

Spirit Filled Family

by Zac Poonen

Zac Poonen emphasizes the transformative power of the New Covenant in building spirit-filled families that reflect Christ's glory through mutual respect and understanding.

Duration: 1:24:45

Scripture: Proverbs 22:15, Ephesians 5:19-23, Ephesians 6:4, Ephesians 6:9

Topics: "Family"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker uses the analogy of a garden to illustrate the importance of putting effort into a marriage. He emphasizes the need for constant communication and teaching of Christian principles to children in everyday life. The speaker also highlights the significance of discipline in shaping a child's behavior. The ultimate goal is to create a home that reflects the atmosphere of heaven, where the bride (the wife) invites her beloved (Jesus Christ) into the garden (the marriage) to enjoy its pleasant fruits.

Transcript

We have been considering the distinctive features of the New Covenant and we have been looking at a number of aspects of this in the last five sessions, features that were not possible for man under the Old Covenant. And this evening, I want to look with you at the possibility under the New Covenant of our being able to build a family that reflects the glory of Christ. We don't read much about husband-wife relationships in the Old Testament.

There is no command for husbands or wives in the Old Testament law. There were very detailed instructions given to the Israelites concerning various things, but almost nothing concerning husband-wife relationships or the importance of the family. And as far as I can understand, there was very little fellowship between husbands and wives in the Old Testament.

I don't know how much Abraham and Sarah prayed together. I don't know how much they shared with each other about spiritual things or any of the other husbands, wives in the Old Testament. We do see some examples and warnings in the Old Testament concerning bringing up children, but when it comes to the New Testament, there are very specific instructions which were never found under the Old Covenant.

And that's partly because we can say that under the law, a woman never had much of a place, but once Jesus came, he gave women a very important place in the ministry. All had co-workers that were women, we read in Romans 16. And the wife became a very important part of the body of Christ that helped to

build the body.

In the New Covenant, the Spirit would be poured out on men and women, and men and women would prophesy, we read in Acts chapter 2. It was a completely new age. And I know in India, with the culture of my country, very similar to the culture that is found among the Jews in the time of Jesus, the woman is not given any important place at all. She is like a slave, a servant, one who is supposed to cook the meals, produce children, take care of the house, and mind her own business in the back of the house when the men are talking.

And in most cases, would not even sit at table with the men if guests were present. And it's so different what I see in the New Testament. In the New Testament, it speaks about husband and wife as joint heirs of the of life.

In 1 Peter chapter 3, maybe we could start with this verse. 1 Peter 3.7, it says, Likewise ye husbands, dwell with your wives according to knowledge or in an understanding way. Now in the Old Testament, there was no command to husbands to try and understand their wives.

The husband just gave the orders and the wife just followed. And if the husband decided something, he didn't consult his wife. When Abraham left Ur of the Chaldees, I don't think he discussed it with his wife at all.

He just said, Pack up, let's pack up, we're going. When he went to offer Isaac on Mount Moriah, I doubt whether he mentioned a word to his wife about what was going to happen. But here it says, dwell with your wives according to understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, as being heirs together of the grace of life.

Heirs together means, we've got to sit together on the throne, husband and wife. If you don't let your wife sit with you, you can't sit there either. So if you want to be a king, you've got to make your wife a queen, otherwise you can't be the king.

You can't be a king and a slave. You can't have her as a slave and be a king. You make her a slave, you'll be a slave too.

Heirs together, joint heirs of the grace of life. And he says, if you don't do that, your prayers will be hindered. One reason why we need to sit together with our wives on the throne of life that Jesus has provided for us, we are kings and priests, is because that's the only way God will hear our prayers.

In the Old Testament, a woman could never be a king or a queen, could certainly not be a priest. But in the book of Revelation, we read men and women singing together that he has made us kings and priests. He has made us reign on the earth.

It's not only men who are going to be kings and priests, women too. The priesthood of all believers, men and women, there's no such thing in the Old Covenant. Men and women, joint heirs, reigning together.

Like I said, in many, many, many areas, believers are living in, according to Old Covenant principles. You can't blame the Charismatics who preach a health and wealth gospel because they got it from the Old Testament, if you got a lot of other principles from the Old Testament also. If you get your principles from the Old Testament, you've got to give them the right to get their principles from the Old Testament too.

And I find very often, one group of people who have selected certain principles from the Old Testament, criticizing another group of Christians who have selected certain other group of principles from the Old Testament, and they don't, each of them don't see the inconsistency of their position. So there are many things like this, where if you go back to the Old Covenant, for your understanding, you got to be Old Covenant all the way. But if you come to the New Covenant, you find many things have changed.

God wants a family that reflects the glory of Christ. A family unit is a very important part of the body of Jesus Christ. A church is not as strong as the men in that church, a church is as strong as the families in that church.

If a church has only got strong men, well, it's a sort of a men's club. If a church has got strong families, that's a church, the body of Christ. Because the church is one large family, made up of many individual families together, living according to the principles of God's kingdom.

If you turn to Ephesians in chapter 5, there's a whole passage here concerning the family, beginning in verse 22, Ephesians 5, 22, all the way to chapter 6 and verse 9. In those days, a family consisted of husband and wife, children and slaves. Lots of Christian homes had servants. Lots of, of course, they had slaves who were bought.

Lots of Christian homes in India have servants, not slaves, servants who are paid a wage, but to work in the home. And some of these teachings are very relevant to the way you must treat a servant in your home, as a master. This whole section, Ephesians 5, 22 to chapter 6 and verse 9. And what I want to point out here is, before and after this section of scripture, we have two very important passages, which are often preached about, often quoted.

I think every church would have something to speak about these important passages, every denomination. But in spite of that, most denominations would never speak about this passage in between, about the home. The verse I'm referring to before this passage is Ephesians 5, 18, where it says, be filled with the Spirit.

Almost every Christian denomination would have something to say about being filled with the Holy Spirit. It means be continuously, be being filled with the Spirit. That's the meaning of that verse, indicating that you're not just filled or baptized with the Holy Spirit once.

You must live in a continuous fullness. A mistake that charismatic and anti-charismatic Christians make. Be being filled, be continuously, constantly filled with the Spirit.

And if you are constantly filled with the Spirit, you live. You know, the Holy Spirit has come to bring to us the atmosphere of heaven. Peter says that, he uses that expression.

