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**Lesson 1**

**How loved is your spouse?**

**Matthew 7:12**

**1. Introduction**

One of the things that we may not like, but is necessary, is to provide maintenance for what God allows us to have. For example: we can maintain our computer, air conditioning at home, maintain the house, be aware of when it is time for the maintenance of the car, etc. Sure, doing maintenance has a cost, but experience teaches us that not doing it is more expensive in the long run. Things end up breaking down.

All this has inspired me to reflect on how much "maintenance" we give our families? How much are we investing in our families so that they are healthy, strong and victorious in Christ? Do not wait for the enemy to destroy what God has designed for us through the family. I invite you to reflect on a series of lessons that will allow you to evaluate some basic points that you should review periodically in your marriage. It is hoped that together as a couple, the best decisions are made so your marriage get closer and closer to Christ's design for marriage.

**2. Development**

**2.1 Vital points to check on in families.** I think there are several aspects that should be reviewed with a certain regularity or when the marriage needs it. If there is something in which the couple or one member of the couple is not satisfied and in which he or she wants something to be different, it is important that they do not let a lot of time pass. Some of the points to review could be:

- How loved does my spouse feel?
- How much do we share our dreams?
- How well do we communicate?
- How well do we resolve conflicts in a healthy way?
- How well do we manage our finances?

I think it's worthwhile to study these points in a series of lessons.

For now, in this lesson we will address the first of them. We must start by evaluating each of these points and others that the married couple considers important. Marriage is about having a full life, according to God's design for our lives (John 10:10).

**2.2 I feel appreciated - loved:** How are you caring for your relationship? Jesus said that the greatest commandment is to love the Lord with all one's heart, and to love others as oneself (Matthew 22: 36-40).

I love to remember a quote attributed to H. Hendricks: "If your Christianity does not work at home, then it does not work." Peter tells us, "Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers (1 Peter 3:7).

Let's start with a simple question. What have you done to show love to your spouse in the last week? There is no doubt that life is built with small moments, with small things that strengthen our marriages. If you do not value them adequately, you may be a couple with a low level of satisfaction in our marriage.

If you can't think of at least three good examples of how you show your love on a daily basis, you may be one of those who believes that, because you are married, you don't have to worry about winning your spouse day to day. The big problems in marriages can arise from a gradual loss of interest in the other, or simply by assuming things: she knows that I love her, so I do not need to say it or go out of my way to show it, etc.

One way in which love is shown to a spouse is by thinking about what pleases them, what they like, what you love about your spouse and how you can make time together more enjoyable .

The person who loves puts the beloved person first. Before thinking about buying new clothes, first think if your loved one has what he or she needs. Love is not selfish. Make your partner your priority. 1st Cor. 13: 4-7

Show your spouse how much you appreciate something they have done recently. Celebrate their successes and encourage them to go after their dreams.

Even in the smallest details, show them your love. If your spouse has cooked something for you, thank them. If they look good in the outfit they are wearing, tell them. Be grateful every day.

Surprise your spouse by doing something that they don't expect. With small daily gestures, show your spouse how much you care. Maybe at first they will be surprised and keep thinking that maybe you did something bad that you're trying to make up for. But keep it up. A call, a message in their briefcase, a bouquet of flowers, etc. A few words can change the day ... words like "I just wanted to remind you that I love you."

Give yourselves time to go out alone like you did when you were dating. Maybe you can go to that little cafe that was your favorite place to see each other.

Show love by deciding to compromise in an area of disagreement between you and your spouse.

Show your love outside the bedroom by kissing or caressing. Take your spouse's hand and go alone on a walk for a while, maybe even in the moonlight. Take time for just the two of you. Enjoy it, it's free.

Be with your spouse in their most difficult times. Sometimes we lose our jobs, sometimes something does not turn out as we expected, sometimes we lose a loved one to death. There are so many hard things that we usually face in life that we need to have our loved one on our side, helping us carry the burdens.

Something that works for my wife and me is humor. We laugh and joke about many things together. Have fun to the fullest.

Finally, I mention that one of the ways in which a wife feels loved is when we help her out with the household chores.

### **3. Conclusion**

Undoubtedly, marriage is built day by day. Sometimes we fall into a routine and we leave behind those little things that express our love for the other, with the result being a deteriorating relationship. The love you sow every day in your spouse is directly proportional to the love you will receive in return.

Begin to pray for the heart of your spouse and your marriage.

### **Tip for closing**

Each spouse writes the answers to the following questions, and talk about their answers together:

- What are the three things I would most like for my spouse to do for me? Discuss answers as a couple.
- What things am I willing to change for my spouse? (make a commitment)

## 1. Introduction

One of the issues that most often cause problems in marriages are financial issues. These can be due to several factors: loss of work, insufficient salary, not knowing how to manage money well, not living with contentment, etc.

You can ask your married friends if they have healthy finances, and you will find that many of them live in debt at levels that are difficult for them to handle.

God teaches us in many passages the importance of knowing how to be good stewards in the use of money. Our handling of money reflects the spiritual level we are at. Matt. 6:24 says, "No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money."

Who are you serving?

## 2. Development

### 2.1 Distinguish between what is necessary and what is unnecessary

In family life there are necessary expenses such as clothing, food, school, rent, etc. However, many times we have become accustomed to wanting and having things that aren't necessary. The unnecessary expenses become a waste of money and a stress on the family's finances, and thus a stress on the relationship.

A simple example of unnecessary spending surrounds cell phones. People often want the latest newest expensive model instead of being content with the fully functional useful model they have. The same can happen with clothes when we insist on only buying famous expensive brands. Even in terms of fun expenses, like going out for a coffee, it can become superfluous when we only want to go to that Café of a certain expensive brand.

Materialism has greatly penetrated our society. Unfortunately Christian families are not exempt from this influence.

We must be aware that when a person allows materialism to take root in their life, it reflects a distancing from God. "One person pretends to be rich, yet has nothing" (Proverbs 13:7).

Paul tells us in Philippians 4:11, "I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances."

