

# Omega Course:

## Practical Church Planter Training

By

*The Alliance for Saturation Church Planting*

In cooperation with

Peter Deyneka Russian Ministries



The CCP Pastoral Training Course



## The CCP (Community Church Planting) Pastoral Training Course Book 2 & 4

*Reaching all the Nations for Jesus Christ*

*Bereik al die Nasies vir Jesus Christus*

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**ONE MISSION**  
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# THE FAMILY

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SPIRITUAL  
CHARACTER

LESSON 12

# Understanding The Father's Heart

## ☛ Lesson Purpose

The purpose of this lesson is that we as leaders might become loving, compassionate people who rejoice when lost sinners are found.

## ☛ Main Points

- God loves His children unconditionally.
- We should love as the Father loves.

## ☛ Desired Outcomes

When the content of this lesson has been mastered, each participant should:

- Understand the Father's love for the lost.
- Know that as Christian leaders we must continually examine our attitudes and actions toward the lost.
- Ask God to give grace to love as God loves.

## ☛ Suggestions to Trainers

The first two verses in Luke 15 are crucial to understanding the parables Jesus teaches in this chapter. Take time at the beginning of the session to get the trainees to imagine the setting with tax collectors and 'sinners' gathered around listening to Jesus. Imagine the Pharisees in the background criticizing Jesus' association with these people. Make this an interactive session by stopping to discuss the questions inserted in the text. Leave time at the end for personal evaluation and application.

## INTRODUCTION

Throughout the Bible, both Old and New Testaments, we see that God's love surpasses not just our sins, but also our ingratitude for that love. We are called on to love others as God loves us. But do we really understand what that means? Jesus, through His life's example, teaches us much about what this means. One of the most vivid and clear passages talking about this kind of love is the parable of the prodigal son (Lk 15:11-31). It is crucial for us to understand God's love for us if we are to show that same love to others.

### I. THREE PARABLES ABOUT LOST THINGS -LUKE 15

#### A. The Context Of Luke 15

The first two verses of Luke 15 provide the context for Jesus' teaching in the later verses. Here we see Jesus surrounded by tax collectors and "sinners" eager to hear his teaching (Lk 15:1). Imagine what it would be like to Jesus to be sitting around telling stories with tax collectors and "sinners." Where would this take place—outside? In a courtyard in a Mediterranean style house? On a roof? What kinds of people would be in the group gathered around Jesus? What would be on the table? Would there be food? Do you hear laughter? Are people trying to impress Jesus with stories of their own?

After you have a picture in your mind of Jesus gathered with the tax collectors and sinners, now imagine the Pharisees and the teachers of the law (Lk 15:2). Where would they be standing or sitting? Certainly not in the same room with the tax collectors and sinners. The Pharisees could

not associate with sinners. Perhaps they are standing outside in the darkness or on the fringes of the crowd some distance away -so as not to touch any of these sinners. What are the Pharisees muttering about?

Allow yourself to feel the impact of this scene and the tension between Jesus, the gathered crowd and the Pharisees. Keeping this scene in mind, read the parables which Jesus tells in the remainder of the chapter.

## B. The Parables

The three parables in Luke 15 include the parable of the lost sheep (vv. 3-7), the parable of the lost coin (vv. 8-10), and the parable of the lost son (vv. 11-32). The main point of the three parables is found in Luke 15:10, *"I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."* Note the following comparisons and contrasts in these parables.

"I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."

- All three stories are about finding lost things (one sheep out of 100, one coin out of 10, one son out of two). The things that were lost were all valuable items. As Jesus tells the parables, He starts out with a loss (one sheep out of 100), then an increasing loss (one coin out of 10), then finally one of the greatest losses a person can experience (one son out of two).
- The lost things in all three parables were eventually found.
- Rejoicing and celebrating with others took place when the lost items were found. How do you think the shepherd, woman and father felt upon finding their missing items? What kind of rejoicing do you think took place? What kind of celebration would you have if you had lost something of great value and then found it again?
- There is one contrast between the first two parables (lost sheep, lost coin) and the last (the parable of the lost son). Unlike the first two, in the parable of the lost son, no one goes searching for him. Why is that? Many people think that the reason for this is to show that a person must take responsibility for his own actions and "come home." This may be partly true, but it is not the point that Jesus was making here. There is a deeper reason that should become obvious as we look more closely at the passage.

## II. THE PARABLE OF THE PRODIGAL SON

As is his custom, Jesus places his emphasis on attitudes. A look at the attitudes of each of the three persons will help us to understand what Jesus intended his listeners to learn from the parable.

### A. The Father

This parable is sometimes called the parable of the Father's love. The father was obviously a loving person who gave his son freedom to choose—even when he made the wrong choice. He continued to show unconditional love to his son, accepting him back, forgetting the past. The unconditional love of the father lightened the hardship of the son's sorrow, opened the doors of hope for his return, showed the way and made the repentance process easier.

This parable tells us not only about a father's love. Christ presents in it an excellent picture of how a person responds to love, shown to him by our heavenly Father, God. The reaction of the two sons shows us two human reactions to the Father's love.

### B. The Younger Brother

The younger brother's actions revealed a person who was basically selfish. He was unconcerned for his father's feelings or his own responsibilities as the member of the family. In Jewish culture, the father might divide the inheritance but had a full right to keep the income from it until his death. For a son to ask for full rights to the inheritance and its income while the father was still living was to express that he considered his father as dead.

The son's selfishness was shown in his squandering his wealth without concern for how hard his father had worked to earn that money. Nor did he stop to think that his absence would mean that his brother would have to work much harder.

Quite naturally, his selfishness eventually led to his disappointment and despair. When he reached the end of himself, he was truly repentant. He openly confessed his sin and unworthiness before the father (v. 21). The love demonstrated by his father and the way he received him obviously made a profound impact on the son and changed his life forever. What do you think... would the prodigal son ever run away from his father again? Most of us would agree that it is doubtful that he would ever run away again, because he had found what every soul longs for—love. Love is the most powerful motivator known to us (otherwise God wouldn't be 'Love' 1Jn 4:8). This love was available to the prodigal son unconditionally from his father. He is a true son in a spiritual sense. (See Spiritual Character lesson 6 "Living Like Sons Instead of Orphans" and lesson 7 "An Orphan Learns To Be A Son" in Manual Two.)

Would the prodigal son ever run away from his father again?
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### C. The Elder Brother

We often favor the older son, whose actions seem more decent to us. Of course, he showed responsibility, worked hard and never left the family as his younger brother did. Nevertheless, the elder brother was also self-centered. He did not show concern for the suffering of his father or for his lost brother. There is no mention about the fact that he ever tried to find and bring his brother back. He did not even call him his brother, but rather referred to him as "your son" when speaking to his father (v. 30). His attitude was one of jealousy toward his brother and resentment that his father would honor the brother rather than him. He justified himself on the basis of his work for the father.

Deep inside, the elder brother envied his brother and felt insulted when the father celebrated the 'prodigal' son's return. He was thinking that he deserved this kind of treatment due to his hard work for his father (v.29). Such a reaction from the older son reveals that for years, he had been serving the father out of a sense of obligation, not love. Spiritually speaking, this son is an orphan (see Spiritual Character lessons 6 and 7).

His heart remained cold and egotistic, which ruined his relationships with the rest of the members of the family. Like his younger brother, he needed repentance.

### D. Interpretation

God loves His children the same way as the father in the parable does – unconditionally. With this parable, Jesus answers the charges of the religious leaders (Pharisees and Sadducees). 'The prodigal son' symbolizes the sinners with whom Jesus had fellowship (Luke 15:1-2). In telling this parable, Jesus explained to his accusers why He had fellowship with sinners – He loved them unconditionally. The religious leaders who judged Jesus for having fellowship with sinners were acting like the envious and self-righteous elder brother, while they should have been like the father, full of unconditional love and rejoicing when the lost return home.

## III. APPLICATION—DO WE LOVE AS THE FATHER LOVES?

A real danger for believers is that although we have all been prodigals and come home, we have a powerful tendency to become like the elder brother after a time. Jesus wants us to repent like the younger son did and to have the love that the father had. The following questions will help you determine your true condition (whether or not you have become like the older son in the parable).

1. What is my attitude toward the lost? Do I despise them? Am I judgmental? Am I compassionate and forgiving? Think of times when you've been around "undesirable" people. What has been your reaction?
2. Do I actively seek the lost or just wait for them to "come home?" Compare Jesus' words in Luke 19:10.

3. Am I uncomfortable “eating with” sinners? Am I more concerned about what people will think of me than I am for the lost sinner?
4. Do I “run to meet sinners” and show them compassion, or do I reject them along with their sin? (For example, how would I react if a prostitute or drug addict came into my fellowship?)
5. Is my love for the Father such that I love those that He loves? When sinners repent, do I rejoice and accept them as brothers and sisters?
6. Am I inwardly muttering about how hard I work and how unappreciated I am instead of rejoicing and celebrating with the Lord?

## **ACTION PLAN**

Read Luke 15. Then re-read and write answers to the application questions. Spend time in prayer and ask God to give you the same heart of compassion for people that God has. If there are things you need to confess to Him, do so. If you need to confess to others or to make plans for positive steps towards relating to others as God relates to you, write these down along with how you will do it.

SPIRITUAL  
CHARACTER

LESSON  
**13**

# Grace Is For The Humble

## ☛ Lesson Purpose

The purpose of this lesson is to show how the Christian life must be lived in humility. Strength comes out of weakness... and the Christian life must come out of humility.

## ☛ Main Points

- Christians should be characterized by humility.
- We are called to minister not in our own strength, but in the power of the Spirit.
- Prayer expresses humility towards God.

## ☛ Desired Outcomes

When the content of this lesson has been mastered, each participant should:

- Understand how to serve with humility.
- Know the principle that strength flows from our weakness.
- Make a commitment to a dependent relationship with the Father.

## ☛ Suggestions to Trainers

The humility test is very powerful. It may lead to a time of repentance for the participants. Look for the opportunity to deal with personal spiritual issues wherever possible. Look for good ways of illustrating the concepts in this lesson from your own personal experience.

## INTRODUCTION

Many Christians struggle to maintain humility. Some Christians—even leaders—start out humble, but after some success in ministry, they develop a subtle pride or self-confidence that contradicts Christian humility. Perhaps nothing is more deadly to a Christian than pride – and church planters are not exempt from this either. Not only does pride create barriers between Christian brothers, but it is also one of those things that the Lord hates (Pr 6:16-17).

Jesus made it very clear to His followers that they should not be self-serving (Mt 20:20-28; Jn 13:1-16). Many worldly leaders use intimidation or an attitude of superiority to get followers to submit. These things should never be characteristic of a Christian (Mt 20:25,28; 1Pe 5:1-7). On the contrary, humility should be the mark of all Christians, with the leader setting the example as Christ did.

### I. HUMILITY—WHAT IS IT?

What comes to your mind when you hear the word “humility?” Many people think of humility as lowliness. We sometimes describe the poorly dressed, poorly fed, poor man as ‘humble.’ While God wants us to be humble, He does not want us to think of ourselves as poor beggars, or paupers. The Scriptures tell us we are His children and joint heirs of His kingdom with Christ. To believe anything else is a great distortion of biblical truth.

Purposely taking the lowest place seems wrong to the world...

Humility is ‘not thinking of yourself more highly than you ought’ (Ro 12:3). The humble person does not draw attention to himself, nor does he do things to state his own importance. Purposely taking the lowest place seems wrong to the world – and maybe even to some of us. But it is the path to

righteousness and the way that Christians, especially leaders, display the Gospel to those around them. Our flesh despises the low place and we have a battle on our hands to take the lowest place. But it is in this place the humble will find grace (Lk 14:10).

**“God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble”** (1Pe 5:5). He does not leave us in our foolish pride. He wants us to be humble. It is from the humble place that we understand how great God is. Do you ever see yourself as being in conflict with God? Could it be that some of the struggles we face are actually God’s efforts to teach humility?

Perhaps the best way to understand humility is to examine ourselves. The twelve questions listed in Table 13.1 will help us understand humility while revealing some of the ways in which we fall short. Consider each question carefully.

**Table 13.1 The Humility Test**

1. How do you take criticism?
2. Do people find it easy to come to you? Are you approachable?
3. Are you frequently involved in power struggles and arguments?
4. Do you find yourself thinking everyone else is wrong but you?
5. Does anger lurk beneath the surface of your life?
6. Are you able to rejoice when you hear of others' successes?
7. Would others think of you as a critical person?
8. Do you find yourself frequently defending yourself to others?
9. Are you a good listener, able to concentrate on others rather than your answer or what is the right thing to do?
10. Do you purposefully take the lowest place? (Luke 14:7-11)
11. Are you merciful and gentle, or is there a hard edge to your personality?
12. Is prayer the first movement of your heart?

