**The Christian Family, Lesson 1- “How Family Priorities Are Established”**

**Reading Assignment:** Deut.6:1-9; Prov.13:20; Matt.6:19-34; 1Cor.5:1-13; 9:24-27; 1Cor.12:12-27; Eph.4:28; 6:4; 1Thess.4:11-12; 1Tim.4:16

**Series Aim:** To establish or re-establish God as the central focal point of our lives as *individuals,* and especially as *families.*

**Objectives of the first three lessons:**

1. Understanding the *need for* and *how to* establish spiritual priorities in our lives, and those of our children;
2. How to manifest those priority choices to our families; and,
3. Understanding how priority choices affect our families.

**Study/Thought/Discussion Questions**

1. As a parent, does your life more resemble 1Thess.4:11-12, or a “continual exercise in crisis management”? In either case, why is this so?
2. More that anything else, priorities are choices of *attitude* and *commitment.* Matt.6:19-34 manifests the importance of “priority choices” in several different, but related, areas of our lives. Please identify each area and describe what priority is being commanded in each of the passages below:
	1. vv.19-21,
	2. vv.22-23,
	3. v.24
	4. vv.25-32,
	5. vv.33-34
3. When one member of the family fails to keep his or her priorities properly focused, why and how does it affect the rest of the family (cf. 1Cor.12:12-27)?
4. Who has the primary responsibility of maintaining proper priorities in the family?
5. **Establishing and maintaining the right priorities for your family starts with three simple things:**
	1. **Taking charge of your life and the life of your family.** Rather than being a helpless passenger on an out-of-control bus headed for a rough ride and sure crash, take the wheel and pedals and drive it to the correct destination!

Husbands/fathers, how do you do this, Eph.5:23,25-33a; 6:4?

Wives/mothers, what’s your role in the process, Prov.31:10ff; Eph.5:22,24; Titus 2:4-5?

Parents, are you *steering* and *controlling* the bus, or just *riding* while the children drive? If the latter is true, and aside from the obvious and inevitable “crash,” what else is wrong with this picture?

* 1. **Control your environment and circumstances as much as possible.**

There are and will be things that are beyond your control, 1Cor.5:9-10.

But are the “beyond my control” things really the ones that most influence and affect our (and that of our family’s) commitment to God, or is it the ones we could control but fail to do so as much as we should, cf. 1Cor.5:1-8,11-13? Please explain your answer and provide examples.

Consciously decide and *prioritize* where you live, where, when, how much you work, and how and how much you play relative to God (cf. Matt.6:19-34), and the impact these factors have on your family positively and negatively, 1Cor.9:24-27!

* 1. **Create and maintain the proper environment for family- one that has God as the priority.**  *Bad company* corrupts good morals **at home too**, Prov.13:20.

Are you aware of, and do you control what television, books, art, music, and people come into your home? Do they *assist* or *detract* from godly priorities?

What steps can you take to control the influences coming into your home to ensure they assist (rather than detract from) godly priorities?

Please carefully read Deut.6:1-9 and list the commands given the Israelites to help them create and maintain the proper home environment and priority for their families.

**The Christian Family, Lesson 2- “Manifesting God as the Priority to Our Families”**

**Series Aim:** To establish or re-establish God as the central focal point of our lives as *individuals,* and especially as *families.*

**Objectives of the first three lessons:**

1. Understanding the *need for* and *how to* establish spiritual priorities in our lives, and those of our children;
2. How to manifest those priority choices to our families; and,
3. Understanding how priority choices affect our families.

**Review of the previous lesson on Establishing God as the Priority of Our Families:**

* God must be the center of our lives;
* We must control our environment and circumstances to the degree possible; and,
* We must control our lives and that of our families rather than allowing them to control us.

**Study/Thought/Discussion Questions:**

1. Manifesting God as the priority of and to our families may involve **major**changes if we’ve been walking by *“the desires of the flesh”* as in Gal.5:16-21. What do these verses indicate that we need to understandand doto *“walk by the Spirit”* instead?
2. If, on the other hand, we have been at least attempting to *walk by the Spirit,* manifesting God as the priority of and to our families will likely involve perhaps **subtle** but **consistent** changes in the overall pattern of our home life. How can we incorporate the individual attributes (*love, joy, peace, etc.*)of *“the fruit of the Spirit”* in everyday living for our families?
3. In this lesson, we will consider **3 simple ways** we can begin to manifest God as the priority to/of our families. Please answer the questions following each of them.

