



**An undenominational publication
devoted to the teachings of Jesus and
His apostles and dedicated to those
who seek the truth.**

Volume 13, Number 7
January/February 2017

HELP FOR FAMILIES

“HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER”

“Honor your father and mother—that it may go well with you” (Ephesians 6:2-3).

To “honor” means to show a careful regard, dignity, and consideration toward; to treat graciously and visit with marks of favor. God wants wellness to be something in my life that would last. As I evaluated my life, I knew that wellness was not present in certain areas, as evidenced by my “low-level grade” of anger, my desire to be respected and accepted and my lack of openness and vulnerability. Let me share with you how I have begun to find this lasting wellness.



BEGINNING WITH FATHERS The plan from God is that “fathers” not *exasperate* (provoke to anger or irritate) their children, but *train* (nurture) and *instruct* them (discipline the heart) in the Lord (Ephesians 6:4). A father is to honor his own father and mother so that his wellness is visited upon his children. I believe that it is from the father’s wellness that his own children will honor him and their mother. If fathers are not resolved to honor their own parents, they can hardly pass wellness on to their children.

When I was a child, my father did not do this. He did what was done to him, or he did what he thought he should do, or he did very little. The result was exasperation, anger and hope lost on my part. My father was home every night; he provided for the material needs of his family; he was at all the athletic events; he thought he was doing all he should and could. However, I strove in vain to gain his acceptance and

Continued on Page 2

“HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER”

Continued from Page 1

respect. What I needed was for him to put his arm around me and say, “I am proud of you....You are doing a good job....You are my special boy....You are my prince”.... and “I am here for you.”

I spent many years trying to gain affirmation from my father. I remained, in many ways, the “nine-year-old” trying to get the respect and the acceptance from my father. I carried this need into my marriage, my ministry, my profession and my child rearing. The irony is that my dad did respect and accept me, but on his own terms, but he did not know God’s design for parenting. How could I resolve what I felt so that I could embrace God’s message that would lead to wellness?

LEAVING HOME I came to the realization that I was still the boy trying to get my father’s acceptance. I realized that I had never left home. But how was I to leave home in a way that was healthy?

First, I realized I had to mourn and grieve that which I will never receive. Even if my father came to me today and put his arm around me and said, “I am so proud of you,” it would not take the place of his doing that when I needed it. Committing these losses to God and accepting His comfort, allowed me to leave home.

I came to see that leaving home is the first step in honoring father and mother. Only then does God rule, and only then do I possess His promise. Leaving home means “wellness upon my life” which enables me to go back home as God’s man, able to honor my father and mother—to love them without resentments or reservations.

Why do you have to honor father and mother? Because, according to Scripture, without this there will be no wellness upon your life, and there will be no wellness upon your children’s lives.

Resolving past issues is a step of faith that allows you to gain the promise of wellness. I believe that one important exercise is to list the things you feel you missed from your father and mother or the painful things that happened to you as a child. The list is not to send to your parents, but for you to “grieve and leave.” If you have not been willing to go there in the past or have denied the reality of having been provoked by the events in your past, now you can begin to be sad, to accept the losses, to receive grace and to be healed. Take the time, however long, to list everything, and give it all to God. This is the first step of beginning to sincerely honor your father and mother.

— Michael Hammonds, Minister
Church of Christ, Natick, Massachusetts

REARING GODLY CHILDREN



CHRISTOPHER AND HEATHER BLACK AND THEIR 9 CHILDREN

“Hunter, stop jumping on the couch!” “Bella, I’m not telling you again, eat your dinner.” “Olivia, please be quiet for just one second!” “Liam! I just asked you if you needed to go potty.” Recently, a young mom working at Starbucks commented that while she originally wanted five children, she could no longer imagine surviving with more than her current three. She confessed that her few hours at work ‘away from the children’ were a godsend.

God designed the family to provide both the greatest intimacy and deepest sacrifice in human relationships. In the Scriptures, Ephesians chapter 5 describes how both spouses are called to put the needs of each other above their own. Gary Thomas, in his book Sacred Marriage, says the pursuit of personal happiness inevitably ends in dissatisfaction, but the pursuit of holiness often, paradoxically, delivers both happiness and holiness. Personal sacrifice continues when children are added to a family. However, the sleepless nights and endless crying evaporate when she smiles; the petulant eye rolls or when he valiantly defends his little brother. There is no doubt that our children’s multi-year transition from dependency to self-sufficiency is challenging and unpredictable.