## II. EXAMPLES OF HUMILITY

### A. Jesus

The Apostle Paul clearly states that Jesus is our example for humility. We learn in Philippians 2:5 that we are to have the same attitude as Christ Jesus, who humbled Himself even to the point of death.

Our example for humility, Jesus, was perfect in all things. Yet, the **perfect man—Jesus Christ—was perfectly dependent!** Note what Jesus said about Himself: *“I will tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by Himself; He can only do what He sees the Father doing, because whatever the Father does, the Son also does”* (Jn 5:19-20). If anyone did not need to be dependent, Jesus was the one. But dependence is not a sign of weakness, but rather a sign of strength. This is the upside-down way of looking at both leadership and the Christian life.

Humility is a recognition that "I am dependent upon God for whatever I need to accomplish."

Humility is a recognition that “I cannot do it alone. I am dependent upon God for whatever I need to accomplish.” In the world’s eyes, such an admission is seen as weakness, not strength. Maybe that is why so many of us have such a struggle with the concept of humility. We let the world set our standards, not God.



**B. Paul**

The great church planter Paul had much to be proud of by human standards (Phil 3:4-11, 2Co 11:22-29). However, we can see that Paul grew in humility over the course of his ministry. Notice that early in his ministry he describes himself as “the least of the apostles” (1Co 15:9). Later, in his letter to the Ephesians, he calls himself “the least of all saints” (Eph 3:8). And in the last phase of his life he describes himself as the “chief of all sinners” (1Ti 1:15).

Paul also had a “thorn” which we do not completely understand, but which he asked God to take away. Note his comments concerning this request: *“But he said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly about my weakness so that Christ’s power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong”* (2Co 12:9-10). It was more important from God’s perspective for Paul to testify through means of “the thorn” and live in humble dependence on God, than for Paul to be free from the thorn and be proud. God wants His children to depend on Him. God wants you and me to depend on Him.

Our self-righteousness is another form of independence. Compare and contrast the man who is strong on the outside (strong in himself) but weak on the inside with the leader who is outwardly weak but inwardly strong (see Table 13.2).

**Table 13.2 Saul and Paul**

<b>Saul:</b> <i><b>Outwardly Strong</b></i> <i><b>Inwardly Weak</b></i>	<b>Paul:</b> <i><b>Inwardly Strong</b></i> <i><b>Outwardly Weak</b></i>
<p>This man was very strong in his determination to “do the right thing.” His zeal even drove him to put Christians in jail. As a Pharisee, he followed the law strictly. He may have been outwardly flawless, but inwardly he was wasting away (Php 3:4-11).</p>	<p>When Saul was converted, he became less dependent on his own zeal to accomplish things and more dependent on the Father’s strength working in him.. He was no longer interested in how he was perceived outwardly and chose to take the lowest place. Think about how Paul humbled himself with the Corinthians. <i>“Who is not weak and I do not feel weak? Who is led into sin, and I do not inwardly burn?”</i> (2Co 11:29). <i>“May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ..”</i> (Gal 6:14). We see a man who was powerful because he did not care what others thought of him. He cared about what Jesus thought about him and as a result, became a powerful person used by God in a mighty way.</p>

**III. PRAYER EXPRESSES HUMILITY TOWARDS GOD**

Many Christians have little knowledge of how to live in dependence and trust when life seems out of control. Unfortunately, prayer can be another way for us to display independence. Sometimes we pray to gain control of situations that we feel are out of control. But real prayer is about God being in control. It is an acknowledgment of complete dependence on God. The humble man does not pray in an attempt to gain control of situations. Rather, he prays to be linked to the purposes and plan of God. Does this describe your prayers?

**IV. CHRISTIAN LIFE CHARACTERIZED BY HUMILITY**

Pride keeps us from recognizing our need to depend on God. We started out the Christian life as beggars and God gave us bread to eat. He provided for us much like He did for the Israelites wandering in the desert. Each day, they needed bread from the Father to sustain them. That is the same situation

we are in. But when we decide we no longer need the bread, we get into trouble. We are no longer beggars but rather have our own source of bread. This is independence and it comes with our love for our own righteousness.

Pride and independence also make leaders the dispensers of the bread rather than the guides to where the bread is. This is a dangerous move away from the Gospel. We figure that we have what people need rather than Jesus having it. We encourage dependence on us rather than Jesus. As leaders, we need to take people to the One who has the power, the food, the comfort and the forgiveness.

Pride and independence make leaders the dispensers of the bread rather than the guides to where the bread is.

1 Peter 5:1-4 gives some principles for those wanting to be church elders or leaders. They should be described in the following four ways:

- Shepherd
- Willing to Serve
- Not lording it over others
- An example

The kind of leadership described above is extremely loving and servant-oriented. A follower would naturally want to respond favorably toward the leader who meets the criteria above. People normally do not want to hurt someone who loves them. This is why it is very natural for Peter, in the very next verse (1Pe 5:5), to encourage the young men, no doubt the followers of the elders, to submit to their leadership.

We also learn in verses 5 and 6 that “all” are to seek humility: *“Clothe yourself with humility.”* In other words “seek it.” *“Humble yourselves”* (vs. 6) is a command, not an option, from the Holy Spirit. This exhortation is not just for the leaders or for the followers. It is for everyone.

The following table can help show the difference between the Christian who lives independently and the one who lives in dependence on God.

**Table 13.3 - Independence verses Dependence**

Independence— <i>PRIDE</i>	Dependence— <i>HUMILITY</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The independent person has a “success/failure” view of things.</li> <li>• Unbelief is a normal pattern for this person because he knows he has limits.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The person who depends on Christ understands that Jesus is in charge. He lives with this confidence.</li> <li>• Faith is central to this person’s life. The only failure is unbelief.</li> </ul>

**CONCLUSION**

Are you filled with pride or are you characterized by humility? If you are not humble, then you are missing out on great blessings from a mighty God who gives grace to the **humble**. Talk to your mentor about your need to be humble before God. Make this a matter of prayer.

**QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION, REVIEW AND APPLICATION**

- Why do you think many Christians, including leaders, struggle with humility?
- In what ways do you find it hard to be humble?
- Why does God give grace to the humble?
- What difference does humility make in the life of a church planter?

**ACTION PLAN**

- Find an accountability partner, a person with whom you can share honestly and openly.
- Ask your accountability partner to help you monitor the items included in the humility test.
- In your spiritual journal, document the changes you see taking place in your life.

THE FAMILY

1

LESSON

# Biblical Roles in the Family

## ☛ Lesson Purpose

The purpose of the lesson is to present a clear biblical and foundational teaching for marriage and the role of the husband, wife and children in a family.

## ☛ Main Points

- In marriage, God is able to complement the strengths and weaknesses of the husband and wife to make them complete, which enables them to best serve Him.
- The ministry of a church planter includes his family, since the family is a visible and biblical indicator of leadership ability and discipling effectiveness.

## ☛ Desired Outcomes

When the content of this lesson has been mastered, each participant should:

- Understand the purpose of marriage from the perspective of the One who ordained it.
- Have a better understanding of the biblical teaching about the roles of the husband and the wife in the marriage relationship.
- Understand family relationships as an analogy of the Church.

## INTRODUCTION

The Church has become the centerpiece of God's kingdom on earth. Within this community of believers, God has called all of His children into loving relationships with Himself and with each other. Some have been called to serve the Lord and the Church in a state of singleness and others in a state of marriage. But whether married or single, everyone has been placed in a family.

The family is one analogy used to describe the Church. Your understanding of the relationships in physical families will influence the way you look at the family of God. It is important, therefore, that you as a church planter understand biblical roles within the family for your own life and ministry. Moreover, Paul, writing to his young leader Timothy, reminds Timothy of the responsibility of a leader within the church. Paul asks, "If a man does not know how to manage his own household well, how will he take care of the church of God?" (1Ti 3:5). This thought-provoking question challenges all church leaders, especially the church planter, to evaluate his own ministry within his family. How is his management of his family if his family is a proving ground for his leadership ability in the church?

"If a man does not know how to manage his own household well, how will he take care of the church of God?" (1 Timothy 3:5)

As you are busy with responsibilities for doing evangelism, discipling, and training leaders, seeking that the new church plant grows well, you must also remember that your own family remains the clearest indicator of leadership ability and discipling effectiveness. If the church planter develops habits that fail his ministry to his family, these may carry over to the new church as well. A church planter must give attention to his family relationships as part of his overall work of ministry.

## I. THE MARRIED COUPLE

The basic unit of the family is the married couple. Reading the story of creation in Genesis, we see that when God created man in His image He created him male and female. These two people living together

as one (Ge 2:24) were a reflection of the image of the triune God who lives in perfect unity in diversity. As one, they were to live in a loving relationship that would result in reproducing children. They were given a task to perform: to rule over the fish, birds and animals of the earth. When they sinned, disharmony entered the loving relationship, reproduction was with pain, and instead of ruling over the earth they tried to rule over each other.

Part of the redemptive work of Christ is the restoration of the image of God within the marriage relationship. There are three principals that will serve as a foundation for the discussion of the roles within marriage.

### A. Three Guiding Principles

1. *Husbands and wives have equal worth.*

From Galatians 3:28 we realize that God has designed *husbands and wives with equal worth*. A person's value is not based on function, or role, but rather on the fact that he or she is created in the image of God.

A person's value is based on ... the fact that he or she is created in the image of God.
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2. *The husband and wife are to be interdependent.*

In 1 Corinthians 11:11, we see that God has designed *the husband and wife to be interdependent*. The church is made up of men and women of all kinds of personalities. One of the distinguishing factors of the church is that its members coexist in unity. There are different depths in these relationships, but the marital relationship may be one of the most complex. In a Spirit-filled marriage, interdependency will be beautifully modeled. And of course this witnesses to the interdependency that exists in the Godhead.

3. *There is an order of responsibility in the family.*

From 1 Corinthians 11:3, we understand that God has designed *an order of responsibility in the family*. Just as there is a functional order in the Godhead, there is as well a functional order in marriage. God is the head of Christ, who is the head of every man, who is the head of his wife.

## II. THE ROLE OF THE HUSBAND

### A. To Be the Head of the Wife: Ephesians 5:23

Paul states that the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the Church. This leadership involves responsibility and accountability before God for the family. Since the emphasis of the passage is on the husband's love for his wife, this is the most important part of his responsibility.

Husbands are to seek the best for their wives, even at their own expense. Headship defined this way becomes a high and holy calling. As church planters, the future of your marriage and/or of those who will be a part of your ministry depend on absolute clarity about this role. Headship is a calling to empower another human being; it's not a license to indulge one's self. One very practical outworking of this concept is in the area of spiritual gifts. The husband should be actively involved in assisting his wife discover her spiritual gifts. This will be an ongoing adventure as a wife's gifts are discovered, developed and released into ministry.

However, some people argue that according to Genesis 3, man is supposed to rule over his wife. The actual text of Genesis 3:16 does state: "...your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you." The Hebrew word translated "rule" means to dominate, to keep beneath, to rule over as an absolute sovereign. The word is used of kings and public officials throughout the Old Testament. But keep in mind that Genesis 3:16 is a statement of the curse, not of the kingdom. It foretells how fallen men will dominate women and subjugate them to positions of lower status. This has been the case in thousands of cultures over thousands of years.

Harsh dominance is not the way of Christ. So when Paul says that a man is the head of his wife as Christ is the head of the church, he's not supporting the curse—he's breaking it! He's showing how men can break the cycle of misery and the "me-first" mentality that the fall inaugurated.

So what was the leadership style of Christ?

This style is outlined in Luke 22:25-27 and is described as servant-leadership. "Servant" and "leader" are not terms that combine naturally. They seem to be in opposition. Yet, in God's kingdom, to be the "head" is to be this unique blend of leader and servant. It's true that men have been given authority to lead their wives, but the style is to be that of a servant, not as a lord. The aim, then, is to be a source of life to them. The husband's leadership of his wife is to be modeled after Christ's leadership of His bride, the Church. Christ doesn't exploit the Church. He doesn't dominate her, or force His leadership on her. On the contrary, He earned the right of leadership by expending Himself for His bride, and ultimately by dying for her. According to the model of Christ, leadership of the husband over his wife is characterized by:

The husband's leadership of his wife is to be modeled after Christ's leadership of His bride, the Church.

- Responsibility, not rank
- Sacrifice, not selfishness
- Duty, not domination

## **B. To Care for the Core Needs of the Wife**

Consider Peter's admonition in 1 Peter 3:7, "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."