In 1 Peter 1, he speaks about the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. 1 Peter 1, 12. The Holy Spirit sent down from heaven to bring into our hearts a foretaste of what heaven is like.

That's how I understand the ministry of the Holy Spirit. And it refers to that in Hebrews chapter 6 as well. It says we are made, Hebrews 6 verse 4 and 5, the last part, we were made partakers of the Holy Spirit and have tasted the powers of the world to come.

So when I'm made a partaker of the Holy Spirit, thereby I get a taste of the powers of that eternal age. I don't get it in fullness, but I get a taste of it. That's why I believe that God sometimes heals sick bodies.

Because one day we're going to have a resurrection body. That's the fullness of what we're going to get. But we can get a taste of that resurrection body that conquers sickness and death by supernatural healing in our body now.

Occasionally. He doesn't do it always. We get a little taste.

We get a little taste of the joy of heaven. Of the peace of heaven. Of the righteousness of heaven.

Of the goodness of heaven through the Holy Spirit. That's the purpose of it. And our homes should be a reflection of heaven.

That's what we should strive for. That's the purpose. If you're filled with the Holy Spirit, we read in Ephesians 5.19 onwards, this is how it's going to be, a spirit-filled life.

There will be songs and melody in your heart. There'll be joy, because that's how heaven is. You'll always be giving thanks, verse 20, for all things.

There won't be any complaining and murmuring, because there is no complaining and murmuring in heaven. There will be a spirit of submission, verse 21. Now it's very important for husbands to recognize that before it says in verse 22, favorite verse for many husbands, wives, submit yourselves to your husbands.

Now I always say, the Bible says, don't be a busybody in other people's matters. That command is not for husbands. So don't be a busybody in what your wife is supposed to do.

If a wholehearted husband will read that and just move on to the next verse. He says, that doesn't concern me. I've just got to ignore it.

But a lot of husbands meditate on that verse, and preach on it. Now, because they misread it. They misread it as though it says, husbands, make your wives submit to you.

That's not what it says. If it said that, then you should do it. It says, wives.

Are you a wife? No? Forget it. Go to the next verse then. Wives, submit yourselves to your husbands.

But before it says that, you know what it says? A verse not so popular with husbands, verse 21. Submit yourselves one to another in the fear of God. If you have understood that, you can go to the next verse.

Wives, submit yourself to the husbands. The problem with a lot of people is, the husbands have jumped into verse 22 without understanding verse 21. In the Christian church, there is a mutual submission of one to another.

Even parents to children. Very important to understand. That's a spirit-filled life.

This is how my home must be. Verse 19. Psalms, hymns, spiritual songs, singing, making melody in our hearts to the Lord, and in the home, giving thanks always for all things, no murmuring, no complaining, and submitting to one another.

Husband submitting to the wife, wife submitting to the husband, father submitting to the children, children submitting to the fathers. That's how I understand one to another, before it speaks about children obeying the parents. So, what does this verse mean? Very important to understand, if we want to understand

everything else in its context.

In the fear of God, you see, God has drawn a circle around everyone. And a lot of problems arise because people don't understand the limits of their circle. Sin comes when a man goes outside his circle.

Let me go back to Eden. God drew a huge circle around Adam and Eve. He said, you can eat of all the thousands of trees in the garden.

There's only one tree outside that circle. Don't go outside that circle. And what did they do? They tried to increase that size of that circle to bring that tree also inside, ate it and sinned.

So, we could say that Adam's sin was, and Eve's sin was, they made their circle bigger than what God made it. They included what God had excluded. Now, God has drawn a circle around children.

He's drawn a circle around fathers, mothers, husbands, wives. And I have to be careful that I respect the circle that God has drawn around my wife, that I don't go treading into that and thinking that that's also in my circle. Does she have no circle at all? What about children? Don't they have a circle around them? If there were no circle around them, then you could treat them like a slave, like you could treat this table, hammer it, beat it, do what you like.

But there is a circle. It says, don't provoke them to rot. Don't irritate them to the point of anger.

That's a circle. Don't do it. Don't tread into that.

It doesn't say, do what you like, they are your children. No, you can't do it. Respect your wife.

I see that everything in the Old Testament was only a little bit of what came in its fullness in the New Testament. It says, it was only a shadow. The Old Testament, the sacrifice of the Lamb was a shadow of the sacrifice of Christ.

The one day and seven Sabbath was a shadow of the seven day Sabbath we have today, where we can be at rest in God seven days a week and not just one day a week, where we can have walk with God and fellowship with Him, not just one day a week, but seven days a week. The giving 10% in the Old Testament was a shadow of where we give everything to God and say, Lord, all that I have is yours. Tell me how much of this I can use for myself, which is very different from the Old Testament, where you say, Lord, 10% yours, 90% is mine.

Please don't interfere in what's mine. But the New Testament is more glorious. And in the Old Testament, it said in Leviticus 19, that when you see a gray-haired man, you must rise up and honor him.

Respect is something that's disappearing from the world today. It's one of the marks of the world hurtling towards judgment and disaster. Young people don't have any more respect for older people in society.

That's even taught under the law, that you must rise up before the gray-haired man and respect him. Now, that was Old Testament. In the New Testament, it's even better.

It says in 1 Peter 2, verse 17, that we must honor all men. Isn't that wonderful? Not just the old man. We honor all people.

We honor the unbeliever. We honor our wives. Not just the wife is to honor the husband.

What does it say in 1 Peter 2, verse 17? Honor all human beings. I must speak to my children respectfully, not treat them like garbage and trash and speak to them like that. Honor them.

They've got a little circle. They've got a dignity about them. And I must not bulldoze my way into that.

Say things like, you're good for nothing. Nothing will ever come of you. You're always making mistakes.

Haven't I told you a thousand times not to do it? Maybe you told them two or three times. But that's how we speak. You see, that's all treading into their circle.

And you keep treading into their circle and you're doing the same thing which Adam did. Trying to expand the circle, going into things God had told him not to go into. And we reap the consequences.

We lose fellowship with God. Just like Adam lost fellowship with God. You don't treat your wife with respect.

You don't speak to her with respect. You think, well, she's got to submit to me. You lose fellowship with God.

Your prayers are hindered, it says. You don't allow her to sit on the throne with you. You think you're the boss and she's just got to obey you.