To know how to live with contentment is to live joyfully, to rejoice in God even though we may be struggling financially. Feel satisfied with the other blessings that God gives us, and be prepared to receive, if that is His will, new blessings in the financial area.

Hebrews 13:5 tell us, "Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, 'Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.'"

Something that is very important is that you should not compare yourself to other couples, because that will start you coveting what you cannot have.

### 2.2 Prepare a budget

It is essential that you draw up a budget together, making adjustments together. It is very important that you talk together and reach a consensus. Each person brings a set of beliefs and values from their family of origin, which may be very different from each other. Remember that now as a couple, the purpose is to be "one flesh" (Genesis 2:24).

Make agreements on what is essential and what is to be expected. Make plans to make your dreams come true. (Eccles. 4:9)

On the internet you can find many formats to develop your budget. You can review it as many times as necessary. Identify areas where you can make cuts, such as the consumption of soft drinks, reduced outings to

eat away from home, unnecessary purchases, compare prices of what you need to consume each month, look to reduce your consumption of electric power, etc.

A budget will help you avoid that classic question: Where did my money go? Instead, you will decide in advance where it will go.

In every budget there should be a savings line item, although at the beginning you may not be able to achieve it due to debts that you may have. However, it is always necessary to have savings for any emergencies (illness, accident, loss of work), as well as for planned long-term expenses and for the achievement of established goals (studies for children, special vacation, etc.). Proverbs 21:20 says, "Fools spend all they get." On the contrary, the wise man prepares for the future (Proverbs 6:6-8, Genesis 41:21-57).

Tithes and special offerings should be the first part of the budget. Remember that as we give, we will also receive (2 Corinthians 9:6). Just remember something, when we sow a seed, no one expects it to bear fruit the next day.

### **2.3 Be wise and stick to your budget**

The culture of indebtedness has spread to all countries. However, let's not forget that the Bible states that "As the rich rule over the poor, he who borrows is a servant of the lender" (Proverbs 22:7).

Sometimes we can see the need to apply for loans at low interest rates for a home or sometimes for a car. If the payments are within the budget, that is, if your level of income is enough to pay them, it may seem appropriate. Even so, you should realize that the cost that you will end up paying for the car that you financed for 4 or 5 years will be almost double the sales price. The same thing happens with the final cost of the house that you finance.

The suggestion in such cases is to first buy a small house that you can increase the number of rooms as your family grows and you have the financial ability to do it. Also think about the possibility of buying a used car instead of new.

In both cases, pay the largest amount possible at the time of purchase. Do not fall into the commercial trap of buying something without having money for the down payment, or borrowing more money than the house is worth. Consider these decisions well, since not doing so has complicated the lives of many couples.

Avoid buying with department store credit cards that charge very high interest rates. I know many cases where people ended up returning the merchandise, and they lost what they had already paid and in some cases, they were left with some debt.

Finally, do not forget that we have been blessed to bless others. Teach your spouse and children that investing in the Kingdom of God will bring blessing to the family.

### **3. Conclusions**

Avoid magical thoughts or get rich quick schemes. If you are already in financial debt, with the help of God you must draw up a plan to leave that state. Put your finances in the hands of God.

If required, ask for guidance from a Christian couple. Ask them to show you how they have been wise in managing their own finances.

Tip for closing

- Identify people with out-of-control debts and pray for them.
- Ask couples to commit to making changes in their family finances.
- Identify marriages with wisdom for sound management of finances and ask them to give counseling in this area.

## 1. Introduction

God says that he has good plans for us. Therefore, it is very important that all couples know how to jointly establish their goals. Many marriage counselors agree that establishing joint goals strengthens marriages. Otherwise, we would hardly know if that marriage is growing or not. In fact, premarital counselors recommend that this issue is addressed in counseling, to see if there is similarity in the couple's plans. So at this point, it is worth asking: do I know the goals of my spouse? Have we worked to establish joint goals? Does God play a central role in those goals?

## 2. Development

### 2.1 Goals in terms of spiritual growth (2 Peter 3:18)

It seems to me that a point of departure should be the practice of spiritual disciplines. Both should seek to grow more and more in their spiritual growth activities. This will also be a good example for the children.

Another area in which you can set goals together is to determine what courses or programs to take to prepare to serve better in the Kingdom of God. The local church and seminary offer us many options in this regard. Many online program options are available as well.

### 2.2 Goals regarding our ministries

If both spouses are Christians, it is very good that both establish ways in which they will be involved in the ministry (or ministries) to which God has called them, in accordance with the gifts that He has given them. "But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD." (Joshua 24:15).

Collaborating together in a ministry makes couples feel more united by serving God as a couple. "Therefore I do not run like someone running aimlessly; I do not fight like a boxer beating the air." (1 Cor. 9:26).

Also involve the children when possible.

### 2.3 Other goals

There are many goals that can be defined as part of the life of marriage.

- Goals in terms of doing studies that allow you to get a good job.
- Goal about when to buy a house and with what characteristics
- Goals in relation to your career goals.
- Goals for when it is time for retirement. At what age would like to retire? Where do you want to live? What do you want to do during retirement?
- Goals about the care of your health. (1 Corinthians 6:19)
- Goals about where and when to spend a vacation together.

Remember that in all these goals we must seek to give honor and glory to God. "So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do everything for the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31).

### 2.4 Small suggestions about setting your goals

Write them clearly. Make sure that they can be measured. For example, if a goal is to provide university studies for our children, we must look for what actions we must do now to be able to meet the necessary expenses. In our family, what we did was to establish a savings account for many years to be able to send our daughters to study for their careers. Here you must calculate the cost, and from that you must make the corresponding savings every year.

### **3. Conclusion**

If you have not yet set goals for yourself, this is a good time to start doing so. Once you do, you should look for the most effective ways to support each other in achieving your goals and dreams. You must also know how to prioritize what you intend to achieve in the short, medium or long term. It is important that you write your goals. This will allow you to review your progress and make the necessary changes to achieve the goals. Remember that the achievement of great goals is the result of a disciplined life that does small actions every day that will lead to the achievement of the goals. The goals can be adapted or added to.