Wives need their husbands to live with them in an understanding way. This means that husbands need to relate to their wives knowledgeably, aware of the fact that they are different from men. Besides the obvious physical differences, there are vast psychological and emotional differences. Husbands should then give attention to the following three core concerns.

### *1. Companionship*

The first is that wives need companionship. God designs women for deep, ongoing relationships and they expect their husbands to meet that need. They want and need the companionship, availability and interest of their husbands.

### *2. Security*

The second need is security. A woman needs the security of a man. She needs to know he can protect and provide for her. She needs to be able to trust him. Biblically, these things are the responsibility of the husband (1Ti 5:8).

### *3. Significance*

The third need is for significance, which is a need shared by both husband and wife. The husband often receives significance from his job, his role in the church, or other activities outside the home. But so much of what the wife does is hidden from view. The one person who can really appreciate her unique contributions, the one who can honor her accordingly, is her husband. She is a friend, a nurturer, and a soul mate. Part of the leadership role is to make her feel honored and not taken for granted.

## **C. To Carry Out the Duties of a Father**

The main responsibility of a father is to bring up his children in the training and instruction of the Lord (Eph 6:4). This includes teaching them the ways of the Lord (De 6:7), and disciplining them as necessary (Pr 19:18, 22:6, 23:13,14, 29:17).

### III. THE ROLE OF THE WIFE

Proverbs 31:10 asks the compelling question, "An excellent wife, who can find?" For a woman to be an 'excellent' wife is for her to understand God's design for a wife and, by His grace, to be conformed by Him to that design.

#### A. A Helpmate

God created the woman to be a helpmate to man (Ge 2:18). She is the emotional and physical complement that makes a man more suited to His purposes and service before God. She does not make him whole in the spiritual, emotional or physical sense. However, she does make him more complete than he was by himself without her. She brings to him perspective, emotions, gifts, and weaknesses he himself does not possess. Together, sealed and gifted by the Holy Spirit, the husband and wife are complete and are best able to serve the Lord.

Together, sealed and gifted by the Holy Spirit, the husband and wife are complete and are best able to serve the Lord.

#### B. Supportive

As she is complementary to her husband, the wife is also a support to him. Support of him is part of her "chaste and respectful behavior" (1Pe 3:2) toward him. She knows his strengths and weaknesses, and she builds him up for his work. Proverbs 14:1 shows that a woman can build up or tear down her house. She can build up the emotional strength and resolve of her husband, or she can help to destroy him, shaming him and being as "rottenness in his bones" (Pr 12:4b).

#### C. Submissive

The wife also has the responsibility to be submissive to her husband. There is no more often repeated command for the wife than for her to be submissive to her husband (Eph 5:22, Col 3:18, 1Pe 3:1), a characteristic of godly women such as Abraham's wife, Sarah (1Pe 3:6). And yet, her position of submission is a very powerful one. By faith she submits to her husband and appeals to her heavenly Father. Like the king's heart (Pr 21:1), the husband's heart is in the hand of God. As she submits to her husband, she submits to God and allows His hand to move in the life of her husband. By her acts of submission, she allows God to win her husband to greater obedience to Himself (1Pe 3:1). She is not commanded to rebel to sway her husband's opinion. She is commanded to submit by faith in order to release God's hand to work in her husband's life and her own.

#### D. A Manager

Scripture gives the model of an industrious wife who labors for her husband's and her household's profit (Pr 31:10-31, especially verse 11). Unlike the wives of Samaria who, in Amos' time, oppressed the poor and needy and made insatiable demands upon their husbands (Am 4:1), the woman of Proverbs 31 fears the Lord (v. 30), serves her husband (v. 12), builds up her house (v. 27), causing her husband's reputation to increase (v. 23) and for him to trust in her (v.11). Her secret is that she is an able support for her husband, caring for and managing his household, making it a harmonious and profitable place that produces much good for him. She serves him, holding him in esteem, though managing his home more ably than he could. The husband can only glorify God for His goodness in giving her to him (Pr 19:14).

#### E. A Mother: Titus 2:4

The core role of a woman doesn't stop with loving her husband. Titus 2:4 goes on to encourage her to be a "child-lover." Children, especially young ones, need tremendous doses of personal attention, support, and of course love. Children need the awesome power of their mother's presence. According to many childcare experts, healthy, normal child development requires a close, loving, and sustained relationship with at least one person during a minimum of the first two years of life. Titus indicates that the mother should provide that care, but the dominant cultures of

our day are, for the most part, abandoning these Scriptural principles and instead are *seeking their own self-interests*.

#### **IV. THE ROLE OF CHILDREN**

##### **A. To Obey Their Parents in the Lord**

Ephesians 6:1 says, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right." This instruction from Paul to the church in Ephesus raises several questions that the church planter should address:

- Is he referring to minors only?
- Should adults continue to obey their parents, even if no longer living in their parents' home?
- If an adult remains in his or her father's house, does this apply?
- Does the "in the Lord" mean that if a parent is not a Christian, the child does not need to obey him or her?

##### **B. To Honor Their Father and Mother**

Paul's instruction quotes from the Old Testament and reminds the Ephesians that this is the first commandment with a promise: "that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth" (Eph 6:2-3, De 5:16).

#### **CONCLUSION**

This lesson is of value to you either as a single or married church planter. As you understand the biblical roles with the family, your own life will be strengthened, your entire congregation will be helped and the community in which you live will see the oneness and love of God modeled through you personally and through the teaching and counseling opportunities that God will give.

#### **QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION, REVIEW AND APPLICATION**

- If you are a single person, how can this lesson be of benefit to you in your ministry?
- If you are married, can you say that your marriage mirrors God's image by demonstrating oneness?
- Are you experiencing companionship in your marriage? What does this look like?
- What factors in society and within marriage make it difficult today to be an effective spouse? What is the greatest struggle in being a good spouse?
- What factors in society and in the Church make it difficult to live as a single person today? What is the greatest struggle in being a single person?

#### **ACTION PLAN**

- Read 1 Peter 3:8-12. The attitude of selfishness destroys unity. Taking this into consideration, read once again the passage above and then list things you should do when your mate is selfish.
- A husband's servant-leadership is the only thing that makes a wife's submission reasonable. A passive husband makes submission impossible and a domineering husband makes submission intolerable. Servant-leadership, on the other hand, makes submission a joy. In light of these thoughts, answer the following questions:
  - How would your becoming a servant-leader affect the ability of your wife to be submissive?
  - How would she respond in other areas if you were more of a servant-leader?
  - Does the Bible teach anything about to whose leadership single women are to submit? What guidelines can you find?
- In his letter to the church at Philippi, Paul addressed the issue of oneness among Christians. Read Philippians 2:1-4 and then think about how verse 2 explains how to achieve oneness in a relationship.

How can you apply these principles in your family life, whether in a marriage or in other family relationships?

- As church planters you will have many opportunities to provide biblical counsel to unbelievers and believers who have suffered from failed marriages or who are presently experiencing disunity within their marriage. As well, you will have opportunity to provide counsel to men and women who are contemplating marriage. Start a small group discussion with some unmarried men and women of your age that are contemplating marriage in the future. Guide them in discovering the biblical patterns discussed in this lesson and the practical outworking of these patterns.

## **SOURCES**

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THE FAMILY

2

LESSON

# Parenting

## ☞ Lesson Purpose

The Purpose of this lesson is to help church planters understand and apply biblical principles for parenting.

## ☞ Main Points

- Parenting requires walking by faith.
- God's Word gives us some principles that should be applied to parenting.

## ☞ Desired Outcomes

When the content of this lesson have been mastered, each participant should:

- Know what the Bible teaches about parenting.
- Be able to evaluate his or her own parenting by biblical standards.
- Develop ways to improve his or her parenting

## ☞ Suggestions to Trainers

Use this material to give the trainees the basic biblical principles. Resist the urge to "tell them how to do it." Leave time for discussing the questions at the end, either in small groups or all together.

## INTRODUCTION

Christian bookstores are full of books with instructions for Christian parents. These books contain many specific models, each claiming to be THE biblical way. But although the Bible does give us certain directives, what it does not give is step-by-step instructions for raising children. In this lesson we will look at some biblical principles that can be applied to parenting situations. Because each child is a unique person with unique needs, how parents apply the principles is a matter of prayerfully seeking wisdom from the Lord. Like the rest of the Christian life, parenting is a walk of faith.

In the Great Commission, Jesus instructed His followers to make disciples of all nations... teaching them to obey all things He had said. The role of a parent is like that of the church planter: to make disciples and to teach them obedience to God. For church planters who are parents, the parenting role has great significance: it is significant for the family members themselves, it is significant for their testimony to the world, and it is significant for the church. The way parents relate to their children is reflected in the way they relate to the church (1Ti 3:4,5). For church planters who are not parents, this lesson is still important because the same principles apply to helping spiritual children within their ministry.

## I. SOME INITIAL OBSERVATIONS

### A. No Guarantees

Contrary to what is often thought, the Bible does not make any guarantees that if parents do everything right, children will love the Lord and serve Him. A verse that is often cited as a promise from God is Proverbs 22:6, "Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it." If their children grow up and reject the Lord, they feel that the Lord has betrayed them.

Please notice that this verse is stating a principle of cause and effect: if you do "X" then "Y" will result. The book of Proverbs, which was written to help guide youth to righteous living, has many similar statements. Training children when they are young will start them down the path to righteousness. Rather than a promise that is true in all cases, this verse states a general principle that if parents train their children to obey the Lord when they are young, when they are old they will continue on His path. The fact that sometimes children do depart from the Lord in no way diminishes the principle or the parents' responsibility to train their children in the Lord's ways. Most children who receive such early training do continue in it.

### **B. No Perfect Children**

Why then do some children who have started out walking in the path of righteousness "turn from it"? Every person is a sinner who has choices to make. Proverbs 1: 29 speaks of those who "...hated knowledge and did not fear the Lord." Ultimately, every person must choose for himself whether or not he will follow the Lord. Even children with good training may make the wrong choice.

### **C. No Perfect Parents**

God is the only perfect parent; earthly parents are not perfect. No matter how much they love the Lord and their children, they will sometimes fail (1Jn 1: 8-10). No one has all the answers. Parents need to be constantly and prayerfully seeking the Lord's wisdom for training children in the way they should go.

## **II. SOME BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES**

Although there are no guarantees because of the sinful nature of both children and parents, God has given us certain principles to guide us in the training of children.

### **A. Model Love and Obedience for the Lord (Dt 6:4-9, 17)**

In the Old Testament, God commanded Israel to "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength... Impress (His commandments) on your children... Be sure to keep the commands of the Lord." They were to do this at home, walking along the road, when they lay down and when they got up. Loving God and keeping His commandments was to be a lifestyle that the parents should develop and pass on to their children.

### **B. Direct Your Children to Keep the Way of the Lord (Ge 18: 19)**

When speaking about the parents' responsibility to direct their children, the Bible often equates this with discipline. Verses like Proverbs 3:11,12 and Hebrews 12:5-11 remind us that discipline is necessary. But the reason for it is because the father (both Heavenly and earthly) loves the child. Whenever discipline is administered, it should be done with a love that has the best interest of the child in mind. The child must be able to discern that love in the midst of the discipline. The desired result is that the child learns to keep the ways of the Lord.

### **C. Do Not Exasperate Your Children (Eph 6:4)**

Many parents are so intent on the second part of Ephesians 6:4, bringing up their children in the training and instruction of the Lord, that they forget the first part, do not exasperate your children. Stories of Christian workers whose children have become bitter and turned from the Lord are numerous. These children often tell stories of parents who were overly strict, unfair, demanding and authoritarian: parents who exasperated their children in their zeal to train them to love the Lord. Unfortunately, often family devotions are seen as times the parents can preach at the children. The result is children who are bitter and resentful toward their parents and toward God.

## **QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION, REVIEW AND APPLICATION**

- What are some practical ways you can make love for and obedience to the Lord a lifestyle in your home?
- What are some practical ways you can check to see if your discipline is done out of love? What do you consider the biggest hindrance to that kind of discipline?
- What are some practical things you can do to make your family devotions a time the children will enjoy?

## **ACTION PLAN**

List some characteristics you desire your children to have spiritually, socially, mentally and physically when they are 18 years old. Then write the name of each child on a separate sheet of paper. List what you are doing or need to do to help that child attain each of these characteristics.

## **SOURCES**

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- Stanley, Charles. *How to Keep Your Kids on Your Team*. Nashville, TN: Oliver Nelson, 1986.

