
6. Children should follow the rules no matter what: no questions asked	Children need simple logical explanations and some freedom of choice. For example: "Would you rather do your work before or after lunch?" Show them there are options, and help them choose the best one; and complete the task required.

It's never too late to do this!

1. Is it possible in your family to do the above suggestions? YES/NO
2. If so, can you begin doing these things in the next few days? YES/NO
3. Which of the above six suggestions will you begin to do?

Celebrate!

Begin now. Start afresh. Give yourself a new start. Today. You are you and that is all you need to be. You are temporary. Here today and gone tomorrow. But today. Today you are a new beginning, a new thing.. a new Life.

LESSON FIVE: FULFILLING SINGLE PARENTING

In this lesson we will learn about how to experience fulfilling single parenting. We will look at the impact of divorce of parents on their children; and also how to develop some positive ways that the Church can reach out to them. We will then examine how to develop a healthy single parent ministry in the local church.

A. ANOTHER WAY TO REACH THE HURTING

The church of Jesus Christ has a tremendous opportunity to minister healing to the untold thousands of hurting, fractured families who have been damaged by divorce. The impact is that a whole generation of men, women and children have been driven into dysfunction. We see in other parts of the world war, famine, and disease have left families and whole communities devastated. The church needs to become knowledgeable about the problem before we can make an impact on the lives of these people.

Matthew 18:16 But if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the

sea.

B. DIVORCE STATISTICS AND PERCEPTIONS

While over 1 in 3 marriages in this era, end in divorce, we do have over a million marriages in place that are functioning in a healthy fashion. The concept that one in three marriages is doomed is a monstrous piece of statistical nonsense designed to grab the ears of an audience by shock. The media doesn't find newsworthy the depiction and promotion of strong families.. it doesn't generate advertising revenue. Let's keep it all real!

C. THE EFFECTS OF DIVORCE

A large number of our families in this nation will sometime be part of family divorce. Both psychologists and Christian counsellors know that this will almost always be devastating to the child.

Why? Children often believe incorrectly that they are the source of conflict between the parents. Their world of safety and security, and comfort gets blown apart. The child sustains inner rejection because it believes that if the parent who moves away loved him enough then he would have stayed, so therefore there must be something unlovable about him, but he doesn't know what it might be. The child drawing this false conclusion will sub-consciously believe it to be true. It also sees the parents under great pressures emotionally, physically and spiritually. Extended families are often ripped apart; and their resources and comfort seriously depleted, and the children denied. Self-esteem takes a beating. The major sense of **belonging** splits. One's whole worth is seriously questioned as an ongoing process.

Malachi 2:15-16 Has not the one God made you? You belong to him in body and spirit. And what does the one God seek? Godly offspring. So be on your guard, and do not be unfaithful to the wife of your youth.

¹⁶“The man who hates and divorces his wife,” says the LORD, the God of Israel, “does violence to the one he should protect,” says the LORD Almighty. So be on your guard, and do not be unfaithful.

1 John 1:9-10 “If we confess our sins, He is just and able to forgive us, and make us clean from all unrighteousness. If we claim we haven't sinned we make God out to be a liar; and His Word has no place in our lives.

D. EMOTIONAL RESPONSE TO DIVORCE:

Below.. is a partial list of emotions and challenges for parents and children.

Parents:

- Shock
- Denial
- Loss of trust

- Rage
- Fear
- Economic panic. Fathers usually come out with more, and mothers are forced back to work
- Unemployment, poverty
- Fear of loss of love by children
- Loneliness (extreme)
- Anger at God

Children

- Depression
- Out of Bounds behaviour
- Psychosomatic symptoms
- Conforming behaviour to try to get parents back together again
- Destroys trust
- Regresses to a younger behaviour.

Give an example that divorce had on yourself, or someone you know:

Example:

E. WHAT CHURCHES, PASTORS, CHILDREN'S CHURCH TEACHERS CAN DO FOR CHILDREN GOING THROUGH DIVORCE:

What practical courses of action can be taken to be a better witness to children from one-parent families? Here are some suggestions which are designed to get us thinking; and be used as part of our gearing up of our church-carers of those in single-parent families.. in their roles.