Tip for closing

- Each couple should together write goals for their spiritual growth.
- Each couple should together write goals their jobs.
- Each couple should together write goals for the education of their children
- Each couple should together write goals to buy a car or a house, if that is something they want to do.

## 1. Introduction

Ironically, even though we live with so much technology, such as the Internet, social networks, digital messages, etc., serious communication problems continue to exist, particularly in the family and marriage. We haven't learned to communicate efficiently, and that leads to many problems that we could avoid. As a small exercise, think about how well you know your spouse; the same for your children.

- Do you know what your spouse's greatest need is at this time?
- What do they like most about themselves?
- Does he or she feel sufficiently supported by you?

Many experts agree that if we communicate well, we'll be able to avoid many of the problems that often arise in families.

## 2. Content

### 2.1 Difference between hearing and listening

When we talk with our spouse, we must learn to listen and not just hear them. When we hear, we only use our ears. We may be listening to music, but at the same time we hear the noise of the fan, although we don't pay attention to it. To hear is to perceive the sound. However, in communication with our spouse, it requires more than that, we need to listen. This implies being attentive to what we are told. It involves paying attention, showing interest, thinking about what we hear. This activates our brain and our emotions.

We're offended when we're talking with someone and they aren't paying attention to us. Imagine talking with your spouse and he or she is watching TV, checking something on the computer or checking cell phone messages. If we don't want that to happen to us, then we need to avoid doing the same thing.

### 2.2 Biblical principles applicable to communication

The Bible presents many principles applicable to good communication. Let's be wise and take hold of them. Let's analyze some of those principles:

✓ In all conversations, use kindness and the right tone. Even when one of the two speaks in a bad tone, the other spouse must have the wisdom not to escalate the violent tone of the conversation. If you don't succeed, it's best to postpone the matter for another time. Proverbs 15:1 says, "A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger."

✓ Be willing to listen to the other to reach an agreement. Sometimes while the other person is talking, we are already thinking about how we're going to refute or counterattack. Focus on listening, understanding and helping the other person feel understood. "A person's wisdom yields patience; it is to one's glory to overlook an offense" (Proverbs 19:11).

✓ According to experts, communication has different levels. It goes from the superficial to the really essential. Don't limit yourself to dialogues that are superficial; create together the atmosphere to establish deeper communication for your marriage. Talk about your hopes, your dreams, how you are trying to accomplish your goals, what you can do together for God, how you see the future, etc. Talk about what causes you pain, disappointments, etc. (Matt. 7:12 - Golden Rule)

✓ When talking with your spouse, remember that we must always do it respectfully and with love. Let's avoid saying things that will hurt them and your relationship. Put yourself in the place of the other person. Do you remember a time when they said things that hurt your heart? That wasn't a pleasant experience, was it. Let's take care not to hurt their heart (James 3).

✓ Make sure that your conversations have more good things that stand out and not so many negative ones. Make sure you have said at least ten good things before saying a negative. Don't forget to lavish loving words on your spouse every day. "Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them" (Colossians 3:19).

✓ Listen to understand, not to judge.

✓ Learn to communicate in the best way. Sometimes we don't know how to express what we really want to express and thus generate misunderstandings.

✓ Be assertive. Assertiveness consists of the ability to ask for what is wanted and needed.

### **3. Conclusions**

We all dream of having the best family, but sometimes we are not making the necessary efforts to make that a reality. I believe that an area of improvement will always be communication. We encourage you and we challenge you to commit yourself today to restoring and improving communication among yourselves.

Learn to really listen, express your emotions, your dreams, and your dreams in a framework of mutual trust.

Tip for closing

- Have each couple discuss between the two of them at least 3 things that they want their spouse to do to improve their communication.
- Ask each couple to make a commitment before God to bring about those improvements they have identified.

## 1. Introduction

In all human relationships, conflicts will arise sometime or another. Marriages are not exempt from having them. However, the difference lies in facing such conflicts so that the relationship comes out strengthened. If we deal with them correctly, our relationship will thrive. Also, we can show other marriages, even the unsaved ones, that marriages can be lived under God's design.

We are aware that there will be many everyday things that could cause conflicts if we don't know how to deal with them properly: tiredness, poorly managed stress, loss of work, illness, the birth of children, etc. Sometimes the models with which we were raised in our family of origin may be the ones that are causing the problems. For example, the father was raised in a home where intrafamily violence was a reality.

Other problems may arise from misconduct by at least one of the spouses or another member of the family.

In either case, God wants us to seek Him to correctly solve the problem.

## 2. Development

### 2.1 Identify the cause of the differences that give rise to the conflicts

Identify what the underlying problem really is. Before dealing with a conflict with your spouse, you need to analyze what the problem really is. Sometimes the problem may be in ourselves. Maybe it's due to the way we were raised. The old ways of thinking have become strongholds that the enemy has created in our mind, which distort God's plan for us.

When disagreements arise, we should avoid automatically blaming our spouse. Examine your heart, pray before God. If after that you feel that the cause of the problem or difference is your spouse, I suggest you now see the magnitude of the problem. Sometimes the problem is only a small difference that we can tolerate without causing a problem.

At this point I remind you that by divine design, men and women are different. Therefore, it is natural to see things differently. I encourage you to talk as calmly as possible, looking for the most appropriate time for your discussion, and express to your spouse what you don't like.

Enjoy all the things you have in common. Remember that your spouse should have many things that they like, since the two of you have chosen one another to form a family.

Paul writes, " Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification." (Romans 14:19).

### 2.2 Setting guidelines for facing conflicts

For major issues that cause real conflicts such as how to educate the children, how to use money, you should look for the best way to address them.

Family experts have given us a series of biblical principles for dealing with these issues that cause conflict in marriage.

The goal is to address the problem and find a solution together and emerge stronger. Ecclesiastes 7:8-9 says, "The end of a matter is better than its beginning, and patience is better than pride. Do not be quickly provoked in your spirit, for anger resides in the lap of fools."