**Begin early to speak *of* God to your children, cf. Mal.3:16; Deut.6:1-9.** This means that children should be caused to notice that God is so much a part of our lives that we include Him in our most simple conversations and thoughts.

1. How can we incorporate God’s *name* in our daily speech? (cf. Matt.12:34-37)
2. How can we use *prayer* to help manifest God as the priority of the family? (cf. Matt.6:7-15)
3. How can we manifest our *trust* of God to our children? (cf. 1Pet.5:7)
4. How can we manifest our *love* for God to our children? (1John 3:14-24)
5. How can we manifest our concern/regard for *spiritual things* to our children? (cf. Matt.6:33)

**Show your children that God is real to you and them.** A child’s world has much in it that is “make believe.” If we do not work to make God *real* to them, He can easily slip into that *make believe* realm for them- much like the fanciful tales of children’s books and movies.

1. How can we help them realize that “Bible stories” are not “fairy tales”?
2. Simple misconceptions of a child’s perspective, such as the difference between God *reigns* vs. *rains,* cancontribute to the difficulty of making God “real” to/for them. How do we help correct this?
3. How can we help them to see that “miracles” are different from “make believe” events in fairy tales and children’s movies?

**Teach your children respect for authority by manifesting it yourself toward the Word of God.**  A child’s attitude toward any and all authority comes first and foremost from his parents’ attitude toward authority- especially God’s!

1. What do children learn about respect for God’s authority when they see or hear their parents *fib* to protect themselves or others? (cf. Eph.4:28)
2. What do children learn about respect for God’s authority when their parents do not make the time or have the commitment to attend bible class and worship services regularly? (cf. Matt.6:33 and Heb.10:22-25)
3. What do children learn about respect for God’s authority when parents speak fondly of their “sins of youth”? (cf. Rom.6:21)
4. What do children learn about respect for God’s authority when parents *bend* the rules of government (and God!) or speak against its leaders? (cf. Rom.13:1-7; 1Pet.2:13-17; and Acts 23:1-5)
5. What do children learn about respect for God’s authority when their fathers and mothers do not fulfill their God-given roles and responsibilities to one another or them? (Eph.5:22-34 🡪 6:1-4)

In order to teach our children to respect God’s authority, we must first *demonstrate* such ourselves. Then, we can also teach them the *practicality* of God’s authority- that it is not just *theoretical.*

1. How can we help them see that God’s word provides the answers to life’s many problems? (cf. 2Pet.1:3; 2Tim.3:15-17)
2. How can we help them see that God expects us to follow/obey the answers He provides? (cf. Jas.2:14; Luke 6:46)
3. How can we help them see that God’s answers are the best way for us? (cf. Deut.6:2-3; Heb.12:3-11)
4. How can we help them see that man’s thoughts and ways- even ours as parents, pale in comparison to God’s thoughts and ways? (cf. 1Cor.1:18-25)

**The Christian Family, Lesson 3- “How Priority Choices Affect Our Families”**

**Series Aim:** To establish or re-establish God as the central focal point of our lives as *individuals,* and especially as *families.*

**Objectives of the first three lessons:**

1. Understanding the *need for* and *how to* establish spiritual priorities in our lives, and those of our children;
2. How to manifest those priority choices to our families; and,
3. Understanding how priority choices affect our families.

**Review of the previous lesson on Reflecting Priority Choices to Our Families:**

* Begin early to speak *of* God before and to your children;
* Help your children see that God is *real* to you and them; and,
* Show your children your respect of authority- first and foremost through your respect for the authority of the Word of God.