What's happening? You pray God doesn't listen. Well, he told you in the scriptures he wouldn't listen. Your prayers are hindered.

When fellowship with each other is lost, vertical fellowship with God is also lost immediately. See, this is the tragedy. So, submitting to one another, it says about masters treating their servants without threatening them and behaving to them as you want your heavenly master to behave towards you, that draws a circle around you.

Even though you're a master, you can't treat that servant as you like. There are some restrictions. So, that's the meaning of submit to one another in the fear of God.

God has not allowed you to do whatever you like with your wife, whatever you like with your children, whatever you like with your slaves. No, no, no. There are some restraints on you.

There's a circle around you. Submit to one another. When you recognize that you're going outside your circle into her circle or your children's circle, hang on, hold on and pull back.

Don't move in there. If we would remember this, how different our homes would be. So, if you want to build your home, don't start with Ephesians 5.22, start with Ephesians 5.21. When we are filled with the Holy Spirit, we learn to submit to one another.

It's the same in the church. As an elder in a church, I have to submit to my younger brothers. They've got a circle around them.

I must honor them, honor all men. I must treat them with dignity. I've had occasions where I've had to correct a brother who was wrong.

And then, as I've gone away after correcting him, the Lord has said to me, what you did was right, but you could have done it more gently. That was harsh, the way you spoke to him. And I've gone back to that

brother and said, brother, I'm sorry, forgive me.

I shouldn't have spoken to you like that. What I said was right, but the way I said it was a bit too hard. I have apologized to people who are younger than my youngest son.

I've never had a problem with that because I feared God. It says in the fear of God. That means I realized that unconsciously, perhaps, I went outside my circle.

I got into his circle. What do I mean by that? I treated him without respect. My circle was correct him, but it was correct him with respect.

But I got into his circle and corrected him without respect. And the fear of God made me realize I got into a circle. You know, it's something like taking money out of somebody else's wallet, if I were to use an illustration.

I can take money out of my own wallet as much as I like, but when I see his wallet, it may be my son's wallet. I can't take it from there. I can't say, oh, that's my son.

I can take it. I can do what I like. Well, that brother is under me.

I can take money from his wallet. No, I can't. We recognize that when it comes to money, but we don't recognize that in many other areas and that's our problem.

We can make life difficult for our marriage partners by imposing our personality on them. God's given us all unique personalities and he doesn't want one to be like the other. He doesn't want you to be like me or me to be like you.

But one of the mistakes that some husbands make is to try and make their wives like them, see things from my point of view. That's actually quite stupid when you think of it. I believe in a truly God-ordained marriage, a husband and wife will be exact opposite of each other, which means if the husband views a building from the north side and takes a photograph, the wife will take a photograph of the same building from the southern side.

And when you put it both together, they look completely different, but it's the same building and you get a better view. Now, if you're a stupid husband, you'll force your wife to come around to your viewpoint and say, you got to look at things the way I look at it and bring her right round to the northern side where you stand and say, you photograph from here and you put both together. Okay, what have you got? A two-dimensional view.

Who's the loser? You. Who are the ones who suffer? Probably your children and your home. Why don't you just leave her where God placed her? Why don't you allow her to have her little circle of her viewpoint? Put it together and you get a better picture of the whole matter or issue at hand.

That is God's way. Now, they never had all this understanding in the old covenant. They couldn't be filled with the Spirit.

Husband and wife could not be filled with the Spirit. There were no two Spirit-filled husband and wife, no Spirit-filled husband and wife in the entire old covenant. No.

There were occasional people upon whom the Spirit rested, but a Spirit-filled husband with a Spirit-filled wife is a uniquely new covenant thing. That's the family which God wants to establish, a Spirit-filled family, a family that reflects the glory of Christ. It's not possible in the Old Testament, but there we need to recognize one another's boundaries, as I say, recognize each other's gifts and viewpoints.

When young couples are getting married and I counsel them, I draw a little diagram of a broken eggshell and I say, and I draw it with the broken like this and with all the jagged edges. Those edges are very sharp. And I say, you're like this, the husband, and you're like this, the wife.

You've got a projection where she's got a depression and she's got a projection where you got a depression. But when you put it together, there's not a gap, perfectly one. But if you're a foolish husband and you say, well, wherever I've got a projection, you must have one too.

And you chip off that eggshell. And wherever I've got a depression, you must have one too. You put it together, there are a lot of holes in between.

It's stupidity. God has given her strengths where you have weaknesses and given you weaknesses where she has strengths. And when you put together her strengths cover your weaknesses and your strengths cover her weaknesses, and there are no gaps, and your children are protected.

The glory of God was seen in Jesus Christ full of grace and truth. It was perfectly seen in Jesus, that glory. When it is to be seen in us, it's very difficult to see a man who's perfectly balanced in grace and truth.

Maybe over many years of walking with God, a person becomes more like that. But initially, we all tend to be a little more towards truth or a little more towards grace. But as we work together with someone else who's imbalanced the other way, there can be a more balanced manifestation of the glory of God, full of grace and truth.

And that's the wonderful thing about having a wife who's different from you. Romans chapter 11 says, Behold the kindness and the severity of God. God is kind and God is severe.

And it's very difficult to find that perfect balance in any one human being. And so God balances us in the home with a wife or a husband who's the opposite of you, so the kindness and severity of God can both be seen by your children, so that together you can reflect God to your children. So that's why you have two elders in a church and not one.

That's how we have it in all our churches, and that's how it was in the New Testament. There was never one man who led the church. You never find any such people.

The apostles appointed elders. Why? Because where two come together, that Jesus is in the midst. Otherwise there's no midst.

There's no midst where there's only one person. And one person leading a church will produce an imbalanced church. It's like a seesaw.

You sit one end of the seesaw, the other end is up. What you need is another person over there at the other end to balance the seesaw. And if you force that other person to come around to your side, you're going to have the seesaw even more up like that.

And that's what happens in some churches where an elder is forced by the other stronger elder to come around to his viewpoint. And then you have an imbalanced church like a seesaw sticking up like that instead of balanced. So think of your wife as sitting at the other end of the seesaw balancing your home.

Think of an elder as sitting at the other end of the seesaw balancing your home. Please don't be foolish to bring that person over to your side. Sometimes it can be the wife.