After having expressed the problem, both parties must agree that they each have a responsibility for the successful solution. Specify what each is expected to do to end the situation that caused the conflict. The goal is to come up with a win-win solution to the situation, without someone winning and the other losing. Amos 3:3 tells us, "Do two walk together unless they have agreed to do so?"

Think of where the lack of conflict resolution will lead. God wants us to remain united, but if we do not understand this, we'll end up separating ourselves, although ironically, we'll sometimes be living together. If that happens, there will only be one winner, who is the enemy of our souls. He wants us to see ourselves as

adversaries, when the adversary of our family is him. The Scriptures declare that a house divided against itself will not prevail (Mark 3: 23-25).

### **2.3 What to do during and after the conflict**

Unfortunately, sometimes the conflict has reached a large scale because the matter was really serious, for example violence, infidelity, etc. God wants us to have life fully (John 10:10). You must go to Him to help you forgive. Don't let the enemy steal your peace and turn you into a bitter person.

### **3. Conclusion**

Let us learn to recognize when we have been the cause of the conflict. Analyze if you have acted in such a way that it is something for which you must ask God for forgiveness, as well as your spouse.

When we Christians succeed in resolving our conflicts and emerge strengthened, we are giving honor and glory to God with the testimony of our marriage.

Each one of us must honor God's Word and fulfill our agreement so that our marriage is better.

Resolving conflicts is a skill that you will acquire. It may be difficult for you at first, but once you have begun to develop this capacity, with God's help it will be easier for you to successfully face other problems that will arise in your marriage.

We recommend that if the couple considers it necessary to seek external help through pastoral counseling or from another Christian family, please support them.

There are many unconverted homes that need Christocentric models to show them the God who can do everything ... even heal and strengthen marriages. That is one way that God will allow you to share with others the love of Christ.

### **Tips for closing**

- Have each couple discuss which are the most common problems that cause conflicts in their marriage.
- Have each couple discuss the new things they need to do together to overcome the conflicts they are facing, and commit to carry through with those new steps.
- Pray asking God to give each couple new direction in successfully confronting and solving marriage conflicts.

## 1. Introduction

Working days are often exhausting, both at home and in the office. That is why at the end of the day it is typical to see the husband arrive home at the end of the day and plop down in front of the TV or computer and relax. The wife may do something similar, like the children, but usually each on their own. Over time, that becomes routine and you get to the point of having little time together as a family. This can be a risk factor for that marriage to end in divorce.

It is not right to put our hobbies before our spouse. Family time is important to nurture closeness and strengthen ties as a family. People often forget this and work exhaustingly until the time of retirement, thinking that then have time for their family. But oh surprise! Habits and ways of living have been formed. Kids have moved away. Relationships have been strained. Health may no longer be good, making even going out for a walk together difficult, much less travel to be with the children and their families. Don't wait ... couples and families must learn to spend time alone ... now!

## 2. Content

### 2.1 Plan times of rest. (Eccles. 3)

No matter how exhausting the day, it's important that the family set aside time to be together. Obviously, alone time for the couple is also included here.

When planning your time together, look for a mix between those distractions that allow them to enjoy watching a movie or something passive, and those that encourage them to talk about the important things for their marriage and family, catching up on what's going on in the daily life of each person, having fun together, etc.

Sometimes we get caught up in the trap of thinking that we should work more so that we can have more things to make us happy. Many times, doing this greatly reduces time as a couple and family and causes increased stress and family problems.

Find ways to eat together as a family (and not in front of the television). Do routine tasks together, like trips to grocery store. These can provide additional times together in the midst of a busy schedule.

Another idea is to try to synchronize the hours of going to bed and getting up; it will give us more time to be with our spouse. Many times one or the other goes to sleep late while watching TV or doing something else, and then gets up just in time to rush off to work.

Try to have at least 30 minutes to talk each day, plus at least three hours on a weekend and at least one good weekend a year. The experts will tell you to invest in your spouse, spending "as long as you can" with them.

This implies having regular times together, looking for a variety of options and thinking about new opportunities and adventures to share as a couple.

### 2.2 Select what is not against God. (Gal. 5:13a)

Some types of fun can be harmful to us and obviously unpleasant for God.

When we plan how we are going to spend our free time, we must realize that God has given us that time, and He wants us to invest it wisely.

That is why it's important that we identify the hobbies that aren't best for us. Here are some of them:

- Going to places of gambling. In many areas, there are places where you can bet money on games of chance. Participating in these games speaks ill of our stewardship of time and money. Avoid falling into these types of attractions that have hurt the finances of many families through addiction to the games.
- Going to movies and shows that don't edify us. These days, many movies, plays, etc. are full of things that aren't going to contribute to our spiritual growth, but to the contrary, place us fully in the path of temptation.

### **2.3 Don't let finances be an obstacle for spending time together. (Gen. 2:18)**

Many times we don't spend time together as the family because we say that we don't have enough money to do so. But in reality, there are many hobbies and a wide variety of options for all kinds of people no matter how good their finances are or aren't. (Eccl. 4:12)

- Start the day by sharing breakfast together.
- Do the ordinary together. For example, exercise together. It can be at home, because today there are many routines that can be planned on the Internet. Going together to the supermarket is another option. Clean together as a game.
- Stay at home to enjoy a good movie. Eat what you would traditionally eat at the movies. Create the right environment.
- Go out to a public park to walk. You can prepare lunches and eat them there together. While the children play, the couple can take advantage of the time to talk with each other. Another option is to take a bicycle tour.
- Prepare a meal together to enjoy at home; it can even be in the yard. If it's just the two of you, you could even put out candles. (Ephesians 5:25)
- Sometimes you can plan an out-of-home dining trip to a coffee shop or a budget restaurant.
- Involve yourself as volunteers in a compassionate ministry.
- Go out and do something with friends, or invite them to your house for games and snacks.
- When time and finances allow, plan to take a trip to another city. There are many options to make it economical; be creative. For example, you can stay at the house of friends or relatives.