THE FAMILY

3

LESSON

# Ministry to the Family

## A WORKSHOP

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### ☞ Lesson Purpose

The purpose of this lesson is to provide an opportunity for an open and honest discussion of issues that may have an impact for the church planter and the balance between ministry and family.

### ☞ Main Points

- There must be a balance between the time spent in ministry to the family and ministry to the church.
- In the life and ministry of a church planter, problems will arise which relate directly to the spouse and children. These problems must be recognized, openly discussed, and a commitment must be made on the part of the church planter to prayerfully resolve them.

### ☞ Desired Outcomes

As a result of this workshop, each participant should:

- Understand that as a church planter, balance and unity in a marital relationship as well as in the home are foundational concepts to a healthy ministry.
- Practice a commitment to understanding one's family members and how their lives are impacted and have an impact on the ministry of the church planter. Strive to obtain balance and unity in family and marriage.

### ☞ Suggestions To Trainers

The examples presented here are used merely to stimulate discussion about the need to seek balance between a church planter's ministry, and marriage and family. Please feel free to utilize your own examples and discussion questions but make sure that your discussions touch on issues such as servant leadership, conflict resolution, proper decision-making in the home, appropriate ways to express love to one's spouse, accepting one's own and one's spouse's weaknesses and strengths, etc. Carefully prepare for this session by reading all of the scenarios and then develop your lesson time according to issues that are of concern to your trainees. The scenarios and questions provided may or may not be adequate to meet the needs of your particular context. In this case, feel free to develop your own examples and questions.

## INTRODUCTION

Often the question is asked, "Which comes first, family or the ministry?" The answer is neither. GOD comes first. Because we love Him, we serve Him. He has given us certain tasks to perform, all of which are part of our ministry to Him. To try and separate family and ministry is like trying to separate our spiritual life from our ministry. It is impossible, because they are interwoven. Our family is a part of our ministry.

The key to effective ministry in a church plant and in a family is balance. Some church planters and pastors take their commitment to ministry in the church to an extreme, and they effectively ignore their family. This is in direct contrast to the commands in the Bible for a father to instruct and discipline his children (De 6:7, Pr 22:6). How can a father do these things if he never sees his children or spends time with them? Consider Eli the priest, whose two sons were so wicked that God put them to death (1 Sa 2:34). God has given us the responsibility to raise our children because He knows that on their own, they will not make right choices.

Some church planters take the other extreme—they are overly preoccupied with their family, to the extent that they are not fulfilling the calling that God has given them as pastors and/or church planters. It can be very

easy for the family to become something that takes away our devotion from God. Jesus warned in Matthew 10:37 that anyone who loves his family more than Christ is not worthy of Him.

The qualifications for both overseers and deacons in 1 Timothy 3 require a more balanced view—a leader in the church is to be a man of one wife, who manages his children and household well. Just as individuals who fail morally disqualify themselves from ministry, so individuals who fail in their family lives also disqualify themselves from ministry. Every church planter who is married must strive to maintain a proper balance between the time that he spends with his wife and children, and the time that he spends with the church. Both are ministries, and both are his calling.

## **GUIDELINES TO THIS WORKSHOP**

The following scenarios discuss situations and problems that are common among church planters. As you work through them, look for similarities in your own life and ministry.

- Break into small groups at the beginning of the lesson time. Each group should deal with just one of the scenarios.
- Come up with biblical principles that could have been applied to the situation.
- At the end of the small group time, have everyone gather as a larger group and have each group present its findings.

*Note to Translator: Please change names in the following case studies to those common in your language.*

### **I. SCENARIO ONE—IGOR AND LUBA**

Rocked by the swaying of the train, Igor settled down for a welcome night's sleep. While it had been a busy five days during the training seminar, he was very encouraged by what he had learned and by the fellowship of others who had the same desire as his own: to start new churches. There had been such unity during the seminar. Everyone understood his struggles and concerns as they were all in the initial stage of establishing churches. Their times of prayer had been worshipful and empowering.

As Igor drifted off to sleep, contemplating the continuation of his church planting ministry, he felt a beautiful peace and a renewed sense of the powerful presence of God in his life. He couldn't wait to share his new ideas with his church planting team and start implementing them in his ministry.

Luba, at about the same time that Igor was drifting off to sleep, was in the middle of another of many family catastrophes since Igor's departure. As she rocked her and Igor's youngest baby (an 8 month old girl) she felt frantic. The flu had hit all three of her children in the last two days and now the baby Katya had a high fever and had been vomiting. Luba was exhausted. The continual needs of her children and the non-stop cleanup of messes related to the flu had brought her to the limit of her physical strength.

But flu was only the last of several problems since Igor left. Besides the extra work that his absence brought about, their refrigerator had broken down and a leak in the roof had damaged some of the living room wall paper during a recent rainstorm.

Having lived in this new town for just a few months, she had no one to turn to for help or even to talk to. She was looking forward to Igor's return. His help would be welcome, but even more than that she wanted to talk with someone about the burdens of her heart and soul related to the living in this remote area away from her family and friends and an easier lifestyle.

When Igor and Luba greeted one another at the front door they were very glad to see one another. He couldn't wait to talk about the previous week's events but there were more immediate problems that needed Igor's attention.

#### **QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER**

1. What are some immediate things that Igor could do to make the situation better?
2. How should Igor respond to the situation he finds at home?
3. Please state what you think Igor will want to talk about when he and Luba sit down for their talk.

4. What kind of burdens could Luba be carrying that she wanted to share with someone?
5. Igor's ministry requires him to be away from home frequently- sometimes for as much as a full week. How can he prevent another stressful occurrence like this?
6. How can he encourage her and help her to see herself as his partner in ministry?
7. How can a church planter with a family determine how much time he needs to reserve/set aside for caring for his family's needs?

## II. SCENARIO TWO—ANDREA AND TIBOR

Andrea was rejoicing about the young father whom her husband, Tibor, had just led to the Lord. She was so happy for Tibor because he was being used greatly by the Lord. In the last six months the new church had grown from a couple of families to 15. They were encouraged in this ministry but Andrea still had these haunting concerns and feelings. She had told Tibor about her need to talk but it seemed as if he was always so busy with his ministry that they never had time to talk. He came home almost every evening very late and dead tired. He said that it would be better if they talked when he was alert, but then he was up and out of the house early in the morning to go to some meeting or to talk to some new convert or to teach a class at one of the several cell groups which were meeting in their neighborhood. Besides her initial concerns, she was beginning to feel jealous. This church planting ministry was becoming a totally consuming love for Tibor that was taking her place in his life. She was feeling things that she didn't want to feel. She wanted to be supportive of Tibor and his ministry. That was her commitment to the Lord and to her husband. But she felt so isolated. This was a city that had no church before they came and until recently there were no believers. Now there were some women converts who were being discipled but they would never be able to understand her life as the pastor's wife. She wanted to feel like she was a contributing part of Tibor's ministry, but up to this point she hadn't been involved and she hadn't been asked to be involved. What could she do to get Tibor to slow down long enough to talk about these burdens on her heart?

### QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. From the facts of the story does it seem that Tibor was communicating with Andrea about her needs as a wife and mother?
2. Do you think Tibor was involving Andrea in his church planting ministry? Was there partnership and unity in their lives?
3. In what ways is Tibor failing as a husband?
4. What practical advice can you suggest that would help Tibor to become better at communicating with his wife?
5. What do you have to say concerning "balance" in this marriage?
6. How is Tibor living out Ephesians 5:25-26?
7. How can Tibor involve Andrea effectively in his ministry?

## III. SCENARIO THREE—NICU AND HIS FAMILY

Nicu had had a long week. He had made some major mistakes as a husband and a father. He had been humbled by his own sinful ways and now, after confession and repentance, life was taking on a positive look once again. But if anyone had asked him how he was doing these days, he would have had to admit that he was still angry. Here is the story:

One day his oldest son, Razvan, age 18 was watching a movie on their VCR in their home. He had borrowed it from one of his friends. Nicu walked into the room and sat down and joined Razvan. Soon after Lina, Nicu's wife, came into the room and joined them. After just a few minutes it became apparent to Lina that this movie was not appropriate for Christians to watch. She made her view known to Nicu and then left the room. Nicu followed her and explained that Razvan was old enough now to make decisions on his own about what he should watch and what he shouldn't watch. Lina argued that it was

their responsibility as parents while any of their children lived in their home to determine what should be watched, read or talked about in their home. Nicu was angry with Lina for confronting him about this, especially in front of Razvan. It was embarrassing as the head of the house to be confronted by his wife. So in somewhat of a vengeful way he didn't agree with her point of view and allowed Razvan to finish the movie.

That night when they were ready to go to bed, Lina raised the issue again but Nicu refused to budge from his position. He was even angrier with Lina now and he refused to pray with her before going to sleep. The next morning after a very miserable night of sleep, Nicu got up to have his devotions. He couldn't concentrate on his Bible reading, he couldn't pray because he was so angry. At the breakfast table, he made the announcement to the entire family that no videos would be allowed to be shown in his home again and there were to be no exceptions. The other children had no idea what was going on but they could tell by their father's voice and the tears in their mother's eyes that there was something wrong between them. Nicu had felt terrible about the whole situation. He was a pastor. He was involved in starting a new church and telling people about the love of Christ and the joy of the Christian life. He had no love and joy in his life due to this problem. But there was more to it than that. He knew that his wife was right about his responsibility to set the spiritual tone in the home. He was just too proud to admit his failure. He also knew that he was disobeying Scripture because he was not loving his wife as Christ loves the Church. This anger he had been feeling was in fact anger at his own body because they were one flesh. He had to correct the situation. So at the next meal, when the entire family was together again, he apologized for several things he had done that were wrong. He did so in brokenness and tears and asked for forgiveness from his family. They prayed together and good healthy discussion followed about the place of videos in their home.

#### QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Razvan is 18 years old, a young man! Why does he feel free to show improper movies on his parent's TV?
2. As evidenced in Nicu's response to Lina, what essential Christian attribute is missing in his life?
3. Was family meal time an appropriate "meeting" time to discuss this, or any significant family problem?
4. Why should there have been a difference of opinion in the thinking of a Christian couple on clear cut matters relating to spiritual or moral aspects of life?
5. What can you say about the communication and understanding between Nicu and Lina up to this point?
6. Should Nicu have been embarrassed by Lina's confronting him?
7. How can such occurrences be prevented in the future?

#### IV. SCENARIO FOUR—ANICKA AND MIREK

"See you soon!" Anicka called as she shut the door behind the last visitor. It was past midnight, and she had just enough energy to gather up the teacups and put them in the sink before slumping onto her bed. Her husband Mirek was already preparing for bed.

The phone rang early the next morning. Anicka ran to get it so that it wouldn't interrupt Mirek's study time. It was a friend from a neighboring city who was passing through town. "Could I stay at your house tonight?" he asked. It would mean extra work for her, but how could she say no?

Their life had certainly changed in the six months since they'd started planting the church. Anicka couldn't remember another time that had been so busy. When they weren't out in the neighborhood, it seemed as though the neighborhood was in their apartment. People were arriving for Bible studies, counseling, or meetings nearly every hour of the day. Anicka didn't resent that: other people were realizing what she already knew—that Mirek had a shepherd's heart. She tried to tell herself that she needed to be a supportive wife. But just because Mirek needed to be free to talk to people and help with their needs, did that mean that Anicka had to pick up all the rest of the duties?

Anicka thought back to the previous June, when they were sent out as church planters. Their pastor had encouraged them to work together and complement each other. The pastor knew that Anicka's gift of evangelism would be important in church planting. It proved to be true—the first new believers in their church were people Anicka had met and witnessed to. But now, she admitted to herself, she had little time to go out and do what she loved most: talk to others about Christ. Something had to change, and quickly.

**QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:**

1. Does Mirek and Anicka's lifestyle suggest that there is balance in their lives? Explain your answer.
2. What are Anicka's unvoiced expectations? What about Mirek's?
3. How could Mirek help his wife use her gifts?
4. Is it possible for spouses to be equal "partners in ministry?" (see Ac 18:24-26).

**V. SCENARIO FIVE—RENATA AND HER FAMILY**

Renata could tell by the look on her father's face that she had done something wrong. Did she forget a chore, or was this just his ongoing disapproval of her decision to follow Christ? She always tried to be careful to help around the house before going out to work with the church planting team. After all, her father made it clear that he felt a 26-year-old could better spend her time looking for a husband than leading a women's discipleship group.

Just that evening, the discipleship group had gone so well. Her co-worker Matthias had encouraged her to continue teaching women how to build the church and know Christ better. "I don't know what we would do without your help," he had said. "There's no way my wife could have led the group with two babies at home. We're so thankful that you're available."