Some husbands are effeminate, don't take the lead, and then the wife is the boss. And she decides, like Eve, I don't need to discuss with my husband. I feel this tree is good.

I've discussed it with the devil and we've agreed on the terms and I'm going to eat it. Okay. Then she tells her husband, you know, this is pretty good.

I think you should be doing this too. And meek effeminate man that he was, he says, okay darling, I won't hurt you. He eats it.

Remember, that's how all the confusion you see in the world came. Because one woman decided she could take a decision without consulting the head God had placed over her. That's how all the sin and confusion you see in the world today, all the evil and the murder and the drug addiction and the drunkards and the murders and wars and everything came through one woman who decided there was no need for me to consult.

There's no need for me to consult my husband. I know, I know, I'm pretty clever. Think what a different story it would have been if she had said, well, supposing she had told the devil, well Satan, what you say sounds pretty reasonable, but let me just consult with my husband.

God's given me a head over me. Let me discuss it with him and then get back to you. It may have been a different story.

Tremendous value in balance. It's important for a husband to recognize his position as the head, not allow his wife to do what she likes. There we read in Genesis chapter 3 that when Eve was carrying on this conversation with Satan in the early years when I read the Bible carelessly, I thought Eve had gone for a private walk in the garden all by herself and then that's when the devil got her.

But on reading the Bible more carefully, I discovered that was not true. It says in Genesis 3, 6, her husband was with her all the time. She wasn't on a private walk.

And what was Adam doing? Like a dumb man, he was standing there watching this conversation going on. Wife and Satan and wife and Satan, he was just listening and moving his head this way and that way and he didn't say a word. And he saw her eating the tree and he didn't say a word until she gave it to him and then he opened his mouth and ate it.

And when God came to Adam, he told him, you know what your first sin is Adam? Listen to this. Adam, your first sin is not that you ate of the tree. That was your second sin.

Genesis chapter 3 and verse 17. The Lord said to Adam, your first sin was that you listened to your wife. Your second sin was that you ate of the tree.

So what do you see there? What was Adam's first sin? He listened to his wife. Second, he ate of the tree. Don't ever forget that.

God said to him, listen, I made you to be the head of your home. What in the world were you doing when your wife was just talking to Satan? All this conversation was going on. You just stood there like a dumb man and just opened your mouth only when she offered you the fruit.

So there is a place for fellowship. There is a place for headship. And I said, when we are filled with the spirit, it leads on to this type of submission to one another.

And then it speaks about wives and husbands and children and parents. And then you come to the end of this section in Ephesians 6. And then after speaking about the home, it comes to another important passage. It says, finally, my brethren, put on the whole armor of God, verse 11, that you may stand against the schemes, the wiles of the devil.

And then it goes on to that whole wonderful section of spiritual warfare. So here is a passage on being filled with the spirit in Ephesians 5.18. And a very important passage, very important to Christian life. And here is another passage on spiritual warfare, the only passage in the New Testament, really, that explains spiritual warfare at such length, Ephesians 6 verse 11 onwards.

And in between the two, you have the section on the Christian home. What does that teach us? It teaches us, first of all, that the fullness of the spirit should lead on to a life in the Christian home first. That means you must learn how to speak in a proper tongue to your wife at home, and in a proper tongue to your husband at home.

That's what we need to learn first. Graciously, kindly, honoring, respecting the other person. And the other thing we learn that this warfare section comes after the home, indicates who's got to put on this armor? Husbands and wives, children and parents.

The battle is going to be in the home. That's where the warfare rages today. That's where the devil is seeking to attack today.

We should not be ignorant of his wiles. We want to stand against the wiles of the devil in the home. We wrestle against principalities and powers in the home.

We need to take the whole armor of God in the home. We need to stand with our loins girt about with truth and the breastplate of righteousness and the shield of faith and the sword of the spirit in the home. That's it.

Now, if we understand this, we see how important the Christian home is. There was no such thing in the Old Testament. There was no such thing as a spiritual family in the Old Testament, and there was no such thing as a spiritual battleground in the Old Testament home, where husband and wife together battle Satan.

That never happened even with Abraham and Sarah. It never happened with any family in the Old Testament. But that's our calling in the New Testament, in the New Covenant.

This is the battleground, and many of us have seen how the devil battles in the home, how his attacks are there, how he flings the fiery darts, speaks about the fiery darts of the wicked, these missiles flung. It's in the home. It's at our children usually.

Spirits are operating, trying to control one member of the home, trying to bring division, trying to bring tension, trying to separate husband and wife, whom God has joined together. What God has joined together, let no man put asunder. It's not just divorce that separates husband and wife.

When there's tension in a home, it's the beginning of divorce. It culminates in divorce finally, but it begins with tension in the home. And it's no use glorying in the fact that we don't divorce, if you haven't understood the New Covenant.

Jesus said in the Old Covenant, it said, don't commit murder, but I say stop murder where it starts, with anger. That's New Covenant. Jesus said in the Old Covenant, it said, don't commit adultery, but I say stop adultery where it starts, with lust in the heart.

So if the command is don't commit divorce, the Lord says stop it where it starts, with tension in the home, with separation, with misunderstanding, with an unwillingness to talk to each other. Now I want to tell you something which sounds so unspiritual. I don't have a scripture for this, so I'm not going to give it to you as a commandment from the Lord.

I'll make it clear when I speak, when it's my opinion. Paul once said in 1 Corinthians 7, I don't have any commandment from the Lord, but I'll give you my opinion as one who has found mercy from the Lord. I think he was very honest about certain things.

He said, I don't have a clear command from the Lord, so you can throw it in the trash can if you like, but it's my opinion. The test of a relationship between a husband and wife, whether it's a good relationship, is not whether they can read the Bible together, whether they can pray with each other, whether they can go to church together, because you know very well, if you're honest, that even when you have tension with each other, you can pray together. Sure, you know very well that when you have tension with each other, you can still read the Bible together, and go to church together, you can eat together, you can do almost anything, you can go for a picnic together, even though there's tension.

There's tension in the air, even the children can sense it. But you pray, you go for picnics, you go to church. How do we know that there's no tension between husband and wife? In my opinion, it's when they can joke with each other.

Sounds very unspiritual, but test it and see. Can you joke with your wife, and can she joke with you when you have tension? Impossible. The same with two brothers.