Continued on Page 4

REARING GODLY CHILDREN

Continued from Page 3

Parents should intentionally mentor children as they navigate this passage. When parents allow selfishness (desire for quiet or entertainment, excessive busyness, career, etc.) to distract from their responsibility, the child's training will languish. Lacking vital guidance, a child may ingrain sin struggles that can last a lifetime. A toddler's refusal to obey Dad may seem small at the time, but if not corrected at this pliable stage, the behavior will grow into much costlier rebellion in a preteen. If still not corrected, rebellion could land a young adult in jail or even dead. Take regular stock of your children's strengths and weaknesses. Ask God to send opportunities to train them before the consequences are devastating. Remember that your role is not to force perfectly behaved children, but train them to discern right from wrong and desire righteousness.

Gregg Harris compared raising children to the care of plants. When children are young (0-5 years), parents shelter and protect, much like a greenhouse protects seedlings. Fertilization during these formative years is teaching them to discover scripture, talk with God, and obey authority. As children mature in convictions and capabilities (6-12 years), parents grant greater responsibilities and freedoms. Application of Biblical principles to everyday situations and deeper understanding of God's grace are critical during these years. The enlarged autonomy brings added risk of failure and associated consequences. Eventually, a fully strengthened plant transferred outdoors will continue maturing. By learning through many failures and successes, a young adult (12 years and up) is ready to stand strong and be responsible. The teen years are ideal for mining the depths of Scripture, to wrestle with the harsh realities of the world, witness to others, and build relationships with godly mentors.

Remember God's starting principle for family—love and serve your spouse. Maintaining this preeminence will bless your children greatly. No parent or spouse is perfect. We fail in both our own lives and in the instruction of our child's life. Therefore, be humble, apologize to your family when wrong, teach grace by your example. Don't lose heart; daily celebrate the victories. Ask God to fill in the many gaps you will undoubtedly leave in your child's training.

— Christopher Black is a Deacon and Youth Minister of the Church of Christ
Melrose, Massachusetts

INTIMACY IN MARRIAGE

Intimacy for mankind begins and ends with God. God has created us as we are, men and women, destined for intimacy. That intimacy is to be experienced first with God Himself and then with one another. We find more than a clue to this in the biblical account of Adam who found no help for himself among all God's creatures. Adam recognized his need and God provided fulfillment (Genesis 2:20).

Marital intimacy was considered important enough that God instructed Moses that an Israelite who had taken a wife would be exempt from military and public service for a period of one year so he could bring happiness to his wife (Deuteronomy 24:5).



Paul provides important information about physical intimacy for husbands and wives in 1 Corinthians chapter seven. He writes that a man's body does not belong to himself but to his wife and his wife's body does not belong to her but to her husband (1 Corinthians 7:1-5). For a time it may be spiritually beneficial for a husband and wife to refrain from sexual intimacy but that should only be for a limited period of time. They should come together again so they are not tempted by the devil.

Intimacy in marriage is far more than a joining together for sexual fulfillment. Its dynamic includes emotional intimacy and spiritual intimacy as well as sexual intimacy. Many couples have a secret language, look or code that no one else knows to communicate intimate desires with one another.

Becoming one flesh brings glory to God and is part of the fulfillment of God's plan (Hebrews 13:4). Sexual intimacy is to be fulfilled only in marriage. It is never given God's approval outside the vows of marriage. This is the intimacy that is to be practiced and taught by those in Christ.

— Charlie Harrison, Minister Church of Christ
Brunswick, Maine

Roles of Husbands and Wives

by
Jim Crisp, minister of the Church of Christ Waterbury, Connecticut

The roles of men and women are vitally important in marriage. Couples need to discover the design of our Creator who made us in His image and to acknowledge how we are dependent upon one another (Genesis 1:26-27, I Corinthians 11:11-12).

Unfortunately, the very idea of roles is negative for some people today. They see roles as confining or abusive. However, when I speak of roles, I mean the essential functions that God has designed for a man or woman to fulfill in a marriage relationship. And as far as Scripture is concerned, roles have to do with one's responsibility, not one's rank. Furthermore - the Father, Son and Holy Spirit have different roles without one being inferior to the other.