Renata's mother entered the room and called her back to reality. "Renata," she started, "we need you to be home tomorrow night."

"Mom," Renata replied, "you know that's the night I meet with my team."

"Oh yes," her mother returned, sarcastically, "the important people in your life. How could I forget?"

Renata tried to control her temper and quickly stepped out of the room. She knew she was supposed to honor her parents, but the words she was tempted to say were far from respectful. Her feelings were a jumbled combination of anger and guilt. Why did she always react badly to her parents' comments? Why did they deliberately plan activities to keep her from what God had called her to?

More than anything, she wished she could afford to live on her own, but her work as a church planter meant she could only work part-time as a bookkeeper. Besides, it was still considered strange for a young, single woman to live outside of the shelter of her parents' household.

Sometimes Renata felt like she lived in two worlds: on the church planting team, she was praised and valued as a key player, and at home, she was criticized and treated like a slave. She knew which world she preferred, but she knew that, at least for now, she had to live in both of them.

**QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:**

1. Does the problem stem only from Renata's parents, or is she doing something to contribute to it? If so, what?
2. How can she honor her parents when they object to how she spends her time?
3. What would you suggest to Renata if she came to you seeking advice on her living situation?
4. What unique things must be considered when a single woman is helping to plant a church? How can other church planters be sensitive to those things?



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# **SPIRITUAL CHARACTER**

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SPIRITUAL  
CHARACTER

6

LESSON

# Living Like Sons Instead Of Orphans

## GALATIANS 4:1-7

### ☛ Lesson Purpose

The purpose of this lesson is to help the church planter become more sincere in his or her relationship with God, as he understands the truth and implications of his adoption by God.

### ☛ Main Points

- Life as a spiritual orphan leads to spiritual insecurity and self-reliance.
- Life as a spiritual child of God leads to a walk with God based on gratitude and faith.

### ☛ Desired Outcomes

When the content of this lesson has been mastered, participants should:

- Understand that they have been adopted by God and have become beloved sons and daughters.
- Understand how they can fall back into an orphan mentality, which paralyzes life and ministry.
- Become more confident of God's love as sons and daughters, being able to deal with failures, insecurities, and fears on the basis of their relationship with God, not on the basis of performance.
- Boldly evangelize and carry out the church planting task not as those who are alone, but as beloved sons and daughters who are in partnership with their heavenly Father.

### ☛ Suggestions to Trainers

Give the trainees the "tongue assignment" on the first day (found at the end of this lesson), then check to see how well they have fulfilled it after a few days. This assignment is simply to help us become more honest about the power of sin within us and our true need for grace and power.

Please note: the term 'son' is not intended to exclude women. 'Son' is used because Paul uses the term in his letter to the Galatians. Daughters are also children of God.

It would be helpful to share your own experiences related to this material. Be vulnerable!

## INTRODUCTION

The Word of God teaches us that we all have a Creator who wants to be a loving Father to us (Mt 6:26, 32). Because of our tendency to rebel, we have left Him to live our lives the way we want. This decision to turn away from God greatly impacts our thinking and our behavior. In many ways, it causes us to think and act like orphans.

In this lesson, we will consider together how we think and act like orphans, even as Christians. We will look at Galatians 4:1-7, which describes the kind of relationship that every Christian enters into with God. And finally, we will learn how to live more like sons/daughters who belong to the heavenly Father and are eternally loved by Him.

### I. LIFE AS AN ORPHAN

If you have ever visited an orphanage and have spent time getting to know these special kids, you may have noticed some patterns of thinking and behavior that are quite common among them. Here are a few.

### **A. Orphans are full of fear and great insecurity**

The neglect, and in some cases abandonment, by the parent leaves the orphan with a deep uncertainty about life and what possibly could happen next. For most of us, the unforeseen future isn't anything we worry about (too much), but with a child where the unthinkable has already happened (mom and dad aren't there for him), the future looks pretty scary.

### **B. Orphans live with an abnormal measure of self-concern**

Each orphan compares what he/she has against what the other children possess. For this reason the 'home mother' states that whenever a gift is given to one child, it ought to be given to every child. Even then, the children prefer certain colors, and terrible jealousy breaks out when one child receives a "special color."

### **C. Orphans carry a deep sense of aloneness**

Orphaned children have the sense that because their mom and dad have given them up (or have been taken away), that they really don't belong to anyone. With the biological "right" stripped away, there is no one "connected" to them and it is difficult for these orphans to believe that someone truly cares for them.

## **II. CHRISTIANS WHO THINK AND ACT LIKE ORPHANS**

Now lets first consider how we think and act like orphans ourselves. Orphans, as we have said, feel alone in the world. They are also full of fear and insecurity. Without a father or mother to care for them, they are full of concern for their own needs. They feel that they have to take care of themselves. *Does this sound anything like your own life?*

Perhaps we feel this the most when life seems to be falling apart or something goes wrong. How do we respond to our difficulties? What do we think? Don't we become anxious and panic? Don't we sometimes think that things go wrong because God with His many concerns has forgotten about us? We begin to worry or we become discouraged and give up. Many times, feeling that we are greatly misunderstood, we blame someone else for our problems. We consider ourselves to be the "victims." At other times, we get frustrated and take matters into our own hands by setting up strict controls. With these controls, we strive to stop the world from falling apart any further. In all these responses, we show our pride or lack of faith in what God has revealed about Himself and His relationship with us. We become spiritual orphans.

### ***Example***

A woman had become a Christian, but was unsure of God's love for her. One reason for this was because of an incident in her childhood with her own father. When she was very small, her sister and she were hanging up the wash outside. She could not reach the wash-line, so she decided to hang her dad's white shirt over the handles of a wheelbarrow, which were very rusty. Of course, when the shirt dried, it had become stained by these rusty handles. The shirt was ruined. When her father found out, he became unreasonably angry with her.

This child had done nothing wrong in her mind. She hung the shirt with the best of intentions, not knowing the consequences of hanging it on a rusty bar. Many fathers would have forgiven a child for such a thing or at least have scolded the child very mildly. Yet this father scolded her as if she had deliberately disobeyed, or rebelled against him. She grew up thinking that her father never loved her.

This is how we often view God. We think he is angry with us, that He is distant, that He is just waiting to punish us. We feel like we are never truly accepted and loved by Him. Our view of God is one of a judicious, unconcerned Judge. Our relationship with Him seems to be tenuous and uncertain, based upon how well we perform.

But this is not how our relationship with God is described in Galatians 4. We will not stop thinking and acting like orphans until we believe God's description of our relationship with Him. We need to understand the basis of this relationship, and the implications of our sonship. As we turn to Galatians 4, let's consider this analogy of our relationship with God (Read Gal 4:1-7).

### III. OUR SONSHIP WITH GOD

#### A. Analogy of a "full grown" son

The Apostle Paul confronts the error into which the Galatian Christians had fallen. As we look at the text, we see the Galatians had begun to forget how they entered into a right relationship with God, how they were to continue in this relationship, and how they would receive the promises of God. They had gone back to thinking that they had received salvation and acceptance by God, at least in part, because of their obedience to the law of God. Paul teaches them once again, that it is by faith alone in the Gospel that they have been justified before God and have received the Holy Spirit. On the basis of faith in the promises made by God through Christ, they see His present blessing and work in their lives. He concludes at the end of chapter three that the Law was given by God to reveal our true sinfulness and to lead us to Christ. After we have believed the Gospel and are in Christ, we are no longer under this law. We now are sons of God.

Paul then, in chapter four explains in fuller detail how we have been adopted by God and what our sonship truly means. He uses the following common practice of his day to give us a picture of this relationship that we now have with God:

When the son was young, though he was certainly the heir to his father's possessions, he remained under guardians and stewards, who were responsible for the upbringing and affairs of the child. During this time, the son had no rights to do business or make decisions that would affect the father's estate. In a sense, he was no different from a slave. At a certain time which was determined by each father, this restriction was taken away, and the estate was handed over to the son to govern as he saw fit. At this time, the heir became a full-grown son of "privilege." This is how we are described in our relationship with God. We are full-grown, privileged sons. Now, what does this mean for us?

#### B. The meaning of this analogy

As the Apostle Paul explains, before we are in Christ, we are held in bondage by the elementary principles of the world. For the Jew, the Law of Moses holds him in bondage and condemns him, preventing the promises of God from being received. The Gentiles also experienced condemnation from their conscience (Ro 2:14-15) out of which the moral and religious norms are formed. Whatever principles we first live under, these principles accuse us of our shortcomings and our unworthiness to be loved by God. We are held in bondage by them and sense our condemnation.

But in Christ, we are redeemed; the penalty of our sin is completely forgiven. We are released from this bondage of condemnation (Ro 8:1). Therefore, we are not to go on putting ourselves under this bondage. We should believe that we have been set free, having been adopted by God as privileged sons; receiving all the promises made to those who have been redeemed by Jesus Christ. To assure us that this release has truly taken place, God has sent His Spirit to dwell within us, to call out to our spirit that the sentence of condemnation has been taken away. God is no longer a judge to us but is now our loving Father. Paul uses the word, "Abba" which in those days was the most endearing description of a father (Ro 8:15-17). Our modern day expression of "Daddy" or "Papa" captures the idea of this term that speaks of God's endearment to us. God's justice has been turned to mercy. He no longer condemns us, but has adopted us so that He may grant all His promises to us.

God is no longer a judge to us but is now our loving Father.
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We can live with boldness and confidence because of whom our Father is. No more insecurity, no reason to prove our worth. No more fear of cruel punishment. No more loneliness. We have a loving father who will not abandon us. He loves us!

#### IV. HOW WE FAIL TO UNDERSTAND OUR SONSHIP

Why is it that we, adopted sons and daughters, often find ourselves acting like orphans? Why do we feel all alone, full of fears, and self-concern? It is because we trivialize the Gospel of Jesus Christ and its relevance to our lives. The Gospel is the basis of our sonship. When we fail to recognize the Gospel, we fail to understand our relationship as children of God. We do this in several ways.

The Gospel is the basis of our sonship. When we fail to recognize the Gospel, we fail to understand our relationship as children of God.

##### A. Trivializing the Gospel through pride

The Gospel is good news but it is also a strong medicine that can be hard to take. It humbles us, reminding us that we are sinners who cannot save ourselves. Even as Christians, we often exalt ourselves above others. We even think we really don't need God's help. We live for our glory and for our own selfish purposes. We live to accomplish our own goals, to exalt ourselves. If some activity or person doesn't contribute to our agenda, then we don't want anything to do with it or him. Our independence forces Him to let us alone to struggle on our own. We become orphans because of our pride.

The fact is, we have a great problem when we put confidence in our own ability (in the "flesh" - Gal 3:3). When we are prideful, we try to establish our own righteousness instead of relying on the righteousness of Christ. One indicator of this is always thinking about how others will perceive our actions.

For example, we even do this in the area of loving our family. Imagine the man who thinks, "I can love my wife and children, how hard can it be?" As he puts confidence in his own ability, he does the things that he thinks will please his wife. One day, after he comes home with a bouquet of flowers for his wife, she shocks him and says, "Honey, I really don't feel like you love me. I know that we are having some friends over for dinner tonight. Whenever we have someone over, you buy me flowers." The ulterior (self-exalting) motive to be seen as a loving husband before others was hidden in the heart of this man, so that he didn't even notice what he was doing. If we took a closer look at the way that we love our wives/husbands, we would probably see how poorly we truly do love them.

We have been born anew by the Holy Spirit and we have been set free from the mastery of sin. The Spirit now dwells within us to help us to overcome sin. However, we are mistaken if we think this means that the flesh itself has somehow been cleaned up (Ro 7:17-18) and we will no longer fight the influence of its evil desires. **We must be extremely honest with God about our sin.** We still have a serious problem with our flesh, and we must become deeply broken over this. We need to grow in our dependence upon the Holy Spirit to help us overcome such a strong force of evil within us. The Spirit's power can be released only as we sense our need for His help, but pride will keep us from realizing this need.

##### B. Trivializing the Gospel through unbelief

Another way in which we trivialize the Gospel is that we stop believing God's promise of grace based solely upon the death of Jesus Christ on the cross. Out of love, many of us seek to serve God and honor Him. We fail, and we are devastated by our failure. Again, we must repent- this time for our sin of unbelief. We must keep believing the truth of the Gospel, which tells us that it is by grace, and no other reason, we have been made children of God.

We must become much more honest about our sin and stop trivializing the Gospel if we are to understand the true nature of God's love for us and the rich blessing of our sonship with Him. This is so important. Otherwise, we will go on feeling alone, thinking that life is all up to us. Our failures will continue to haunt us, as our guilt is turned into condemnation. Our service to God will become a slavish obligation, the weight of which we cannot bear. We will become ungrateful toward God and others, unmoved by the reality that Jesus Christ suffered and died for our sin in order to make us privileged sons.