They can pray together when they don't, they've got things in their heart against each other. Two elders can pray together, read the Bible together, but they can't really have any humor with each other. I don't believe that humor came from the devil.

It's too good a thing for the devil to invent. It's God who created humor. I don't mean dirty humor, and I don't mean humor that hurts other people.

I'm talking about good, clean humor, where if you pull anybody's leg, it's your own, where you don't hurt anyone. If you don't believe what I say, try it out. Try cracking a joke when you have tension.

There won't be any response. That's the test. I believe God wants us to have fun together.

It doesn't sound like a spiritual thing, but I find it's a very spiritual thing. Sometimes we've got these wrong concepts of spirituality that have come more to us from hermits and ascetics than from the scripture. Heaven is a place of joy and happiness.

I just mentioned that in passing. As I said, it's my opinion. I don't have a verse so you can throw it in the trash can on your way out if you don't accept it.

But I find it's true in my life, and it's really been a blessing for me to test whether everything is good between me and my wife. To me, it's the infallible test for myself anyway. See, God gave Adam two gardens to look after when he created them.

Do you know that? One was the garden of Eden, and the other was the garden of his relationship with his wife. And there's no use his looking after the garden of Eden if he didn't look after the garden of his relationship with his wife. Our relationship as husband and wife is like a garden.

A garden is a beautiful picture of our relationship. You know that if you neglect the garden, it's not going to be beautiful. The tendency of nature is not towards the garden, but towards the wilderness.

That means if you leave a patch of ground unattended and come back after a few years, it's not going to be a beautiful garden with neatly planted rows of roses and flowers and plants and other that. No, it won't turn out like that. It'll be just a mess of weeds and thistles and thorns.

That's how nature is. And if we neglect our relationship with our wives, that's how it's going to be. Nobody goes around actually planting thistles and thorns and weeds.

How does a person get weeds and thistles in his garden? Not by planting them, just by neglecting. And you don't have to go planting thorns and thistles in your relationship with your wife. You just got to neglect it.

Just don't do anything. It'll automatically become like a wilderness. That's what the Bible says in Proverbs in chapter 24.

Proverbs 24, it says in verse 30, it says here, I went by the field of the slothful and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding. And lo, it was all grown over with thorns, nettles had covered the face thereof, the stone wall was broken down. And I saw and I set my heart, I considered it well, I looked upon it.

This is a picture of a marriage and I received instruction. What did this man do? Did he actually destroy his relationship with his wife? No, he just slept. And he says, yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep, so shall your poverty in your marriage come as one that travelth and your want is an armed man.

You can take this as a picture of marriage. If you don't make an effort, that garden will never be planted. If you don't make an effort to understand how these plants can grow, how the ground needs to be ploughed, how that weed needs to be pulled out as soon as it comes, a little misunderstanding, a little hard thought, an angry word and immediately you apologize, you pull out the weed.

If you don't, it's going to flourish and it's going to grow. There'll be more weeds by tomorrow and you wait for three days to set it right. There'll be a lot of weeds by then, a little more difficult to pull out.

And this is what happens in a lot of marriages. They don't pull out the weed immediately. They take a lot more care of the garden outside their home than the garden inside.

That's exactly Adam's mistake. I don't know how well he looked after Eden, probably well, but he didn't look after the relationship, his relationship with his wife, because you see him pointing his finger at his wife and telling God, this woman is the cause of all the problems. He's the one who made me sin and that pointing of finger is the thing that destroys a garden.

It dries it up. This pointing of finger, I told you so. Have you ever said that to each other? I told you.

I'm the great expert. I told you. This pointing of finger, if you want to destroy your marriage, just do this.

You know, it says in Isaiah chapter 58, I don't know whether you've noticed this. It says here how your life can be like a watered garden, like a spring of water whose waters fail not. Your marriage can be like a watered garden.

The Lord will guide you continually and there won't be any drought in your life. Your bones won't dry up, Isaiah 58, 11. Applying it to marriage, let me say your marriage, middle of that verse, thou shalt be like a watered garden.

We can say thy marriage shall be like a watered garden, if what? If, you see, this is the end of it. If you do this, your life, your marriage will be like a watered garden. Verse 9, the middle, if you take away this putting forth of the finger, if you take away this pointing of the finger, the last part of verse 9, and when you point the finger speaking empty words, you stop pointing your finger at each other and stop speaking empty words and the Lord will make your marriage, verse 11, like a watered garden.

If you've got a garden in your house, the chances are you take more care of that garden outside than the one inside. That's how it is in most homes. They think the garden outside needs a lot of tending and caring, then only it'll grow, but they think the garden inside will just grow automatically.

It doesn't. We got to eliminate these weeds and we got to nurture it. We got to plant seeds.

Seeds don't drop automatically from heaven. Seeds don't come automatically. We got to plant seeds.

We got to speak words of goodness and kindness. We tender attitudes, plant them, be considerate and water it and work on it and one day, lo and behold, you have a beautiful garden inside the home. You have a home, a garden that reflects the atmosphere of heaven.

In the song of Solomon, it says here, song of Solomon, chapter 4, verse 16, the last part, let my beloved come into his garden and eat his pleasant fruits. You see, this is the bride. Think of you and your wife as a bride of Jesus Christ, jointly, joint heirs, the bride of Jesus Christ, saying to the Lord, to your bridegroom, let my beloved come into this garden.

Lord, this garden that we've planted, come in and eat your pleasant fruits. It's not for display to others. No.

You can build a home which is just like a showpiece, like a shop window. A lot of homes are like that, like a shop window for other people to admire. Oh, what a beautiful, what a beautiful window that is, beautiful things arranged there so nicely.

A lot of people build their homes like that, like a shop window, to show other people. This is not like that. This is, forget other people, I'm not building my home to show other people.

Let my beloved from heaven come into this garden, and he who examines the secret thoughts and intents of the heart, and he who examines all the areas which other people can't see in the shop window, let him find satisfaction, and if he finds satisfaction, that's enough. I couldn't care less what all the other people who pass by the shop window say. It's not for them.

Maybe a byproduct if it blesses them, but it's primarily for my beloved. A lot of people are bringing up their children in a particular way to get honor from people passing by the shop window, and they see all these neatly dressed children and all behaving well like little tin soldiers around the table, and the people passing by the shop window say, boy, that's a lovely family, and the people sitting in the shop window can hear that, and they'll feel a little proud, and yeah, that's right, we're pretty good, you know. It's all honor seeking, and that's why when one of these tin soldiers behave a little badly, we get all disturbed.