In Jesus Christ God considers male and female to be equal in value (Galatians 3:28), but that does not mean that both have identical roles. Maleness and femaleness means something very important to our Creator, something non-negotiable. There's no notion of a role-less marriage in Scripture.

The husband is responsible for a specific kind of leadership in the home. Meanwhile, the wife is responsible for specific kind of support and nurture.

The Bible is clear about how marriage should be organized. It uses words like "head," "love," and "care for" when speaking to husbands (Ephesians 5:23-29), and "helper," "manage their homes," and "submit" when speaking to wives (Genesis 2:18; I Timothy 5:14; Ephesians 5:22). These words point to distinct roles.

If you want your marriage to be what our Creator intended it to be, look for His guidance in Scripture. A good place to begin is by reading I Timothy chapter 5.



FIRST THINGS FIRST

The Holy Bible declares that “... all things were created by Him (Christ) and for Him” (Colossians 2:16). This includes marriage and family. If we “walk the walk” trusting and obeying God’s commands we will let Him teach us how to form and maintain relationships, including family life, through His enduring word.

It takes courage and commitment to humbly let God take precedence in everything. In our pursuit for freedom, individualism and happiness, we have often undermined teachings of God who is the architect of marriage and family. We have chased after self-worth and wealth thereby sacrificing God’s design for families. Only the Sovereign God will be able to heal our family relationships, and in doing so, heal our churches and our nation.

—Ishmael M.Bhebhe, Minister Church of Christ
Brattleboro, Vermont

**You Are
Invited
To Attend**

**CHURCHES
OF CHRIST**

**NEW MILFORD
CONNECTICUT
CHURCH OF
CHRIST**

129 Litchfield Rd
(2 miles North of Hospital)

Tel: 860-355-0489
Timothy Tarbet
Minister

10 AM Bible Class
11 AM Worship
WEB:
nmchurchofchrist.org

**FARMINGTON
CONNECTICUT
CHURCH OF
CHRIST**

69 South Road

Tel: 860-677-1463
Jesus Nieves
Minister

9:30 AM Bible Class
10:30 AM Worship
WEB:
southroadchurch.com

**KENT COUNTY
RHODE ISLAND
CHURCH OF
CHRIST**

42 Nooseneck Hill Rd
West Greenwich

Tel: 401-397-9700
Gary Babcock
Minister

9:30 AM Bible Class
10:30 AM Worship
WEB: kentcounty
churchofchrist.org

**S. BURLINGTON
VERMONT
CHURCH OF
CHRIST**

330 Dorset St.

Tel: 802-864-7939
Johnny Davis
Minister

10 AM Bible Class
11 AM Worship
WEB:
gburlchurchofchrist.com

**CASTLETON
VERMONT
CHURCH OF
CHRIST**

522 Rt. 4A West

Tel: 802-683-4970
Kirk Israel
Minister

10 AM Bible Class
11 AM Worship
WEB:
vermontchurchofchrist.com

**UNION CITY
NEW JERSEY
CHURCH OF
CHRIST**

Iglesia de Cristo
4509 45th St (@ Park Ave)
ESL Classes, Bible Studies

Tel: 423-414-8011
Edelto Villa
Minister

11 AM; 4:00 PM
Worship
E-MAIL:
sirgalahadvilla2013@
gmail.com

**WORCESTER
MASSACHUSETTS
CHURCH OF
CHRIST**

89 Beaver Brook
Pkwy

Tel: 347-313-5813
John Nat Kissi
Minister

9:30 AM Bible Class
10:30 AM Worship
WEB: worcestercoc.org

Find the **CHURCH OF CHRIST** in Your Community

<http://www.churchzip.org>

Request These Free Booklets for Families by Phil Sanders



- Love and Respect
- God's Plan for Marriage
- Building Intimacy

Name: _____
Address: _____
Apartment: _____
City, State: _____
Zip: _____
E-mail: _____

Send requests to:

CHRIST FOR TODAY

P.O. Box 755
New Milford, CT 06776
Call 860-355-0489

E-mail: christfortoday@gmail.com

CHRIST FOR TODAY

David Tarbet, Editor

New Milford Church of Christ
129 Litchfield Road (Route 202)
(2 miles North of New Milford Hospital)
P.O. Box 755
New Milford, Connecticut 06776

CHECK OUT THESE WEBSITES

<http://christfortoday.org>
<http://nmchurchofchrist.org>

NONPROFIT ORG.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Dallas, Texas
Permit 2829