## **QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION, REVIEW AND APPLICATION**

- How have you trivialized your sin?
- How have you trivialized the Gospel?
- In what ways do you act like a spiritual orphan?
- Does God condemn His children as he does those who don't know Him?
- Why has God given us the privilege of sonship?
- How does understanding sonship help us to be honest about our sin?

## **ACTION PLAN**

### ***The "tongue assignment":***

For the next two days, do not gossip, do not speak badly about someone else, do not complain, do not defend yourself when someone talks about a fault, and do not boast of your achievements. Speak only good of others, give thanks to God in all things, honestly admit when you are wrong, and only boast of your weaknesses.

The tongue assignment will help you see the powerful influence that sin still has in our lives and our ongoing need for the grace of God. After this assignment you will have a deeper gratitude that God has made you His son not on the basis of your obedience, but on the basis of Christ's redemption for you. This is a lifetime assignment, but consciously fulfill it in the next two days.

SPIRITUAL  
CHARACTER

7

LESSON

# Learning To Be Sons

## ☞ Lesson Purpose

The purpose of this lesson is to move deeper into the applications of believers' sonship with God. Motivation for spiritual growth and ministry should come from a heart of love and gratitude toward God rather than fear and guilt.

## ☞ Main Points

- A heart weighed down can be set free
- A heart of pride can be changed into a heart in partnership with the Father
- A heart of self can learn to love others

## ☞ Desired Outcomes

When the content of this lesson has been mastered, each participants should:

- Understand the implications of adoption by God.
- Understand the practical, every day expressions of thinking like a son/daughter vs. an orphan.
- Live and serve with a greater conviction of God's presence and partnership.
- Live and serve with a new compassion for people, reflecting God's grace toward them.
- Serve the Lord with greater confidence, greater power, and greater love.

## ☞ Appendix

7A Orphans vs. Sons

## ☞ Suggestions to Trainers

As in the last lesson, the term "son" used commonly in this lesson is not intended to exclude women. The term "son" is used because Galatians uses the term. Daughters are also children of God.

## INTRODUCTION

The concept of adoption is foundational to how God now relates to us. How a believer understands this has daily impact upon his thinking, attitudes, actions and present relationship to God. This is an in-depth study of the ramifications and applications of adoption by God.

In order for a person to more significantly comprehend his adoption by God (which has made the believer a "son of privilege"), it is important to think through the common mindsets that are present in day-to-day thinking. How often do we function like orphans instead of like children of God? It is important that the Holy Spirit open our eyes to these matters.

There are three primary areas in which we can evaluate whether or not we are living like orphans or sons. Consider the following:

### I. A HEART WEIGHED DOWN VS. A HEART SET FREE

The first "measuring stick" is whether or not you typically have a heart that is weighed down and feeling defeated, or a heart that is set free. Obviously, there are different reasons why a person's heart may be

weighed down, but in this context, the heavy heart is caused by the weight of our guilt and a sense of unworthiness.

As we grow in the Christian life, we grow in the awareness of sin. King David said, "For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me" (Ps 51:3). For a young Christian, it can be very devastating to feel the weight and reality of personal sin.

For example, when "Sergei" first turned to God and received forgiveness for his sins through Jesus Christ, he felt such incredible joy. He was like a man let out of prison, and his deepest desire was to please God in everything that he did. It didn't take long before he failed in something and became very disappointed. His sin so overwhelmed him that for many weeks, he was discouraged and even depressed. He struggled to believe that God still loved and accepted him. He wasn't able to settle this issue until he finally discovered the truth about God's relationship with him.

In Romans 8, God tells us what He thinks of His children, even when they fail. Six questions are asked: "What shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up for us all- how will He not also, along with Him, graciously give us all things? Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God Who justifies. Who is he that condemns?... Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" (Ro 8:31-35).

Whenever someone asks six questions in a row, it is obvious he is not looking for an answer. It is the same case here in this passage. The answer is obvious: God is not looking for an answer from man, but is making a statement to him: "I love you, I don't condemn you, and nothing will separate you from My love."

This declaration became clear to Sergei when he finally saw the basis for God's love for him in verse 39. God says nothing "will be able to separate us from the love of God that is *in Christ Jesus our Lord*." That final phrase provides the basis of God's unchanging love. It is based in Christ Jesus the Lord. Not in the believer, but in Him because of what He did on our behalf. Sergei discovered that if God were to stop loving him, He would be denying what Jesus Christ, had accomplished on the cross. He would have to say that His Son's death was not enough! God could never say that, and therefore, God can never stop loving His children.

God can never stop loving His children.
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When Sergei discovered this, he again became like a prisoner who had been set free. The burden of his failure was lifted, and he was given new freedom to acknowledge his sin and then to disown it, claiming Christ's blood and righteousness for his own. Previously, Sergei had repented of his sin, but did not continue to believe in the finished work of Christ on the cross. Ironically, he discovered that his pride kept him from doing this. It was hard for Sergei to admit to God that his need for Christ was just as great as it was on the first day he had believed. As he humbly admitted his need, joy again filled his heart. He had never felt so deeply and unconditionally loved.

God wants to set every believer's heart free with this kind of love. Love that is not deserved; love so unconditional, love so abundant, that people can't help but love Him back.

It is easy to feel unworthy and undeserving. However, God keeps showing love anyway. And if a person's heart is not set free by this love, then his faith in Christ's work on the cross is too small. In essence, he is trivializing the Gospel message. God said, "It was for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery" (Gal 5:1). Jesus said, "For my yoke is easy and my burden is light" (Mt 11:30). It is only as we build our lives on sonship with God that we can experience this freedom. If our lives are based on anything else, our hearts will be continually weighed down.

## II. A PROUD HEART VS. A HEART IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE FATHER

Anatoli was born in a strong Christian home. He repented of his sin and found salvation at a very young age. All his life, he had been able to maintain an excellent Christian testimony in spite of many who tried to discredit him. Anatoli's strong commitment to the Lord inspired him to become a missionary in Siberia where he planted three churches among Buddhists in the past few years. Many looked to Anatoli as a model Christian, and if Anatoli were honest, he would admit that he felt like one. At least he would like to



feel like one. Deep in his heart, Anatoli was proud of his strong commitment to the Lord and he assumed that God was proud of him for this as well.

If you, like Anatoli, think God blesses you because you are so devoted to Him, you think too highly of yourself. Anatoli did not have the sin of unbelief like Sergei, but he, too, was an orphan. An orphan thinks he alone can solve problems. What demonstrates this more than anything is a person's reliance upon himself as opposed to his reliance (by faith) in God. Relying on oneself eliminates God's partnership in ministry. He is forced out, and the person is truly alone, but not because God has abandoned him. He is an orphan *by choice*.

The fruit of a person's life can indicate his motivation for ministry. Self-reliance bears the fruit of fear, tight control over others, worry, sleeplessness, doubt, defeat and a complaining spirit. If a person feels he has to fix everything and make it work, this is what he will produce. He may try harder, but will end up frustrated because often he cannot solve his problems in his own strength. This can manifest itself in wasted time or neglect of other areas of ministry or family life. If a person's problems are constantly on his mind, it will take his attention away from truly caring for others. It can also lead to sleeplessness, constant complaining, and other problems.

In order to break this independence, God will often bring a challenge into a believer's life so that he seeks God's presence and partnership in his life and ministry. This is what Jesus did in the life of His disciples. For example, when Jesus fed the five thousand (Jn 6), it seems that He had a particular lesson to teach His disciples- specifically, Philip. Jesus asked Philip, "Where shall we buy bread, for these people to eat?" The text says that He asked him this in order "to test him" (Jn 6:6). It was obvious that no human resource could provide for such a multitude of people. He was testing Philip to see if he had learned Jesus' true power and identity, and if he had learned to rely upon his Lord.

As children of God, the "messes" of ministry shouldn't unravel us, if we believe that God is in control; and if we surrender our messes to God.

When you face challenges that test your relationship with God, your response will demonstrate your view of God. Are you full of fear or do you know God is a loving, trustworthy Father? Have you redoubled your efforts—perhaps even come down hard on someone else—in order to get control of a messy situation? (One pastor excommunicated most of his church because they were not falling in line with what he wanted them to do!)

If the concept of sonship is applied to the way we think and function in our daily lives, we ought to become people of prayer, continually entrusting our lives and ministry to the care of God, assured that He is in control. God's Word teaches that God has works already prepared for His children to accomplish (Eph 2:10). Through prayerful dependence, we come in step with what God wants to accomplish through us. So we ought to continually invite people to join us in prayer, and continually go to God in secret, that we might understand what God has already prepared for us.

A son has a strong confidence that God is His beloved Father who truly cares about his concerns. As children of God, the "messes" of ministry shouldn't unravel us, if we believe that God is in control; and if we surrender our messes to God.

### III. A SELFISH HEART VS. A HEART FREE TO LOVE OTHERS

Whether we think like orphans or sons also penetrates into other areas. It greatly affects our relationships with others. When we are preoccupied with our problems, when we are under a load of concern, when we feel we are alone in this world, we become self-centered.

Consider a young boy named Dennis, a Russian orphan. He is full of energy and loves to have fun. He is also full of mischief. Once when Christians visited Dennis and the other orphans over the New Year holiday, they brought a few games to play. There was one game that the kids liked in particular, so the visitors decided to let them keep it. When Dennis found out that the people were giving the game to the group, he grabbed the game and wouldn't let go of it. The other orphans also fought for it, and the visitors had to step in, take the game from Dennis, and give it to the housemother.

What had been freely given to Dennis and the rest of the children became something each one felt he had to personally guard so that he would not lose it. They could not share it with one another.

We become the same way when we think that our heavenly Father doesn't truly care for us. We act like He is not strong enough to protect what He has freely given to delight our hearts. Many times, our orphan minds blind us from seeing the divine blessings He has given to cheer our hearts along the way. Even when we see His blessings, these become idols in our lives, because we feel we must cling to them to keep them. This perhaps is the saddest consequence of all. We are not led to delight in the Giver of the gift or to delight in the way He truly loves us. Ironically, when our possessions become the objects of our love, we never really feel loved ourselves. Our idolatry acts as a thief, stealing the most precious experience of our life- being loved by the Almighty.

Has this happened in your life? Has your orphan mind-set left you feeling unloved? Or do you feel you must tightly hang onto what God has given you for fear of losing it. Are you able to freely give to others, because you believe that God has freely and abundantly given to you?

## **CONCLUSION**

As you can see, how we view God and His relationship with us greatly impacts our daily lives. Motivation for spiritual growth and ministry should come from a heart of love and humility characteristic of a son, rather than a heart of fear and guilt characteristic of an orphan. In what ways do you see you have been living like an orphan, instead of a son?

## **QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION, REVIEW AND APPLICATION**

- How does an orphan see God?
- How does a son see God?
- What are the real reasons we see God in the particular way we do?
- How do we know that God still loves us?

## **ACTION PLAN**

In Appendix 7A of your lesson you will find a copy of the "Orphans vs. Sons" list. Go through this list, and then pick the three areas that you struggle with the most. Think of an example for each of the three areas in which you have experienced this struggle. For each example how do you want God to change you? Then commit this in prayer to your heavenly Father.



# Orphans vs. Sons

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Read the list below and pick the three areas that you struggle with the most. Think of an example for each of the three areas in which you have experienced this struggle. For each example how do you want God to change you? Then commit this in prayer to your heavenly Father.

<u>ORPHAN</u>	<u>SON</u>	
LIVING BY "TRYING HARDER." JESUS OUR FLESH'S "HELPER" Jn 14:18 "I will not leave you as orphans"	LIVING BY FAITH. CHRIST IS OUR LIFE! Jn 15:4, Gal 2:20 Ro 8:15 "He has given us a Spirit of Sonship"	
Feel alone; lack a vital daily intimacy with God; "a vacuum of self concern."	1.	Have a growing assurance that God is really <u>my</u> loving Heavenly Father (1Jn 4:16)
Full of anxiety over "felt needs;" friends, money, etc.; "I'm all alone and nobody cares."	2.	Trust the father and have a growing confidence in His loving care; freed from worry.
Live on success/fail basis; must "look good" at any cost; performance-oriented.	3.	Learning to live in daily self-conscious partnership with God; not fearful.
Feel condemned, guilty and unworthy before God and others.	4.	Feel loved, forgiven and totally accepted because Christ's merit really clothes me.
Have a "little faith," lots of fear, no ability to really trust God. "I've got to fix it."	5.	A <i>daily working trust</i> in God's sovereign plan for my life as a loving, wise and best plan.
Labor under a sense of unlimited obligation, trying hard to please, burnout.	6.	Prayer is the first resort; "I am going to ask my father first!" Daddy (Abba), Father!
Rebellious towards God and others; often spiritually cold and hard-hearted.	7.	Strength to be submissive; soft (broken and contrite) heart (Ps 51:17).
Defensive; can't listen; bristles at the charge of being self-righteous (virtually proving the charge).	8.	Open to criticism since I consciously stand in Christ's perfection, not my own; am able to examine my deeper motives.
Must always be right, safe, secure; unwilling to fail; defensive; unable to tolerate criticism; can only handle praise.	9.	Able to take risks—even fail. Since righteousness is in Christ, needs no record to boast in, protect or defend.
Self-confident but discouraged, defeated and lacking the Spirit's power.	10.	Christ-confident and encouraged because of the spirit working in me.
"I'll show 'em—just watch my smoke!" "Where others failed." (will power).	11.	"I can do everything through him who gives me strength" (Php 4:13).