Not because God is dishonored by my child's behavior, but this tin soldier is disturbing the shop window. This beautiful picture in the shop window is being disturbed by this one child who doesn't behave, doesn't dress properly, doesn't talk properly, doesn't sing properly in church, and we try to hide it. Somebody passing by the shop window saw it.

If only he hadn't seen it, and that little boy or girl watching it knows very clearly, daddy and mommy are not bothered about God's opinion, or even about my welfare. They are only bothered about what the pastors buying are saying, and you drive that poor child far away from God, because you seek the honor of men. I feel sorry for such children.

I want to ask you, my brothers and sisters who are parents, are you building a shop window in your home for pastors by to admire and speak well of your family, or are you building a garden for your beloved? I tell you, I have four sons. I fought this battle. I couldn't care less what anybody in our church thinks, because they don't know ten percent of the story in any case.

Why should I put up a front? I want Almighty God, my beloved bridegroom, to come here and see the way I brought up my children, not to show the church how well behaved they are, and how nice neat little tin soldiers they are, but that I tried my best to bring them up for the glory of God, to live for Him. I hope that's your desire, and I hope your children can see that you're more bothered about what the Lord thinks about them than what people in the church think about them. Don't build little tin soldiers.

Build real soldiers for the kingdom of God, for heaven. Let your beloved come and examine, and he examines many areas which those who pass by the shop window cannot see. They can see only ten percent.

How much can other people see about what happens in your home? And if you're happy with the front that you have presented to others with your family, you can be pretty sure that that's artificial. It's not real. A lot of shop windows are props.

They're not real. Some of those figures in shop windows, they're not real people. They look like real people wearing those dresses and all, but they're not real.

And a lot of that spirituality that you see in some homes, in their children and all, is not real. It's as unreal as those figures in those shop windows. I'll tell you that.

Life flips. It's a form. Don't waste your time doing that.

Build a garden for your beloved. Sisters, why does it say in Proverbs and chapter 15, Proverbs 14, sorry, verse 1, I've asked people this question. Who builds the house, the man or the woman? Most people say the man.

Actually, let's turn to Proverbs 14.1. Every wise woman buildeth her house, but the foolish plucketh it down with their hands. What does that mean? How can a home reflect the glory of Jesus Christ? What was the most beautiful thing about Jesus? Shall I tell you what I think is the most beautiful thing about Jesus? He humbled himself and became obedient even unto death. The death of the cross.

It says in Philippians 2, let this mind be in you which is in Christ Jesus. Although he was in the form of God, he emptied himself, became a servant and humbled himself to the death of the cross. That's the most beautiful thing there is about Jesus Christ.

The world looks at the wonders of God in creation, but the disciple of Jesus looks at the wonder of God coming to earth as a little helpless baby, growing up in submission, submission, submission. That is the glory of Jesus Christ. To me, that's the greatest thing of all.

How the eternal God could come as a helpless baby and submit to imperfect parents. Do you think Joseph and Mary had victory over sin? There was no victory over sin in the old covenant. Nobody had victory over sin in the old covenant.

John the Baptist was the greatest. Jesus himself said, and this is where it's clear that the Roman Catholics, our Roman Catholic friends are wrong. Mary was not the greatest.

John the Baptist, Jesus said, was the greatest person born of women, including Mary. There was no one perfect. No one had victory in the old testament and Joseph and Mary did not have victory in the old testament.

And I'm sure they fought and quarreled just like any other old covenant couple. They were imperfect. And Jesus, the perfect son of God, lived in that home and submitted to these imperfect parents who were sinning.

Do you believe they were perfect? Do you think Joseph was Saint Joseph who never sinned? And Mary was Saint Mary who never sinned? I don't believe that. Mary called God my savior. She needed a savior.

She was a sinner. She sinned. Joseph sinned.

And Jesus submitted. To me, that's a greater wonder than his raising Lazarus from the dead. It's easy for God to raise Lazarus from the dead, but to submit for 30 years, not one or two days, for 30 years.

I don't know how long Joseph was alive in those 30 years. He probably died when Jesus was a teenager. I don't know.

But for 30 years, he submitted to Joseph and to Mary all the time. That's the glory of Christ. Now who's going to bring that glory of Christ into a home? It's the woman.

Not the man. Because even though there is to be a submission to one another, it's primarily the wife who is to submit. It goes on in Ephesians 5.22 to say, Wives, be subject to your husbands as the church is to

Christ.

And when a wife brings the spirit of submission into her home, she's going completely against what Eve did in Garden of Eden. And she's doing what Jesus did in Nazareth for 30 years. Is your husband imperfect? So was Jesus' parents.

Don't say, oh, my husband doesn't have a clue about spiritual things. But Jesus could have said that about Joseph and Mary too. But he still submitted.

He's got nothing to do with being spiritual. It's easy to submit to God, right? It's difficult to submit to your husband. You haven't understood the New Covenant.

Jesus came as the mediator of a new covenant where we can submit to imperfect people if that is God's will. So don't ever say, my husband doesn't obey the word. I don't ever listen to him.

That's the spirit of rebellion. It started with Lucifer years ago saying he couldn't even submit to a perfect God. Listen to what it says in 1 Peter 3 verse 1. Speaking about how Jesus submitted, suffered.

You got to start in 1 Peter 2.20. What glory is there if when you're buffeted for your faults, you take it patiently. But when you suffer patiently, when you have done well, when you did the right thing and you suffered, that is really acceptable to God. Because even Jesus, 1 Peter 2.21, Christ suffered for us, leaving us an example, who did no sin.

And yet when he was reviled, he did not revile again. When he suffered, he threatened not, but committed himself to him that judges righteously. In other words, he submitted, Father, I haven't sinned, but if these people revile me, I'll keep quiet.

When they hurt me, I'm not going to threaten them saying, wait and see what God will do to you. He didn't say that. He submitted, he kept quiet.

And then it says, in the same way, you wife, in the same way, likewise, chapter 3 verse 1, you wife, being subject to your own husband. Even if they are like that, they don't obey the word. He's talking about a husband who doesn't obey the word.