**Study/Thought/Discussion Questions:**

1. **Our priority choices are supposed to, and do affect our families.** Please answer the questions that illustrate this truth:
	1. How did Abram’s decision to put God at the center of his family, and make Him the priority of their lives, affect his family? Gen.12:4-8
	2. How did Abram’s priority choice create a *spiritual legacy?* Gen.18:16-19
2. **Children learn what they live.** Please answer the questions below in these regards:
	1. How difficult is it for a child that is reared in a bilingual household to learn that “second language” when it is part of their everyday home life?
	2. How does this relate or compare spiritually to the choice of having God as a priority for the family?
3. **Too often, we try to provide *things* instead of *environment* for our families.** Please explain how having God as the priority of our families affects our choices in the following areas:
	1. *Nice home* or a *spiritual home,* cf. Eph.5:28,22; 6:1-3; 1Tim.4:7-8?
	2. *Good neighborhood* or *good friends* and *neighbors within the family of God,* cf. Prov.13:20; Rom.12:9-16?
	3. *Good education* or a *foundation of biblical knowledge* from which comes a *lasting faith,* cf. 2Tim.1:5; 3:15?
	4. *Nice/popular things* or a *caring, loving,* and *compassionate home,* cf. Matt.6:25-33; Luke 12:15; 1Tim.6:6-11?
4. **Given these things (above), what do all parents owe their children:**
	1. **The best example of a Christian that you can show them.** Note Jesus’ estimation of John the Baptist in Matt.11:7-11. What kind of parents did John have, cf. Luke 1:5-6?
	2. **Love and affection, Eph.5:25; Titus 2:4.** Be prepared to discuss the following in class: “Children who are not shown/taught to both *give* and *receive* love in **appropriate** ways, will learn **inappropriate** ways to *give* and *receive* what they think is love.”
	3. **Understanding and sympathy, Prov.4:1-9.** What happens when children are given *excessive* amounts or *inappropriate* types of *love, affection, understanding,* and *sympathy?* What happens when they are given *insufficient* amounts or types of the same?
	4. **Discipline, 1Tim.4:7-8; Prov.13:24.**  Proper *discipline* includes three Elements: *Education* (what the *right* thing is); *Encouragement* (explanation and exampleof why it is the *right* thing, and how to do it); and, *Enforcement* (punitive/correction measures when the *right* thing isn’t done). This is how God- our *Perfect Parent,* *disciplines* us, cf. Heb.12:1-11. Identify which verses of this passage manifest each of the three elements of discipline.
	5. **Knowledge of God’s will, Rom.10:17; Deut.6:1-2,6-9.** What can you give or provide for your child(ren) that is more important than: the *knowledge* of God’s will, and the *proper respect* for it? (Additional Thought Question: Do your current *priority choices* reflect your answer to the previous question?)
	6. **Encouragement to serve Christ, Phil.2:12-16; 4:13.** Let your children learn *from your example, encouragement,* and *expectations* the spirit of love and optimism that is such a vital part of serving Jesus Christ by making it visible to them on a **daily** basis. Though Question: Do your current *priority choices,* and your *example* of them, encourage or discourage your child(ren) from being a loving and optimistic servant of Christ?

**The Christian Family, Lesson 4- “The Role of the Husband/Father”**

**Series Aim:** To establish or re-establish God as the central focal point of our lives as *individuals,* and especially as *families.*

**Objectives of the first three lessons:**

1. Understanding the *need for* and *how to* establish spiritual priorities in our lives, and those of our children;
2. How to manifest those priority choices to our families; and,
3. Understanding how priority choices affect our families.

**Objectives of the next three lessons:**

1. To examine and emphasize the biblical role of the husband/father in the family.
2. To examine and emphasize the biblical role of the wife/mother in the family.
3. To examine and emphasize the biblical role of the child/children in the family.