<b><u>ORPHAN</u></b>	<b><u>SON</u></b>	
LIVING BY "TRYING HARDER." JESUS OUR FLESH'S "HELPER" Jn 14:18 <i>"I will not leave you as orphans"</i>	LIVING BY FAITH. CHRIST IS OUR LIFE! Jn 15:4, Gal 2:20 Ro 8:15 <i>"He has given us a Spirit of Sonship"</i>	
Self-effort; rely on gifts and abilities to get by in life and ministry.	12.	Trusting less in self and more in the Holy Spirit (with self-conscious daily reliance).
Complaining and thankless toward God and others; must tear others down; display a bitter, critical spirit.	13.	Rely on the Holy Spirit to guide the tongue for use in praise, edification, thanksgiving and encouragement (Eph 4:29).
An expert at pointing out what is wrong; always dissatisfied about something.	14.	Not blind to wrong, but choose instead to focus on what is good and lovely (Php 4:8).
Gossip (confess other people's sins); need to criticize others to feel secure; a competent analyst of other weaknesses; has the gift of "discernment."	15.	Able to freely confess faults to others and preferring to major on their strengths; don't always have to be right; finding that I am often wrong; eager to grow.
Always comparing self with others, leading either to pride or depression (depending on how bad or good others look).	16.	Stands confidently in Christ; real self-worth comes from Jesus' blood and righteousness, not man-made props (Php 3:9).
Powerless to defeat the flesh; no real heart victory over "pet sins," yet has lost sense of being a "big sinner."	17.	Resting in Christ, and seeing more and more victory over the flesh (Ro 8:1-9), yet seeing self as a "big sinner."
Relatively prayerless; prayer is a "last resort;" prays often in public, seldom in private	18.	Prayer is a vital part of the day, not confined to just a regular "quiet time;" Talking with the Father is a joy (1Th 5: 16-18).
The Bible's promises of spiritual power and joy mock self: "What has happened to all your joy?" (Gal 4:15)	19.	God's promises of power and joy are beginning to describe self (Ro 15:13).
Needs to boast; must constantly point out own accomplishments for fear that someone might overlook them (Gal 6:14).	20.	Finds that Jesus is more and more the subject of own conversation; boasts in the Lord and in own weaknesses (2Co 12: 9-10).
Unconsciously building "a record" of works that needs noticing and defending.	21.	Christ's righteousness is own "record," stands complete in Him (1Co 1:28ff).
Self-centered: "If they would only see things my way!" Deep need to be in control of situations and others.	22.	Becoming Christ-controlled; ministering in the power of the holy spirit, not in the strength of own "redeemed flesh."
Something other than Jesus can satisfy; "idols" in life (possession, position, passions) give sense of worthiness and justification.	23.	Christ is meat and drink; God truly satisfies soul. "...and earth has nothing I desire besides you" (Ps 73:25).
Little desire to share the Gospel(since own Christian life is so miserable) when sharing, tend to be motivated by a sense of obligation and duty, not love.	24.	Desire to see the lost come to know Jesus, shares the Gospel with others, <i>even when not under the outward pressure of a church program.</i> "...the love of Christ compels us" (2Co 5:14).



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# Mission to Children

~ Colleen Fitch



# 1

## Realizing our God-Given Responsibility

### Lesson Purpose:

- To establish the divine and biblical mandates for the spiritual care and teaching of children.

### Lesson Outcome:

- Students will know Jesus' exhortations concerning children's ministry.
- Students will know the Old Testament foundations for children's ministry.
- Students will understand the importance of the church's responsibility for children's ministry.
- Students will gain an overview of children represented in the Bible.
- Students will honestly and thoughtfully interact with and apply the lessons in their ministry settings and to their personal lives.

### Table of Contents

- The Example of Jesus
- The Mandate of God
- The Wisdom of Proverbs
- The Presence of Children in the Bible
- A High Calling
- Questions for Discussion

### The example of Jesus

*"He took a little child and had him stand among them. Taking him in his arms, he said to them, 'Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me does not welcome me but the one who sent me'" (Mark 9:36-37, NIV).*

When we welcome children into our homes and into the fellowship of the church, we welcome God. He delights in the children. We are to join Him in that delight and joy. Around the world, each culture and society has its own attitude towards children and its own understanding of the place and position that children should have in the family, local community, and society. One of the primary goals of this course is to examine the Scriptures and, in particular, the words of Jesus for the purpose of developing a biblical theology and Christ-like practice for the care and nurture of children in the communities where we are serving. Consequently, we must be willing to honestly evaluate and reflect upon our ministries and the cultural norms in our communities to determine whether or not they are biblically compatible. Would Jesus be pleased with our care for the children in our midst? This should be a question that is prayerfully kept before us as we study children's ministry.

*"And if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to be thrown into the sea with a large millstone tied around his neck" (Mark 9:42, NIV).*

The responsibility that we have to disciple our children is great, and it comes with a serious warning against failure. Notice that the option of the millstone is actually considered the better outcome as opposed to the consequences for injuring a child's faith or ability to follow God. This fact might cause us to tremble; but, thankfully, we can rest in the assurance that God will help us with this task. Throughout the Scriptures He repeatedly assures those He calls to ministry with the promise, "I am with you." Our responsibility is to be diligent in doing our best to care for the children in our homes, churches, and communities, humbly keeping in mind the precious worth of each child's heart, soul, and life to Jesus.

***People were bringing little children to Jesus to have him touch them, but the disciples rebuked them. When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, 'Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. I tell you the truth; anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter.' And he took the children in his arms, put his hands on them and blessed them" (Mark 10:13-16, NIV).***

Jesus was indignant—He was extremely angry and upset that the children were not being allowed to come to Him. Children are to be present in our worship, and we must recognize the truth that God is ministering to them no matter their age. Another key point that Jesus mentions is that children serve as a model for how an adult should receive the kingdom of God. If we, as adults, are not observing children and their faith response to God, we might miss out on an important example that we should follow. "The unseen God is real to children."<sup>1</sup> When children are nurtured in the community of true believers, the simplicity, innocence and sincerity of their faith can be a powerful testimony to adults whose hearts may have become hardened through trials and disappointments. Children trust God. They talk to Him. They ask Him questions and seek information. They know He's always present. They know He doesn't like sin. They believe, as we all should believe, no matter our age or what life experiences we have had.

## The Mandate of God

***"Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates" (Deuteronomy 6: 4-9, NIV).***

Through Moses, God instructed his people. The adults were given a dual responsibility: to obey and to teach their children to obey. The Hebrew verb for "impress" can also be translated as "teach or repeat over and over." It comes from a verb which means "to sharpen." Spiritual and Biblical instruction by parents and the people of God, the church, is to be intentional and definitive. At all times and in all places there are opportunities to talk with our children about God. In this way, children learn that the entire world belongs to God and that He is present in every moment of their lives. God's Word is to be present in our homes, not only through our words, but written out or represented through pictures and placed where it can be seen easily by the eyes of a child. The stained glass windows of the older churches in Europe were made to serve this very purpose. The people who could not read would look at the windows and learn the stories of the Bible.

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<sup>1</sup> Catherine Stonehouse. *Joining Children on the Spiritual Journey: Nurturing a Life of Faith*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Bridge Point Books an imprint of Baker Books, 1998) , 133.

This same mandate is seen even earlier in the life of Abraham.

***“For I have chosen him, so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing what is right and just, so that the LORD will bring about for Abraham what he has promised him” (Genesis 18:19, NIV).***

Paul, in the New Testament, re-iterates this same mandate.

***“Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:4, NIV).***

God has designed the family to be the center for Scriptural and godly instruction. The family has the greatest influence on the formation of the belief system and world view of the child. More than any other influence in the child’s life, what the family teaches and models for the children during the first twelve years of their lives will have a lasting imprint on their minds and hearts.

### **The Wisdom of Proverbs**

***Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it (Proverbs 22:6, NIV).***

King Solomon, still considered as the wisest man in the history of the world, knew that godly instruction must begin during childhood. Throughout the book of Proverbs, there are repeated exhortations to parents concerning the absolute necessity of moral and spiritual guidance early in the life of their children. The first seven chapters of the book of Proverbs contain the wise counsel of a father speaking to his son, warning his child to be wise in such things as the fear of the Lord, the choice of friends, the use of time, and in sexual purity. What greater gift can be given to a child than a life free of the scars that are created by the sins that the parent seeks to educate his child to avoid: immorality, AIDS, betrayal, or shame? If parents and the church do not teach these things, who will?

### **The Presence of Children in the Bible**

***For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be (Psalm 139:13-16, NIV).***

God’s presence and involvement with each person’s life begins at the moment of conception. Psalm 139 praises God for His marvelous personal care for each child even while that child is still in the womb. When a child is born, God remains present. His grace is active; yet, amazingly, He entrusts the care, nurture, and training of that child to its family and to the community where that child lives. We have the opportunity either to continue to build upon the wonderful work that God has begun or to destroy it through our words, actions, and involvement, or the lack thereof, in the life of each child.

Considering that God through His Spirit inspired the writing of the Scriptures, the presence of children throughout the pages of the Bible reinforces the truth that God’s love and involvement in the life of each person begins in the womb and continues each and every day. God does not wait until an individual is a mature adult to begin His relationship and instruction in that person’s life.



- **Cain, Abel and Seth**, the sons of Adam and Eve: God, Himself, tries to keep Cain from the snare of sin. Abel's actions show that he worshipped the Lord with all his heart.
- **Isaac and Ishmael**, the sons of Abraham: Even though Isaac is the son in the line of the promise, God cares for Ishmael and his mother, Hagar, when they are sent away to the wilderness.
- **Jacob and Esau**, the sons of Isaac: God pursues and assures Jacob until he finally understands that he can trust in the promises of God.
- **Joseph and his eleven brothers**, the sons of Jacob: God's hand is on the life of the precocious tattletale, and God remains faithful to him through many challenges until he arises as a man of integrity and mercy.
- **Moses and his sister Miriam**: God hears the cries of his people and keeps his hand on the life of Moses until he one day is the man of God who is equipped to lead the nation of Israel out of their slavery in Egypt.
- **Samuel**, son of Hannah: God calls to him when he is a little boy serving in the temple.
- **David**, son of Jesse: He had more courage than all the soldiers of Israel because of His great faith and trust in God. He was the youngest son, but the one God chose to be king because of what He saw in David's heart.
- **A Jewish girl**, servant of Naaman: She told her leprous master about Elisha. She recognized a need and gave wise counsel. (II Kings 5)
- **Josiah**, a boy king: He loved God and understood the importance of teaching and obeying God's Word.
- **Jeremiah**, the prophet: When God called him, Jeremiah complained that he was only a child. God responded that he calls both young and old to be his servants and promises His presence as an assurance of that call.
- **Daniel**, a Hebrew captive in Babylon: He was a young man who stood up for his faith even though he had been taken from his family and country.
- **Jesus**, the promised Messiah: He grew in wisdom and stature during his childhood years under the care of Mary and Joseph.
- **A boy with loaves and fishes**: He carried his lunch out to the countryside where Jesus was teaching. He wanted to hear Jesus too, and he was willing to give what he had to him. Over 5000 people were blessed that day because that boy went to hear Jesus teach.
- **Boys and Girls** who were physically and spiritually healed by Jesus: Jesus took time out from what he was doing to heal children.
- **Children** who sang in the temple just after Jesus turned the tables of the money changers upside down: Amazingly these children, unlike the Pharisees, understood that Jesus was putting things right. Matthew 21:15-17
- **John Mark**, a young follower of Jesus: He didn't do well on his first missionary journey with Paul, but Barnabas was willing to disciple him. Eventually Mark wrote one of the four gospels.
- **A boy** who sat in the window listening to Paul: When sleep overcame the boy, he fell to his death. Paul miraculously restored him to life.
- **Timothy**, Paul's spiritual son: People had affirmed his gifting and calling to ministry even as a young boy. Paul encouraged him to teach and pastor with boldness because even though he was young in years, he was mature in Christ.