1. Realise that not all children come from homes where both natural parents are present. Homes are disrupted by divorce and death. There are also occupations such as the military, and others that are excessive in their time demand that can take fathers away for many months; and most of the week.
2. When children are not attending church fellowship each week.. it may be a signal that there is domestic difficulties being encountered. What do you do? Try where possible to encourage the parents to be there each Sunday. Children's Church teachers can take the lessons and materials to those absent and assign it as homework. The Pastor should be made aware so that professional assistance is available to help the parents.. especially to focus on the needs of their child. Parents not getting their children assisted properly sends all the wrong signals to the child about Christ and how He is valued in that family, and how he should value Christ in the future.
3. Let their be great love, and absolutely no partiality shown to any child. Children will be sensitive to any of your angers and displeasures; and may feel as though they are bring social leprosy to their class. They are not

"unclean" children. They have a special need for your stability and kindness during their **brokenness**.

4. Make a special phonecall; and /or visit to their home. After the usual chitchat about the class, the church.. ask about the family. It is not too personal or prying to say.."Tell me about your family".. "Kelly tells me that she spends every other weekend with her father. Is there any way that we can work together so that she can keep up with class on the weekend she is away?" "Is it possible for her father to bring her to Sunday School?".. most parents are relieved to know that there is someone who is interested in their child. They will welcome the inquiry, your presence and your concern.
5. Recognise that children of single-parenting have "roller-coaster" feelings. Some Sundays Kelly will be all smiles... having a good morning with the parent. Other times.. all gloom. It has been a miserable week. It may be appropriate to ask Kelly.."You seem to be sad this morning.. is everything alright?" At other times Kelly may need an extra hug from you, a little extra care, or some encouragement to participate with the other children.
6. In teaching, use illustrations that help children know you understand their questions. You can tell a story about a little girl whose prayers are not answered in the way she wanted. Daddy and Mummy didn't get back together again; or grandma didn't get well. However Jesus sent other people to give the little girl loving care. Jesus did hear her prayer. He answered in a different way.
7. Placing emphasis on the person of Jesus is important to a child in a broken home. Jesus communicates consistency, love and caring. They need to know that Jesus suffered so He understands their suffering. They need to know that all did not go well for Jesus; and all does not go well for them. They need to know that Jesus loves all people; so therefore they can love both their father and their mother, even if their mum and dad do not love each other. Jesus forgives people. The child wants to be forgiven for bad thoughts about mother, father and the world.
8. When there is a class party or outing make sure the child has transport. During the 10 years one mother was a widow, one of her heartaches was the outing to which no-one thought to invite her son. His father had died when he was 4 years old. Mum spent all her time working and keeping the home going. Calling the mother or father with details of the invitation and times for picking-up and dropping-off would be so helpful. It gives that important contact with the parent!
9. Remember.. the children are adaptable. Home conditions may seem distressing and futile to us, but frequently, children rally and adapt to their reconstructed family without too much pain. Single parents may also have a little more time to spend with their children once the demand of divorce proceedings are over. The parent may begin to compensate for the absence of the missing parent, and work harder at making the child's life more meaningful. Some children are more resilient than others.

10. Remember that many parents left in a single-parent situation can be strongly gifted; and may rise with renewed energy to rear their children alone. They will welcome your support, your concern and your interest.
11. The most important message the child will ever receive from you is "I LOVE YOU!" That makes it easier for the child to believe that God loves him; and is consistent in His Love. In a world of confusion.. there needs to be a strainer-post of an adult who cares, is consistent and is concerned. The same can be true of grandparents, a neighbour, a family, or a friend of the family.. that the child can lean on as a supportive community and the glue of their life... amid the flux of life.

F. JESUS LOVES CHILDREN: Children of divorced parents; of deceased parents or of step-parents are the children around us right now, who do, or who could come to our Children's Church! Jesus adamant about our treatment of children.

Matthew 18:15: "Whoever welcomes a little child like this in My Name, welcomes Me."

Give an example of helping children of divorce to better cope with their situation:

Example:

Amid the imperfections of this world the Lord gives us opportunity to witness and to teach. What a privilege to welcome the children from many troubled homes to our Church and children's church. There we can give them Love; and share with them the Good News of the Saviour who came to give hope and abundant life.

G. COMMUNICATING ABOUT THE DIVORCE:

There are some specific things that divorcing parents can do to make this traumatic experience easier for the child:

Things to do:

- Be sure to tell to tell the child first before they hear it from an outside source.
- Make sure the child hears both sides of the story from both parents.
- Encourage the child to understand that he will be able to continue the relationship with the departing parent.
- Encourage the child to maintain relationships with the relatives from "the others side".
- Avoid fights over visitation rights (in the presence of the child)
- Keep the other parent informed about details of the child's life. Parenting never ends.
- Keep a civil/good relationship with your spouse.