Please, when leaving to share time together, avoid having at hand things that distract you from enjoying the company of your spouse and your family. Make simple rules such as "no cell phones" or "no video games" during our activity together.

You can alternate between her favorite things and his favorite things and the children's favorite things. For example, the man may like to watch football games. She can agree to accompany him and try to enjoy it to the fullest. On another occasion she'll be able to choose what to do, even if it's not his favorite thing.

And while you're doing those things together, do the romantic things with your spouse, like giving tender looks, flirting smiles, hugs, kisses and holding hands. We challenge you to look good and do the things you did when you were dating and trying to catch their attention before you were married. (1 Peter 3:7)

### **3. Conclusion**

Looking to spend time together as a couple is a priority if we want to have healthy families. Sometimes, by reducing the time in front of the television or computer/phone screen, we can have wonderful times together. Plan and carry out times of being together, and soon you'll see better results in your well-being and happiness as a couple and as a family. (Amos 3:3)

Select those fun things that don't go against what God has given us as guidelines of life. Remember that the relationship with your spouse is primarily spiritual and based on the Rock that is Christ. (Mat. 7:24-27)

There will always be options for times together.

What has been seen here is in addition to the time you invest together in worship, prayer, participating in ministry or studying together to serve better. It is clear that this is the basis of everything else.

### **Tip for closing**

Knowing that we want to share wonderful times with our spouse:

- What could we do to have more time together during the day?
- What are the places where you would like us to go out together?
- If we could take a trip, what would be a good option for both of us?

## 1. Introduction

What is encouragement and why is it so essential to maintaining healthy marriages and families?

Encouragement represents a positive influence, according to the dictionary, encouragement is to infuse force or energy into someone to do, solve or undertake something.

Note that there is no condition that says, "when someone deserves it" or "when someone asks for it." This implies that we should encourage each other even when things seem difficult or uncertain.

Other synonyms of "encourage" can be motivate, edify, inspire, vitalize, or cheer.

## 2. Content

In the bible we find an example of a life dedicated to encouraging others. His name was Joseph, whom the apostles called Barnabas because he was an encourager and he had a way of building others up. The New International Translation Bible translates Barnabas as "son of encouragement."

There are some principles we can learn from his ministry of encouragement to others.

### 2.1 An encourager is practical

Barnabas appears on the scene in Acts 4:36-37. Here the first church leaders were fulfilling the ministry of caring for orphans and widows, and what they needed at that time were financial resources. The story says that Barnabas sold land he owned, took the money and made it available to the apostles.

Encouraging others is a practical ministry. It is about being sensitive to the needs of others and acting at the necessary time and in the necessary way. Can you imagine if your name was "spouse or mother / father of encouragement"? Sometimes, all our spouse or children need is a kiss, a hug, quality time, or a "I love you." In what practical way can you encourage your spouse today?

### 2.2 An encourager takes risks

In Acts 9:26-27, Barnabas defends Saul (Paul) when no one else believed in his conversion, and people were afraid of him. Barnabas took the risk of accepting Paul when others rejected him. Love is able to see beyond the mistakes and past of a person, and see the work that God is doing in their life. Loving and taking care of someone entails risk and requires leaving our comfort zone.

Marriage and family offer numerous opportunities to forgive when we have been hurt. Being open and transparent, especially when expressing feelings and thoughts, requires leaving one's comfort zone. There is no guarantee of not getting hurt. However, in Christ we can overcome the risks with steps of Faith.

### 2.3 An encourager thinks of others

Acts 11:19-26 tells how the gospel began to spread through Antioch. Barnabas was so happy that he had to share it with his friend Paul. Barnabas did not focus on himself; he knew that we were created by God to be in relationship with others.

Marriage and families are made up of individuals where everyone has their own expectations, likes, dreams, and plans. We must proactively focus on our spouse and children and think of what would be a blessing to them; how can we encourage, support, and bring them closer to God. How can you encourage your spouse today to fulfill their dreams and goals?

### 2.4 An encourager is available

In Acts 13:1-3, we see God's first call to a missionary journey. Paul and Barnabas were available to obey immediately and took the trip. This implies a constant preparation, anticipation and desire to set aside their own plans and desires for the benefit of others. God sees our availability more than our ability.

Being available to God, to our children and to our spouse can open up opportunities for more solid and deeper relationships. Time is the most valuable resource we can dedicate to them. Being available is a way of saying "I

am here for you, ready for you to love and serve." Your presence and availability are ways to love your family. How can you show your spouse that you are available to him/her?

### **2.5 An encourager is patient**

During the first missionary journey, Barnabas had taken his cousin Mark, who left in the middle of the trip. On another trip, when Paul suggested visiting again the churches they had planted, Barnabas suggested taking Mark with him. However, Paul didn't want to take him because he had defected during a previous trip, so they decided to go their separate ways. Barnabas left with Mark and Paul with Silas. (Acts 15:36-40).

Sometimes loving someone means being on their side despite their shortcomings and mistakes. 1 Corinthians 13 tells us that love is patient. Surely, we have all heard beautiful testimonies of people who were converted by the prayer life of their mother or spouse. Who else is there to believe, encourage and advocate for our spouse in prayer if it isn't us? Let's encourage our spouse with patience and unconditional love.

### **3. Conclusion**

Potentially, you are the person with the most influence over the life of your spouse and children, therefore, you have the greatest opportunity (and responsibility) to support them, believe in them, pray for them and encourage them, as well as walk beside them for the ups and downs of life. God has granted you the gift of encouragement. Have you put it into practice?

#### **Tips for closure**

- As couples, discuss on a scale of 0 to 100 how encouraged you feel by your spouse?
- As couples, discuss what you would like your spouse to do to make you feel more encouraged?
- As couples, write your commitments about encouragement and pray for them together.