That without your speaking a single word, he can be won by the conversation, by the behavior of the wives, when they, your husbands, behold your pure, submissive behavior, your chaste conversation, coupled with fear. And then it says, who's adorning, let it not be the outward adorning of all this. But before you go to that simple outward dress, it says, you must have a gentle and quiet spirit at home of submission to your wife.

So when a wife brings that spirit of submission into the home, she's bringing the glory of Jesus Christ into that home, and she builds her home. A wise woman builds her home. But the foolish woman, she's always criticizing her husband, saying he doesn't know a thing, he doesn't know what he's talking about, and goes on like that, finding fault with him.

Maybe what he did was wrong. Maybe he is stupid. Don't you think Noah sinned, when he got drunk and lay naked.

What an example, after all that God had done for him to get drunk and lie naked. And when Ham, his son, saw it, and he went and spoke about it to his brother, what did he say? He never said a lie. He didn't tell a

lie about his father.

He said, dad's drunk, he's lying naked there. God cursed him. Why did God curse him? For speaking the truth? Because that was not the proper way to behave towards an authority.

I've told children, don't ever expose the nakedness of your father or mother to anybody else. Let the curse of God be upon you. It came upon Ham.

What did Shem and Japheth, the other two sons of Noah do, when they heard it? They didn't even want to see their father's nakedness. It says, they went backwards with a sheet and dropped it on their father and came away. And God bless them.

Honor your father and mother and it'll go well with you. Who brings that spirit of submission and respect into the home? The wife. Sister, if you got the chicken pot and your children got it later, the chances are they got it from you, right? And if your children are rebellious in their teenage years, the chances are the same.

They got it from you. Do they speak to you the way they heard you speak to your husband perhaps through many years? A wise woman builds her house. A foolish woman tears it down.

And sometimes that house can be torn down so badly it can take years to rebuild it. But there's hope. As long as you're not dead, there's hope.

The things that are impossible with men are possible with God. God can take the most broken down home and build a palace through it. If we humble ourselves, if we acknowledge our iniquity, if we say, Lord, that was my fault.

I don't want to point my finger like at him. It was my fault. It was my sin.

Forgive me. My children are like that because I was like that. It says in Ephesians in chapter 5 that a husband should care for his wife like the head cares for the body.

Yeah, a lot of husbands like to say, I'm the head of the wife. We all like to say that. But what does it mean to be the head of the wife? The husband is the head of the wife.

But it says here that like Jesus cares. So ought men, verse 28, Ephesians 5, 28, to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.

For no man ever yet hated his own flesh. What do you do with your body? You nourish it and cherish it. He says, that's what you should do to your wife.

You see, when it says the husband is the head of the wife, what it really means is the brain. See, the brain here, that's the head, really. Controls the whole body.

The brain says to the left hand, lift your hand, lift it up. Goes up. Tells the first finger, wiggle that, wiggles it.

Everything from here. Put the right hand down, down. All from here.

And that's how the husband-wife relationship should be. Where the husband is the head, wife is the body. But there's another side to this.

Do you know that even a small pinprick here in the body, the brain feels it immediately and pulls the hand back. You touch a hot stove and you don't have to wait two seconds, the brain immediately feels it and pulls it back. And you got a little thorn in your foot, the brain immediately feels it and doesn't wait five minutes, pulls it out immediately.

Husband, care for your wife like that. Do you? Easy to say, I'm the head, but that's what the head is supposed to do. Feel the pinprick, feel the thorn, pull it out immediately, don't wait five minutes.

Be sensitive to their needs. Does the brain hurt the body in some way? Never! Cherish it, nourish it. Oh, how well we take care of our body.

How we shower when the body is dirty. We never criticize our body. We take care of it.

If we have a little stomachache, we go and take a medicine. If we have a little headache, we go and take a medicine. We never allow pain to come into this body.

Husband, are you the head of your wife? Good, that's what you should be. But that's what the head does for the body. You see, a lot of husbands when they think of head, it means just authority.

That's how it is in the gentile world. Tyrants, dictators who don't care for the people under them. That's not the head of the body.

That's a tyrant. That's not new covenant family. Yeah, we could go on and say a lot of things about that, but we don't have time.

What about children? I told you children, there's only one commandment God's given children. Obey your parents, honor your father and mother, never speak evil of them, cover their nakedness, for love covers a multitude of sins. And it'll go well with you all the days of your life.

You see the nakedness of your parents better than anybody else, because you live in their home. Don't expose it. What do you gain by exposing the nakedness or the drunkenness of your father or mother? Nothing.

You destroy yourself. And it says here, isn't it very interesting that when it says, wives do this, husbands do this. Slaves do this to your masters, masters do this to your slave.

Wives do this to your husband, husbands do this to your wife. And now listen to this. Children do this to your parents.

What should the opposite be? Parents do this for your children. But it doesn't say that. And it's not a mistake.

When it comes to husbands and wives, it is wives do this for your husband, husbands do this for your wife, masters and slaves. Slaves do this for your masters, masters do this for your slave. But when it comes to children and parents, it says children do this for your parents.

But it doesn't say parents do this for your children. It says fathers. Putting the responsibility squarely upon the head of the father.

Be a man. Lead your children. Don't put that responsibility on your wife.

It is not the responsibility of your wife. Where does it say mothers should do that? You know where mothers have to do it? Where the fathers are irresponsible failures. Then of course the mother has to do the job.

I normally use my right hand for writing. But if the right hand is paralyzed and doesn't do anything, what to do? I have to use my left hand. It's not as good.

But I have to use it. That's what happens in many a home. But the job is the right hand.

The job is the father. It says in Ephesians 6, for fathers, don't provoke your children to rot. Don't just get upset with them and angry with them.

Discipline them. Sure, it says there. Bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

Bring them up with teaching, correction, discipline, but not with anger. I must discipline my child, but there must be no anger in my discipline. And if there has been anger in our discipline, then we need to go and repent before the Lord about the anger.

I'm not throwing stones at anybody. I've disciplined my children many times with anger. But I've gone into my room and wept before the Lord for the anger, not for the discipline.

And say, Lord, help me to separate the anger from the discipline and to discipline him without anger. Not because I'm upset. You know how the Bible says, vengeance belongs to me, says the Lord.

Many people don't realize that we're not supposed to take revenge on anyone, just like we're not supposed to take another man's money. If that money belongs to that man, you're not. You've got no right to take that.