Things not to do:

- Do not let the child accept feelings of blame for the Divorce
- Do not let rejection feelings develop about the parent who leaves.
- Do not put down the absent parent in front of the child.
- Do not let the child heap guilt upon you. Admit your mistakes, but insist that life must continue.
- Do not encourage the child's hopes that you and Mum/Dad are going to get back together again.
- Do not quiz the child about visits to the other parent. Let him share things if he chooses.

*Give an example of things done or not done that helped a child cope with divorce:
Example:*

H. DEVELOPING A SINGLE-PARENT MINISTRY..

Single parents have a tremendous responsibility. God not intend for one parent to handle two parent's roles. God has designated the "widows and the fatherless as one of the great foci of His heart. What a great opportunity for us to fulfil, in Jesus Name, the opportunity of reaching out to; and touching the lives of these precious, hurting and often overwhelmed people.

EXPLORING THE ATITUDES OF TODAY'S CHURCH

Take a look around around our Church:

- How are singles, in general, viewed?
- What is the Pastor and Staff's attitude about divorce?
- How does our congregation interact with single-parents? Support? Equality? Love?
- What percentage of our congregation is single?

Single-parents.. and 'singles' (whatever road they have come to this) want more than anything to be just a normal, total part of Jesus' Family.. go to events with others.. go and have lunches... invites... friendships across the board.. to be understood and not rejected.. to show love to others...to help all to know that there are fewer differences and more likenesses to everyone else..

I. MISSION STATEMENTS FOR ANY CHURCH FAMILY MEMBER:

a) To provide all single-parenting folks in our family with a nurturing, loving and accepting environment which will:

- offer a comfortable setting to the non-believer, and non-churched
- to stimulate support and spiritual growth in the challenges and joys of single-parenting;

- provide pertinent teaching on issues as they apply to the single parent.
- b) To define a set of values that govern our own Church culture which leads to A SPECIFIC SINGLE-PARENTING MINISTRY:
- To create a sense of "Loving-Family" and sustain it, so that all who are in it **sense real belonging**, and give real belonging, as a means of supporting each other.
 - To make every single parent whether a regular attender, or a visitor to feel totally welcomed.
 - To **encourage healthy values** which enable others to form theirs to be the best they can be as a parent, or whoever for Christ.
 - To help single-parents to **develop skills, and courage** to be the best they can be.
 - To encourage **single-parents to reach out to friends and neighbours** with support and nurturing.
 - To **identify leaders** who will help carry out with urgency the importance of this mission.
 - **Be consistent and stable, and faithful** to your appointments with single-parents.. they have had a lot of disruption in their lives. Work out sustainable regularity with contact and group gatherings.
 - **Heal the hurting parents and children..** bring them back to wholeness.. teach them nurturing and loving.. and help them deal with guilt, regret and loss.
 - Assist them with **specific parenting skills..** what behaviours are normal; and what are out-of-bounds?
 - **Encourage friendships..**
 - Help them through grief and anger to **find their way to God.** Love them to Jesus.
 - **No-no attitudes:** judgemental statements; male/female bashing; patronisation/pity; co-dependency relationships
 - **Yes-yes attitudes** :rebuilding self-esteem; rededicating lives to Christ; redirection of life-goals; releasing of gifts.
 - **DESIGN A SINGLE-PARENTING PROGRAM LIKE:** "JUST ME AND MY KIDS" and implement it ASAP.. see who wishes to be your Support Team...

LESSON SIX: 'THE BEST FOR BLENDED FAMILIES'

Here we learn more about blended families and how they can be strengthened by a caring church. We will also examine some statistics and myths in an effort to get a clear and Godly perspective about this confusing and often highly disturbing predicament that many families are facing.

A. WHAT IS A BLENDED FAMILY?

A blended family is often referred to as a step-family, or a merging family. It is a family unit consisting of a father, and a mother and their children, one or more of whom was born to a previous mate, and either of the parents.

Blended families come in different sizes, ages and mixes. The important issue for a merging family is find a way to blend to become a new, whole family. Blending does not mean making an exclusive family, one that keeps other people out. It means making a family where all of the members belong, care, and have allegiance to each other. It is a family in which people are accepted and honoured for being who they are without being compared to someone else.

B. WHY STEP-FAMILIES FAIL

Why do a large number of step-families fail? The conflict of four parents already carrying heavy emotional baggage, anger, financial concerns etc. is complicated by two to six children suffering loss, abandonment and unbelievable readjustment. The parents with optimism look at trying again to make marriage work. If they have come from divorce, or unclean death, then the self-esteem of the parents will almost be reduced to nil. They may also enter the marriage with pre-existing self-esteem almost at nil. They feel a sense of powerlessness, and helplessness because there are now all these children to raise, bills to pay, social life to balance, etc. Many single mothers will be forced to live at the poverty level. All this is clouded by the 'optimistic dream' that this marriage this time is going to be "Camelot".