**For study:** Ephesians 5:21-33

**To memorize:** "Submit yourselves to one another in the fear of God" (Ephesians 5:21).

**Purpose:** "That parents know their role in God's plan for the salvation of humanity. May they grow by reflecting the character and justice of our Father God. "

## 1. Introduction

This lesson presents Christ and the church as a model of relationships between husband and wife, a FAMILY ORDER. The specific instructions that the apostle Paul gives to husbands and wives are a glimpse of the relationship between Christ and his Church: a heavenly model for every earthly marriage!

How should I treat my wife? Look to Christ, the Divine spouse in his relationship with the church: He loves her, sacrifices himself for her, is attentive to her interests, takes care of her, is sensitive to her needs and what makes her suffer.

At the same time, the wife must ask herself: How should I treat my husband? Look at the chosen bride, the church! In her relationship with Christ; she respects him, acknowledges that he is called to be the "head" of the family, responds positively to his leadership, listens to him, trusts him, stays united in purpose and will with him; is a real help.

No husband or wife can do this by relying only on their willpower or resolution; but since you are God's work (like your marriage) the Lord will help you achieve it.

## 2. Development

### 2.1 Christ, the essence of marriage. (Ephesians 5:21)

#### A) Submission:

The word "submit" means: take your place freely and voluntarily. Often, its use relates to the person of little character or performance before someone with more power. But we have the best example of submission: how Jesus, at whose name "every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth," (Phil 2:10) submitted his will to the Father. We honor Christ by following his example. When we submit to God, we are willing to obey his commands related to submitting ourselves to others, that is, subordinating our rights to theirs.

In a married relationship, both spouses have the call to submit. For the wife, this means subjecting herself voluntarily to the leadership of her husband in Christ. For the husband, it means setting aside his own interests in order to care for his wife ... putting her before himself.

Submission is rarely a problem in homes where husbands maintain a strong relationship with Christ and in which each is interested in the happiness of the other. The figure is that of two pieces of a puzzle that fit together perfectly without being forced, made for each other. This type of mutual submission preserves order and harmony in the family, while increasing love and respect among those who make it up.

### 2.2 Christ: example of the husband. (Eph. 5:25-29)

**A) Christ is the head:** What is being the head? It is being the leader that guides the rest. We can also see it as the cornerstone that guides the construction of a building.

The husband is the head of the woman, but Christ is the head of the husband, just as the Father is the head of the Son. The husband is a servant of Christ who has the responsibility to govern the family for God.

**B) Christ loves his wife:** Here marriage is not a practical necessity nor a cure for sexual desire; rather, a figure in the relationship between Christ and his church. How did Christ love his Church?

1. He gives: His is a sacrificial love, which seeks to please his wife, and, at the same time, he is pleased to play his part.
2. He provides happiness: this is a priority of the head, that those they lead are happy.
3. He cares: As one would care and provide for themselves.

No wife needs to be afraid to submit to a man who treats her like that. (Song of Solomon 2:2).

### **2.3 The church: example of the wife. (Eph. 5:22-33)**

The duty of the wife is the submission in the Lord to her husband, which includes honoring him, obeying, and loving him. The wife must see in the husband an authority that is not self-imposed, nor imposed by society; but, divinely authorized to govern.

The authority to which we refer is given, that is, in the case of the woman, she recognizes the husband as head and decides to join his leadership of her own free will and without pressure. The leader that seeks the good of those they lead is esteemed, obeyed and respected.

The church obeys Christ out of love, knows his dedication and care, knows the purpose of his leadership - to be one in God. (Song of Solomon 2:3-4)

### **2.4 The mystery of unity. (Eph. 5:30-32)**

Jesus clarifies to those who doubted the unity of marriage (Matt. 19:3) "can a man divorce his wife?" And He answered them by reminding them of a Divine principle (Matthew 19:4-5): "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh." We are not to divorce (leave, let go) our partner in marriage. The reason is because the purpose of God in forming the married couple was and is unity.

To be one means: to unite in such a way that the difference is not noticed. That is why they are the same flesh, of the same body, united to the same head.

"Being" leads to "doing". Being head of the family leads to thinking and feeling and acting like one: being a suitable help, helping the mind and heart of the woman in all she does.

### **3. Conclusion**

God uses the intimate relationship of husband and wife to illustrate the relationship of Christ and the Church. The relationship between children and parents represents our relationship to Him as a heavenly Father. God planned the family to teach us in a tangible way about Himself. Children need to experience flesh and blood parents to understand the spiritual truth of God.

**For study:** Hebrews 12:5-11.

**To memorize:** " because the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and he chastens everyone he accepts as his son" (Hebrews 12:6).

**Purpose of the lesson:** That parents understand that the purpose of training and discipline is to produce good and righteous character in their children as a testimony of the glory of God.

## 1. Introduction

The scriptures bear witness that God created the universe and humanity to manifest his glory and character, and the family must contribute to developing his people because God is glorified when his character is reproduced in his children.

When we look at the Scriptures, we find precisely that: that the discipline of God and our earthly fathers is planned to produce righteousness.

## 2. Development

### 2.1 Discipline.

There is a difference between discipline and punishment. Punishment focuses on the past; it's the way you hurt your child for doing something they shouldn't have; the reason may be revenge. In Romans 12:19, we are taught to not take revenge.

Discipline focuses on the future (Hebrews 12:11). We should not punish our children for doing something wrong; We must discipline them so they don't do it again. Supervise future actions; it is a sign of love, not a license to return evil for evil. Discipline is related to behavior, while judgment is related to character. Let's look at the following example:

You discover your child telling a lie and confront him about it: "What you just said is not true." Are you judging him? No, you are just making an observation about his bad behavior and have confronted him to help him change. But if you said, "you are a liar," you are judging and attacking his character.

Discipline does not kill character. When you attack the character of your child ,you can expect him to defend himself. There is nothing you can do about it. Maybe he wants to become a better person, but he cannot change his character from one moment to the next, especially when you're attacking him. But when you confront his behavior, he can do something to remedy it immediately. He can recognize it and ask for forgiveness, and he can decide to change, and he will not feel hurt in the process.