And when it says in Romans chapter 12, towards the end of that chapter, vengeance is mine. Don't touch it. Vengeance belongs to the Lord.

Never take revenge. That's God's business. You say, well, I don't take revenge.

I hope not. You tell your child to drink that glass of milk and he doesn't. Plays the fool.

You tell him again, drink your milk. He doesn't. Plays the fool.

And then accidentally he tips it over and it's all on your clothes. Then what do you do? Punish him. That's not discipline.

That's revenge. If it was discipline, you'd have done it the first time. This is revenge because you've inconvenienced me now.

There's a lot of vengeance in the way fathers and mothers treat their children, provoking them to rot. Recognize the circle you're in. Bring them up in nurture and admonition of the Lord.

Teach them the principles of God's word. Fathers, not just have a little quiet time in the morning and family devotions. That's not it.

But it says in the Old Testament, when you're walking, when you're getting up, when you're walking by the road, when you're sitting down, when you're lying down, all the time. There may be occasions in ordinary.

In other words, there's in the circumstances of normal life, in ordinary conversation, different subjects come up and then there's an opportunity to teach a Christian principle to our children.

The children say, why don't we do that? What those people do and there's an opportunity to explain why. And there's a need for discipline. It says in the Old Testament, Proverbs 22 and verse 15, foolishness is bound in the heart of a child, but the rod of correction will drive it far from him.

It's interesting. The rod is applied to the bottom and the foolishness goes out of the heart. There's a direct connection.

But if you don't apply the rod to the bottom, the foolishness remains in the heart. We can do that for our children up to a certain age. We can't do it forever.

If you start when they are one year old, to begin to teach them the nurture and admonition, the nurture, the discipline, the teaching and discipline of the Lord. I think usually by the time they're 13, you can stop. The physical discipline, the instruction, the rebuke, the correction must still continue.

But they're a bit too old for physical discipline when they become 13. Now, I'm giving my opinion. I have no commandment from the Lord.

I have no verse. So you can throw that in the trash can too, if you like. It's only an opinion.

After that, we've got to win their heart. We've got to love them. A lot of children in their teenage years, some seem to have a smooth passage through to adulthood.

Some others between the ages of 13 and 19 have a difficult path. They're not all the same. That's the time when they need parents who understand, who can befriend them.

I'll never forget. My second son once came home for a vacation and I think he was about 25 years old then. And he was speaking to the young people in our church and I was sitting in the back listening.

And he said to them, he said, I want to share with you an aspect of my dad, which you have probably not seen. You've probably seen him there as a very strict person standing up in the pulpit and preaching. He said, I remember some 10 years ago when he was maybe 15 or something, he'd done something wrong.

And he said, my dad called me. He said, okay, let's go upstairs. I'd like to have a talk with you.

And he said, I went upstairs trembling, fear what's going to happen. And he said, when we went upstairs, my dad said, let's kneel down. And my dad put his arms around me and he prayed.

And he said, heavenly father, tell me where I failed as a father that he did this. It was a small thing, but still. And my dad said, help me to pray, help me to be a better father.

Amen. That was it. And he said he had never forgotten it.

He remembered that more than all the spankings he had ever received. That really taught me something. I think he saw something of the heart of God there.

Our children need to see the heart of God in us. Mercy, forgiveness. Severity and kindness.

I often think of that prodigal son far away from home, having ruined all his father's wealth. His father must have been a very wealthy man because he had so many hired servants. How many of you have hired servants, maids in the house? He's a very wealthy man.

When he got half the share of his property, I don't know whether it was half a million that he got. And he lost it all, wasted it all, ruined his life. But there was one thing he remembered.

I know my dad still loves me. I know he'll never slam the door in my face. And he went back.

And sure enough, his dad still loved him. His dad had been praying for him. And he welcomed him back and made him sit at the right hand.

No punishment, no time in the servant's quarters, nothing. Come straight to the right hand, ring on his hand, the best robe, kill the fatted calf, let's eat and be merry. But the elder brother was not like that.

And the elder brother was hard. That could also be a picture of some father, that elder brother, so hard. We ought to teach this fellow a lesson.

How can we celebrate like this? I've often thought if that prodigal son had heard the news out there that his father had died and the elder brother was running that home, he would never have come back. He knew what his elder brother was like. Dear father, I hope your children know what you're like.

That your heart is wide open to them no matter how much they have drifted. That you're not building any shop window with thin soldiers to show other people. That you've got a heart of love for your children.

You want them to spend eternity with you. That you want that family circle to be unbroken in eternity as it is unbroken here. That no one is missing in that circle when Jesus comes again.

That we'll all be there. So I want to say this in closing. Let's pray for our children.

Let's pray for one another. Pray for your wife. Pray for your husband.

It's not easy in this difficult world. Pray for your children. And children, pray for your parents.

I'll tell you, I've been a parent for 30 years. It's not easy to be a parent. I can only fall on my face and ask God for mercy.

If my children are born again today, it's certainly not because of me. It's God's mercy. I can only think of the number of things I did wrong.

Children, pray for your parents. I hope you do that. If you haven't done that now, pray for your dad and mom every day.

Don't just take it for granted. Be thankful for the sacrifices they made for you. Let your home be a little foretaste of heaven on earth.

Let people who come in see the naturalness of your home. Not the artificial behavior trying to show that everything is proper. No.

The naturalness. Yeah, little children will be naughty. That's natural.

We don't have to pretend that they're not naughty. May God help us all. Let's pray.

There is hope for everyone. The things that are impossible with men are possible with God. Only acknowledge your iniquity, the Lord says.

Don't blame other people. Get rid of this pointing of the finger and your home will be like a watered garden. Parents, stop pointing the finger at your children.

Point it at yourself. Children, stop pointing the finger at your parents, at yourself. Husbands, stop pointing the finger at your wives and wives, stop pointing the finger at your husbands.

We want our homes to be like a watered garden, where mercy is one of the most wonderful flowers that grows there. Mercy. Forgiveness.

Oh, what a need there is. That's how we water the garden, with mercy and forgiveness. Heavenly Father, help us.

We've all failed. I know I have. Have mercy upon us, that we can build a home that glorifies you on earth, that we can show this world what the Holy Spirit can do when He fills our lives.

Help us each one. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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