Marriage too soon: Often the marriage is performed too soon. Each parent should go through therapy to work through grief, anger and general analysis. The children also need counselling. If this is not done, the "old stuff" gets buried under the "new stuff" and the load is too heavy.

Hanging onto the past: "You have to say old 'good-byes' before you can say new 'hello's' ". This saying probably holds more true for blended families, than for anyone else. The woman who hangs onto sadness for a dead husband throws a separating ingredient into the new blend. So does the man who still carries anger and unforgiveness towards his ex-wife. Or one of the partners may come in resenting that they are committed to something they don't fully understand, and have trouble accepting healthy parental responsibility for. The children may persist with the romantic notion of the family that "could have been".. if only Mum and Dad had stayed married, can also prevent the blend from jelling. It is important for people in blended families to count their past wins and enjoy them, recognising their losses and letting them go, and then position themselves specifically in the here and now with their new family. Let the 'ghosts' of other family configurations stay peacefully in the corner; and keep them out of the middle of the action.

*Give an example of a blended family you know that is successfully living in the present and not in the past:
Example:*

Myths

If a man and a woman who each have children decide to wed, some familiar myths need to be exposed.

Myth 1: Step families should work just like nuclear families

Myth 2: Step-parents are cruel and insensitive

Myth 3: A step-family is created instantly

Myth 4: All step families should and will love each other

Myth 5: Step families formed after death have fewer problems than those formed after divorce.

Born of Loss:

All step families are born of loss. Just as in any change or loss situation, there must be time for grief work with a qualified professional, or group, or an expert in the field.

Denial: It's not true, I'll do anything to bring it back

Anger: Rageful behaviour. It's not fair. I hate you

Depression: The melancholy of the facts. It is over.

Acceptance: Finally coming to peace with the process.

*Give an example of someone who experienced "born of loss" symptoms:
Example:*

C. LETS DO IT RIGHT THIS TIME

This may take a long time. The more solid the two splintered families become, the more the chance for success in the next marriage. Here comes the bride, again. If the man and woman decide on a second marriage, they should:

- Have pre-marriage counselling
- Know they love each other and are best friends
- Plan far ahead enough to include the children in their plans. Also include grand-parents. They are experiencing trauma too.
- Decide where to live. The best idea is to move away from both family homes. Start fresh. If possible.

*Give an example of a blended family that did it right:
Example:*

Where do I fit?

'John' goes from being the oldest to the second youngest, to a girl. Judy goes from being the youngest. At the same time, four children have four parents. Birth order a problem in itself, becomes a raging battle-field for war. Each child may suddenly have eight grandparents. Many adjustments must be slowly and

gradually made. Some will never fully accept each other, but the goal is to live in peace.. with all of Holy Spirit's wisdom and help.

Major areas of conflict:

- Lack of privacy
- Discipline.. who's call?
- Boundaries in each home
- Redefining roles
- New rules
- Finances
- Favouritism for child from biological parent
- Sexual abuse from step parent.
- Regressions in school and in the behaviour of the child. Self-esteem crashes.

D. POINTS TO PONDER FOR STEP-PARENTS

Recognise the importance of the non-custodial parent:

- Respect children's needs and the right to love that parent
- Help step-children nurture the relationship be encouraging them to write, phone etc.
- Allow pictures, mementos of biological parent without creating conflict
- Invite parent to milestone ceremonies and events
- Strive to be added parent figure and friend rather than substitute parent.

Acknowledge the existing bond between new spouse and children.

- Realise that it's natural to feel closer to biological children
- Reduce jealousy and competition for time and attention
- Control resentment where child and parent need time alone.

Allow time for relationships to develop:

- Focus on the process of developing as a family unit
- Value each small success as evidence of relationship growth
- Minimise worrying or trying to force progress
- Respect and accept others as new family forms.

Give an example of family or youth who had to adjust to the challenges of living in a blended family:

Example:

Manage your relationships with each child.

- Avoid interfering in other people's problems unless invited
- Encourage family members to take care of their own needs and relationships

Understand that Family Life cannot always be happy.

- Accept that problems exist
- Understand that unhappy experiences teach children coping skills
- Allow full expression of emotions whether negative or positive, pleasant or unpleasant.. these can be managed progressively.