### 2.2 Teacher of teachers. (Hebrews 12: 9-10)

The word "discipline" in Greek is "paideuó" which means: "related to education or training." Parents who discipline are "paideutes": coaches or educators.

The discipline of the Lord is not to humiliate the child, nor to belittle, demerit, or knock him down, but to correct his actions. The child still holds the same value to the Father, but he must discipline if necessary because of love.

"In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways" (Heb. 1:1). "Spoke" means: "having judged" the attitude of the parents. Heb. 12:10 tells us, "They disciplined us for a little while as they thought best." No father knows what he must do if he does not enter discipline first. The teacher lives his discipline and then educates his disciple, is an example of what he preaches, teaches, judges.

The aim of the lesson is to educate so we can participate in what is beneficial to us: The Holiness of the Father. In 2 Tim. 3: 15-16, the apostle Paul reinforces the importance of the divine scriptures to obtain wisdom. The correct way to conduct ourselves in front of the father shows respect. His word teaches us, reproves, corrects and instructs; In a word, it educates us to honor the Father.

### **3. Conclusion.**

Psalm 127:4 illustrates the work of the brave man. He had to prepare his arrows. When he had the bow and arrows in his hands, he looked ready, prepared to shoot. What was not seen was the laborious and careful work of heating and straightening the arrows that were necessary to shoot them straight.

Our goal as parents is to solve family conflicts and get a little peace. We participate in God's great plan; forming lives for eternity.

This perspective transforms the task of educating children. We are educating future ministers who will bear witness to the glory of God in their lives. The discipline will be able to present children who are honest, responsible, respectful, punctual, compassionate, friendly, etc.

**For study:** Genesis 1:26-31.

**To memorize:** “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 1:28).

**Purpose of the lesson:** Motivate parents to help their children do their best.

## 1. Introduction

God instructed the first couple to produce children and to rule over the world. In other words; humanity was placed on earth to rule, not to be a victim of circumstances.

It is important that we married couples be instructed regarding the biblical design of our children's formation. In this lesson we will discuss some biblical principles that we should consider and implement in our children's education in marriages.

## 2. Development

### 2.1 Made in God’s image. (Genesis 1:26)

The biblical concept of the Image of God in mankind indicates that mankind somehow reflects some of the attributes and characteristics of their creator. But this image cannot be physical similarity, because God is Spirit; but the similarity is in the intellect, the emotions, the will and morality. All these qualities are determined by knowing and obeying the will of God.

The Image of God in mankind distinguishes humanity from the rest of creation and gives it a dignity and value not shared by the rest of the created. The value and sanctity of human life are related to the image of God in mankind. The creation of humanity is presented as the ultimate creation of the creator. The dignity and meaning of human life derive from the fact that God created mankind in his image. (Gen. 1:27)

### 2.2 Male and female. (Gen. 1:27)

God not only blesses male or female, but both as one. Both are qualified to fulfill the Creator's purpose on earth:

- a) Be fruitful and multiply: be fertile and increase in number (inheritance).
- b) Fill the earth: Providing for children. (support).
- c) Subjugate: Conquer, dominate, subdue, hold (valor/courage).
- d) Rule: educate, take command, govern (discipline).

### 2.3 Seed and fruit to eat. (Gen. 1:29)

Seed is what we sow, and the fruit are what we expect to delight us. Our children are our seeds that we plant in the world, and their lives is what pleases us. If our commandment is to sow the earth with children to glorify God, we must have valor and courage to overcome the difficulties that arise. We must use discipline for ourselves and our children.

We have the ability to overcome the opposition, because in retaking the original purpose of God, we continue in the first blessing of Adam and Eve. This blessing is God's covering and is the presence of his kingdom on earth. God the creator spoke and made all that exists. Who can oppose him? Parents must only decide to do his will.

### 2.4 More than conquerors. (Deut. 28:12-13)

God has provided a treasure for parents ... God. In Him is found everything we need to fight our battles.

If we can infect our children with these words: "in God is your blessing," the Word says that He will put you as head on top of everything created.

## 3. CONCLUSION

There is opposition to God's plans for our children, the devil. The devil originates evil, abuses and injustice in the world; but our children don't have to be caught in hell, they don't have to live like defeated failures. They and we have been designed to reign and overcome adversity, all in the name of Jesus Christ.

**For study:** Psalm 127

**To memorize:** "Children are a heritage from the LORD, offspring a reward from him" (Psalm 127:3).

**Purpose of the lesson:** That parents enjoy their parenthood, as God enjoys them.

### 1. Introduction:

It is interesting to note that the commandments and purposes of God also meet human needs.

This confirms that God is not selfish in demonstrating his glory and demanding our worship and service. God created the human personality so that there would be no conflict between the satisfaction of man and the glory of God.

By creating the family to glorify him and to govern and fill the earth, God also wanted him to produce joy. Throughout Scripture children are presented as gifts from God.

### 2. Development

#### 2.1 If Jehovah does not build the house... (Psalms 127:1)

Families build houses and there are sentinels guarding the city, but these two activities are futile unless God is with them. A family without God will never experience the spiritual bond that He creates in relationships. A city without God will be devastated by the evil and corruption that is inside.

Do not make the mistake of leaving God out of your life, if you do, you will have lived in vain. Make God your highest priority and allow Him to build your life.

#### 2.2 Balance (Psalm 127:2)

God is not against human efforts. Hard work honors God (Prov. 31:10-29). But working tirelessly or forgetting the family can be a disguise for the inability to trust that God will meet our needs.

We all need adequate rest and moments to refresh ourselves spiritually. On the other hand, this verse is not an excuse to be lazy. Be careful to keep the balance: work hard while trusting in God and also rest trusting Him.

#### 2.3 Inheritance from Jehovah. (Psalm 127:3-5)

Very often children are seen as responsibilities and hindrances, and not as assets. But the Bible calls children: "an inheritance from Jehovah," a reward.