**Study/Thought Questions:**

1. At what point is a “family” created? (cf. Gen.2:18-25)
2. Why is the answer to the previous question such an important consideration for us today? (cf. Prov.13:15)
3. Think for a moment about the terms typically used to describe the role of husband/father: **Provider, Leader, Teacher,** and **Protector.**  Are these *physical* or *spiritual* descriptions and synonyms for the role? Please explain your answer.
4. **Provider-** What is the husband/father expected to *provide:*
	1. For his family *physically?* Matt.7:9-12; 1Tim.5:8
	2. For his family *emotionally?* 1Pet.3:7;
	3. For his family *spiritually?* 1Cor.14:34-35; 1Pet.2:2; Eph.6:4
	4. Thought Question: What do these *provisions* require of the husband/father with regard to his *maturity?*
5. **Leader-** How is the husband/father expected to *lead:*
	1. In regard to *successes* and *failures* in the family? (What does a *good leader* do in respect to successes and failures?)
	2. When the family is not *growing* or *progressing* physically?
	3. When the family is not *growing* or *progressing* spiritually? (cf. 1Pet.2:2; Heb.5:11-14)
	4. In regard to the ultimate *spiritual* goal? (cf. Col.3:1-2; Eph.5:23,25-27; 6:1-4)
6. **Teacher-** What are some of the *physical* things a husband/father typically teaches his family?
	1. *Knowledge* is required to *teach-* either physically or spiritually, Prov.14:6b; John 8:32. What should a husband/father do when his wife/children need to know something about which he has no specific knowledge? (cf. Ezra 7:10)
	2. To be a *teacher* in and for his family, the husband/father must first *recognize the need* (cf. Eph.6:3-4), and then be willing to *learn/teach* and *teach/learn* (Heb.5:11-4 🡪 12:1a).
7. **Protector-**  Stop and think for a moment about the efforts husbands/fathers take to ensure the *physical* safety of their families. Now, what should husbands/fathers do to ensure the *spiritual* safety of their families from the following passages:
	1. 1Thess.5:17?
	2. 2Tim.3:14-17?
	3. 1John 2:15-17?
	4. Prov.13:20?
	5. 1Tim.1:3-11?
	6. Matt.10:16?
	7. Jas.4:1-4?
8. Conclusion- some things to contemplate:
	1. The *spiritual* husband/father does the same kinds of things a good *physical* husband/father does, only he does them better, and with *spiritual* goals and objectives in mind.
	2. Good *physical* husbands/fathers fulfill their role somewhat *naturally-* because it is in their nature.
	3. Good *spiritual* husbands/fathers fulfill their role *naturally* as well, if they are *spiritual* themselves (and thus, it is *in their nature*).

**The Christian Family, Lesson 5- “The Role of the Wife/Mother”**

**Series Aim:** To establish or re-establish God as the central focal point of our lives as *individuals,* and especially as *families.*

**Objectives of the first three lessons:**

1. Understanding the *need for* and *how to* establish spiritual priorities in our lives, and those of our children;
2. How to manifest those priority choices to our families; and,
3. Understanding how priority choices affect our families.

**Objectives of these three lessons:**

1. To examine and emphasize the biblical role of the husband/father in the family.
2. To examine and emphasize the biblical role of the wife/mother in the family.
3. To examine and emphasize the biblical role of the child/children in the family.

**Study/Thought Questions:**

1. Why is it important for a woman to become a “wife” before becoming a “mother” (at least 2 reasons, please; cf. Gen.2:18-24; 4:1-2; Titus 2:3-4; Heb.13:4)?
2. After each of the passages below, explain what a “wife” should learn before becoming a “mother.”
	1. Eph.5:22-24,
	2. Titus 2:4-5,
	3. 1Pet.3:1-6,
	4. Eph.5:33,
	5. Rom.7:2-3
3. What is the difference between *“natural affection”* (as in Rom.1:31) and *learned love* (as in Titus 2:4? Please explain your answer.
4. Where or when is the wife/mother *forbidden* to “teach,” and why? (cf. 1Tim.2:8-14)
5. Where and when is the wife/mother *supposed* to “teach,” and why? (cf. 1Cor.7:13-14,16; 1Pet.3:1-2; 1Tim.2:15; Prov.1:8-9; 6:20; 31:26)
6. Please answer the following from Titus 2:3-5.
	1. When does a wife/mother transition from *younger* to *older?* (No, I’m not looking for trouble, and yes, the answer is in this text!)
	2. What, specifically, is the *older* wife/mother to teach the *younger* wife/mother? (At least 6 please, and explain what each one means.)
	3. Why are these things important?
7. Conclusions:
	1. Wives/mothers, be the kind of wife you want your son to marry and your daughter to be, and the kind of mother you want your grandchildren to have.
	2. But even more importantly, be the kind of wife/mother God expects you to be, and teach your children (sons and daughters) these things and fruit will be born to the Lord for generations to come!