Possess the courage to be imperfect.

- Reject fairy-tale myths and TV portrayals of blended families
- Understand that every mistake does not reflect a cruel step-parent image
- Realise the way that people learn is by making mistakes, thinking about them and trying again.
- Share your own mistakes to give children permission to be imperfect and human.

Accept grief and loss as part of life's experiences:

- Encourage the children to face the reality of death or divorce that preceded the step-family.
- Feel empathy, not sympathy, with the children of loss
- Help children confront and express feelings that grief elicits
- Provide strength and encouragement so children can move into the future.

Let go.

- Permit children to belong to two families with a minimum of fuss
- Allow children to spend time with peers, activities, other parent, without fearing that the stability of the step-family is threatened.
- Plan family activities without forcing participation
- Use time away from children (and plan for it), to enhance relationship with the spouse.

E. FURTHER THOUGHTS

- Effective step-parents are able to empathise, are not defensive, and avoid being judgemental
- Step-parents can play one or more roles in the child's life.. friend, confident, parent figure, mentor, role model. Couples need to discuss and agree about which roles each parent will take.
- Remarried non-custodial parents with step children often feel guilt about rearing children who are not their own.
- Step parents need validation and support from family and friends. Mostly they need it from their spouse.
- Unchecked competition creates jealousy among step-children that can hinder building bonds
- The Law cannot legislate LOVE. Adoption is not a cure-all for the family.
- The idea of 'instant-love' between step-family members is absurd. Refuse to believe this notion, giving yourself permission to gradually love them

with AGAPE love.

- Sexuality issues must be discussed in the step-family. Not doing so can lead to serious consequences.
- At the start in blended families, it is most effective when biological parents discipline their own children.

Give an example of some of the challenges of step-parenting you have witnessed:

Example:

F. REMEMBER THE KIDS RIGHTS

- Kids have the right to a secure family life and continued contact with their non-residential parent
- If your children live with you, they need special time with you alone, and reassurances they are loved and not being replaced by the new spouse.
- Children, like adults need help.. and time.. to complete their grieving. Becoming part of a step family may mean loss of friends, family and familiar situations and places. Encourage children to express these losses.
- Confusion and uncertain behaviour by your children and step-children are normal until you get to know one another.
- Step children may have one idea of what they want you to be in their lives; you might have another. It is important to clarify everyone's expectations about your role as step-parent.
- To get to know your step-children plan for time alone with each of them so that you can get to know them and slowly build relationship.
- If you are the non-residential parent, or share custody, your children might encourage you to shower them with gifts and treats. What they really want is time with you, not things.
- Schools can help or hinder step-children's adjustments. It is up to parents to work with schools to gain support and co-operation.
- Step-siblings are a big plus for kids. An only child may gain sisters and brothers; all of the children learn from one another. Once they move from competition to co-operation, many become life-long special friends.
- Change in birth order position can provide new perspectives and flexibility.
- Step-family meetings can help improve relationships among step-siblings, give all step-family members an opportunity to understand and enjoy each other, and provide a setting for the creative solving of problems.
- Grand-parents are the children's vital link between the past and the future. Encourage children's relationships with grandparents and step-grandparents.

Give an example of some "kid's rights" you have witnessed or experienced:

Example:

G. WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

If you choose to take the blended, step-family journey go with joy but also go with responsibility. Don't expect too much too soon. Let love take its time.

Some Words from God our Father:

1. Be informed.. seek Wisdom and study

Proverbs 15:22 'Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they will succeed.'

2. Bring Christ into the marriage.

Matthew 19:4-6:⁴And He answered and said to them, "Have you not read that He who made *them* at the beginning *made them male and female,*'⁵ and said, '*For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh*'?⁶ So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate."

3. Face problems willingly. The key is unity Keep the couple's relationship first. God loves to do "a new thing" and provide water in the desert and pathways in the wilderness"

Isaiah 43:19-20. See, I am doing a new thing!

Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?

I am making a way in the wilderness
and streams in the wasteland.

²⁰The wild animals honour me,
the jackals and the owls,

because I provide water in the wilderness
and streams in the wasteland,

to give drink to my people, my chosen

CHECK YOUR VIEWS:

1. Do you and your church have a ministry of Grace towards those experiencing divorce?
2. Can the divorced come to our church and get a new start?
3. Do we train teachers how to minister to children from divorced parents?
4. Under what circumstances do your pastors conduct marriages for divorced believers?
5. Will there be programs for parents without partners? Programs for blended families?