We can also learn valuable lessons from their inquisitive minds and their healthy naivete. Those who view children as simple distractions or hindrances should see them as an opportunity to shape the future. We must not dare treat them as a nuisance when God values them so much (Mark 10:13-16).

A. **Inheritance:** family order. God's covenant with Adam and Eve contained two independent provisions: descendants and dominion.

God knew that single people could not dominate the earth, this required descendants. For believers, having children is a response to a commandment: "Be fruitful and multiply; Fill the earth and subdue it" (Gen. 1:28).

In this psalm, children are called "Jehovah's inheritance." This means that children belong to God; they are "ours" only on a secondary plane. God gives offspring to couples as a person entrusts a fortune to their heirs.

Jesus wants us to not despise any of these "little ones," and speaks of his faith in God as an example for adults (Matt. 18:1-5, 18:10).

B. **Thing of esteem:** salary, compensation, maintenance, remuneration.

Do you know why God blessed Adam and Eve before giving them the command to be fruitful and multiply? Because his blessing would provide them with what was necessary for the support of their family.

C. **Like arrows:** The head of the family had to take care of his house. For that, he depended on his weapons and abilities; the more arrows he had in his quiver, the more opportunities he had to win. Parents, as defenders of the home, must discipline their children in the fear of God; if they fear God, they will honor their parents. They will be a help for them in their old age.

### 3. Conclusion

We are also told that we will prosper if we love God, and that we will see the children of our children (Psalm 128:5-6). Other passages of the Old Testament compare the joy of God in us as his children, and our joy in our children.

How sad it is that many parents cannot enjoy their children! Instead of creating happiness, children become a center of conflicts and sources of setbacks and frustration. It doesn't have to be like that! We can change our attitude towards our children. It's time!

**For study:** Genesis 1:29

**To memorize:** “And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:19).

**Purpose of the lesson:** That parents know and are interested in meeting the other needs of their children: mental, emotional and spiritual.

### **1. Introduction**

When we talk about providing for children, we often think only about physical needs such as food, clothing and home. In a sense, this is the easiest thing.

In addition, it's our responsibility as parents to provide good education for their mental development; give love and unconditional acceptance for their emotional development; and teach them of the living God for their spiritual development.

That is why in this lesson we will analyze a series of principles that each marriage must consider to provide the correct way for their children. After all, from there, future marriages will be forged.

### **2. Development**

#### **2.1 God as a provider. (Gen. 1:29)**

This verse makes it clear that after having created Adam and Eve, God give them dominion over nature. He provided for his children according to their needs: plants and trees that would provide food for them. God provided Adam with companionship (Gen. 2:18) and determined the union for the purpose of both being companions and providers of the inheritance he would place in their hands, children (Gen. 2:24).

When man rebelled against his creator and Father, sin ravaged the family. God so loved the man that he provided the means of his salvation (John 3:16).

What better way to remind parents of their responsibility to children than by showing God as their provider?

#### **2.2 Provide love, God's command. (1 Tim. 1:5)**

The Bible admonishes older women to encourage young women to love their husbands and children (Titus 2: 4). Perhaps loving children results from a vague concept: What does it mean to love children? Fortunately, Agape love is clearly defined in the scriptures. Love is the highest level of character, it is the fruit of the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:22) It is by love that the true disciple of Christ is identified (John 13:25).

Agape love does not depend on the person to whom love is given; but on the person who is loving. You like your child for what they are; but one loves you because of what he is. God loves us, not because we are easy to love; but because He is love. Unconditional love has no basis in one's achievements. God will not love us more if we achieve more. If you do not love your child, you will have revealed more about yourself than about your child. You have not achieved the necessary maturity to love your child unconditionally (Luke 6:32).

The grace of God helps you to love your child in a way that the parent who doesn't have Christ in their heart cannot love. God does not command you to like your child, because you cannot force your emotions to respond; but he instructs you to love your child. You can always decide to act with love and trust that over time you will also feel love.

Write on a paper: Why should God love me?

#### **2.3 Provide trust. (2 Cor. 7:16)**

Did Paul write to the Corinthian church telling them he had confidence in them? Trust in a church full of problems and disorder? No!

Paul's confidence was in the Lord, and he knew that the work that God initiated in those believers in Corinth would be perfected. Under the inspiration of God, he knew that expressing his trust in them was fundamental to being able to build them.

Many parents are blinded by the lack of confidence in their children, because they totally distrust their children. How can I get to trust my child? They are not trustworthy! The truth of the matter is that there is no other alternative, we have to trust them. We cannot walk after them for the rest of their lives. If we're going to help our children grow, develop and go free, we have to communicate our confidence.

Why don't you communicate your distrust and give your child a higher standard to strive for it? You should notice the potential, not the problem.

When you effectively communicate love, he will learn to value these qualities so much that he will never intentionally do anything to lose them. "But my son is not trustworthy," you might say, but are you? Trust is a very high standard to fulfill.

#### **2.4 Provide respect. (John 15:17)**

The other side of the coin of trust is respect. They too are created in the image of God. It's necessary to talk to them with the same respect as anyone else. During a conflict, the lack of ability to communicate with our children can be revealed. The need to win can make a difference in respect. Why is it so important for parents to win and always be right? The ambitious person is driven to win, to be right or to be in the first place; He is an insecure person and is driven to succeed.

Safety comes from relationships, not from achievements. A confident person is more comfortable with herself and others; it is easier to communicate with them. Would you rather be a person who loves or who wins?

For God, relationships are more important than success. The purpose of the Word of God is to govern our relationships with Him and with others. The achievements in our lives should serve to improve our relationships with God, with our spouse, our children and others.

### **3. Conclusion**

The only time we should win a conflict is in moral matters. We must never violate the fruit of the Holy Spirit by being stubborn. If what you do cannot be done in love and with self-control, it may be better not to do it at all. Our authority does not increase with the volume of our voice. When you scream, you are in the flesh and you are losing control of the only person you can control: yourself.

Remember: you cannot always control your child, but you can always love him or her. Your relationship with them is as important as anything you could achieve in life.