From these examples, it can be observed that God and Jesus were directly involved with all of these children. Children can receive a call from God early in their lives to full-time Christian service. Children can worship God with all of their hearts. They can demonstrate great faith in His power and love. Children can love the word of God and can share it with others. Children can be messengers of God's truth to non-believers. Children want to learn about Jesus. Children, even those who are somewhat troublesome in their youth, can develop into spiritually mature adults. Children can recognize the presence of God. Children can stand up for their faith. Children can serve in the church.

## A High Calling

Roger Fields is the creator of Kidz Blitz ministries: <http://www.kidzblitz.com/>. He began his ministry as a pastor of adults, but eventually transitioned into the development of ministries that were intentional about reaching children and their families. Here are a few of the top twelve reasons why he believes that children's ministry is superior to other ministries. (My personal comments are included in the parentheses.)

1. **"Longer Results"**—Children who have just made a commitment to the Lord have their entire lives before them. Adults who accept the Lord have already squandered much of their lives. Children's ministry is the only place where you can impact one's entire life span."
2. **"Superior Challenge"**—Children vary widely with respect to age, comprehension, physical challenges, attention spans, etc. and therefore require more ability to educate...[Adults] are much easier to restrain and therefore less of a challenge in a group setting. It takes more ability and creativity to teach children. "(Fields sees this challenge as something positive, but unfortunately not all will agree with him. For many, this challenge is the very reason why children's ministry is not developed to its greatest potential. Working with children is not entertainment or babysitting; it's ministry with the youngest members in the Kingdom of God. It's not optional according to Jesus, so if it requires more study, more preparation, more patience, more energy, is it possible that the return on this increased investment is more blessing, more fruit, more believers and more of many other good things?)"
3. **"More Humility"**—Jesus made this point in Matthew 18. Children have a better grasp of their limitations than do adults. There are reasons why Jesus never asked the children to be more like the adults to enter the kingdom of God... [Children] understand that when they come to Jesus it is with nothing in their hands to offer Him." (This characteristic in children is one that many adults need to re-learn. Status, position, earning power, and rights unfortunately get mixed into adult faith and practice in church life and even into our relationship with Christ.)
4. **"More Participation"**—Children want to be involved. They don't want to sit and watch. Adults are too content to merely observe... Children desire to participate and serve." (Involving children is risky. You don't always know for sure what they are going to do. Yet, if the children's desire to serve is encouraged and given opportunity to flourish, imagine the possibilities and experiences that they will bring into their adult life of service and faith.)
5. **"Greater Warning"**—Jesus never warned that offending an adult would result in consequences worse than having a millstone tied around your neck and being heaved into the sea. He did say that in Matthew 18 about those who offend children. Evidently, there is something exceptional about children." (Does this warning repel or draw us to ministry with children? Who are we really most concerned about: the children or ourselves? The excuses I have heard most often for not working with children are: *I am not prepared. I don't know the Bible. I don't want to miss the worship service.* /

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*need to be spiritually fed.* These excuses represent ignorance about the learning that takes place in the preparation of lessons and about the spiritual insights that can come through interaction with children. There is an underlying inaccurate attitude that children's ministry is less spiritual than adult ministry. This inaccurate attitude is contradictory to what Jesus said about the blessings that come from welcoming and listening to children.)

6. **"Jesus--**Jesus said that when we receive a child in His name we receive Him (Matthew 18:5). Did He ever say that about receiving grownups? No. So whether you have ten or a thousand children in your children's ministry you supernaturally receive Jesus into your midst that many times over." ( If we believe this, how will it impact the ministry of our churches?)

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**QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION**

1. What is the attitude of your community towards children? What is the place of children in your society? How are children treated in public and in their homes? What are considered to be the most important things for children to learn or do?
2. How are children received by your church? What place are they given?
3. Who is responsible for teaching children in your church? If it is the family, how does the church help them with this task?
4. If Jesus came to your church, would he be pleased by what he would find concerning the care, involvement, and instruction of the children? What is being done that is good? Where do improvements need to be made? What help or assistance do you think is needed?
5. Considering God's instructions to the people in Deuteronomy 6, how can the homes of the church families reflect evidence of God's word? What activities in your community and daily lives might serve as teaching examples for the children? Are there any challenges in your living situation that create opportunities for teaching faith, forgiveness, love, or mercy? (For example: poverty, violence, discrimination, etc.)
6. Read through the Scripture passages in this lesson. Which one brings the greatest challenge or conviction to you or to your present ministry? Which one brings the greatest comfort or encouragement?
7. Read again through the list of children mentioned in the Bible. As you read, ask God to bring names and faces of children in your ministry to your mind. Are there children in your ministry who need to be encouraged to follow God's call on their lives? Who need to avoid a be-setting sin? Who have an amazing spiritual depth or hunger for God's word? Who boldly give witness of their faith in Jesus Christ?
8. Read through the reasons that Roger Fields gives for the superiority of ministry with children. Do you agree or disagree? Why? Which of his reasons poses the greatest challenge to you?



# 2

## Celebrating the Uniqueness of Each Child

### Lesson Purpose:

- To establish the uniqueness of individual children and how this impacts the way they learn.

### Lesson Outcome:

- Students will learn the 4mat system.
- Students will know the multiple intelligences.
- Students will consider the variety of ways children differ from one another.
- Students will honestly and thoughtfully interact with and apply the lessons in their ministry settings and to their personal lives.

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- Children learn in Different Ways
- The Four Learning Preferences
- Multiple Intelligences
- The Children: Each Unique in Many Ways
- Questions for Discussion

### Children learn in different ways

Each person is unique. This seems obvious, but the extent of our uniqueness from one another is not always recognized. One area of uniqueness is that people learn in different ways. Jesus knew this and demonstrated it in the various ways that he taught lessons. He used parables based in common life experiences, lecture, discussion and conversation. He also made use of practical experience by sending out his disciples two by two. Ministry to children, or people of any age, must consider the uniqueness of individual learning styles.

Unfortunately, the church has tended to follow the model of traditional classroom teaching rather than the model of Jesus. In the traditional classroom, information is transferred to the students through lecture or reading. Order is maintained by requiring that students sit still while learning. Those who can best recall the information are considered to be the good students. Advantages of this model are that order is fairly easy to maintain, information is communicated, and some students will do quite well. Other students, however, will not do as well because this method of instruction fails to engage them in the way that they prefer to receive and process information. They are not less intelligent, but intelligent in different ways.

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Teaching so that every student is engaged requires an understanding of the variety of ways people learn.

- Some people learn best through information that they receive through their ears. They are **auditory learners**. They need to use their ears to learn. Tell them a story.
- Some people learn best through what they see. They are **visual learners**. They need to use their eyes to learn. Show them a picture.
- Some people learn best by actively moving, touching, and interacting. They are **kinesthetic learners**. They need to use their bodies to learn. Let them act it out, play a game, or make up a dance.

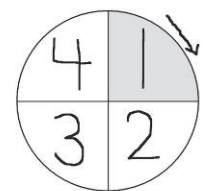
Interestingly, teachers tend to teach in the way that they prefer to learn. Preparing lessons that have elements designed to reach all learners demands preparation, creativity, and flexibility on the part of the teacher. There are many books on learning styles and on teaching methods. To be an excellent teacher, it is wise, as one has opportunity, to study new methods, theories, and approaches. This equips the teacher with many possible resources for reaching out to all students. In this course, two approaches for recognizing individual learning styles will be presented. The first considers four unique characteristics in learning preferences. The second presents the uniqueness of children in the ways that they are gifted with intelligence.

### The four learning preferences

This information is based on the **4mat** system designed by Bernice McCarthy. There are **4** learning preferences that consequently require **4** different teaching styles. The beauty of this system is its simplicity and its completeness. The instruction begins by targeting the children with the first learning preference and continues to flow from learning preference to learning preference around the circle. This creates a dynamic, multi-faceted, and integral lesson for all learners.

**Quadrant 1:** Children with this preference learn best through opportunities to talk and relate information to their personal experiences and feelings.

- **The challenge** with this group is keep their conversation directed towards the learning goals.
- **The questions** they would like answered by the lesson/teacher are: *Why should I learn this? What relationship does this have to my life?*
- **Therefore, the teacher** must find ways to connect with the children's experience and emotions. Sometimes this is called an ice breaker, an opener, or a hook—to catch their attention.. What stories, experiences, or images might motivate the learners to respond to the new material or experience? Teachers must build a bridge from a known experience or feeling to the new information they want to introduce. Possible methods: Begin with a leading question, "Have any of you ever experienced...." Create a group experience through an activity, drama, or in response to a video clip that will prepare the class to receive the new information.
- **Jesus** did this through the use of parable. He told stories from common, familiar everyday life. People connected with the familiar first, and then Jesus could direct them to the spiritual application.



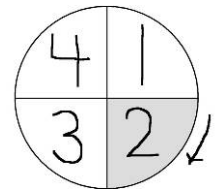


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In Matthew 21: 33-46 Jesus tells a parable to the Pharisees. They have questioned his authority. He tells them a story about a vineyard owner and his corrupt tenants who kill the owner's son when he comes to collect the harvest. They probably all had a particular vineyard in mind as he told the story, or they perhaps knew someone who had suffered problems with corrupt tenants. Then, when Jesus compared this story to the Kingdom of God, they were able to understand that he was talking about them. They were being compared to the corrupt tenants, and so they made plans to kill Jesus. A different type of example would be using the setting of the well and the need to draw water to speak with the woman in John 4 about "living water."

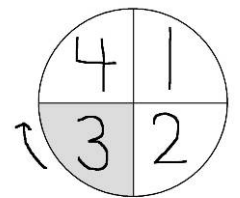
**Quadrant 2:** These children prefer to learn through receiving information. Generally those with this learning preference are the "good students" in the traditional classroom setting. They will quietly receive what the teacher transmits.

- **The challenge** with this group is that they may not appreciate or have patience with the forms of instruction used to reach other learners.
- **The questions** they would like answered are: *What are the facts? What new skills, theories, truth do you have for me to receive?*
- **Therefore, the teacher** should present new material/information to the children. Possible methods: Lecture, visual images, reading materials, video clips, a field trip, demonstration, a combination of verbal instruction and lab activity, or through a group experience.
- **Jesus** used lecture and preaching as well as small group debriefs with his disciples. The Sermon on the Mount in Matthew chapters 5-7 is a long message that Jesus gave. After telling the parable of the sower and the seed, Jesus took time later to explain its meaning to his disciples in Mark 4:10-20.



**Quadrant 3:** Children with this preference learn best when they are given the opportunity to apply or "try out" the new information in their life context.

- **The challenge** is to keep these children engaged in the learning process while they "wait" for the opportunity to try out the new information and see if it is useful. These children often have behavioral difficulties in traditional classroom settings that focus primarily on the transmission of information with little or no practical life application.
- **The questions** they would like answered are: *Is this useful? Does it work? Can I try it out?*
- **Therefore, the teacher** gives the students an opportunity to try out the information. (Important: Giving a test does not count as "trying out the information.") These children learn through interaction, trial and error and application. This is an active stage in the learning/teaching cycle. The teacher may serve more as a facilitator as students engage the material. Possible methods: Laboratory settings, dramas, problem solving activities or discussion, crafts, simulations, or field experience.
- **Jesus** sent his disciples out two by two with the instructions to imitate his life. In Luke 10 Jesus sends out 72 disciples. They are to live by faith, trusting God to provide for their physical needs. They are to receive the hospitality of the people. They are to heal the sick. They are to turn away from those who are unwilling to welcome them. The 72 returned from their practical experience with excitement

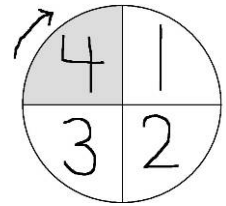


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saying, "Lord, even the demons submit to your name" (Luke 10:17, NIV). They had personally participated in the power of Jesus' ministry.

**Quadrant 4:** These children learn best by applying the information that has been presented in new ways.

- **The challenge** is to allow their creativity and questioning, and simultaneously keep them grounded with integrity to the information that has been presented. These children may have ideas and insights that surprise the teacher. Teachers should never miss out on the opportunity to learn from their students.
- **The questions** they would like answered are: *What if I try this? Can this be connected to that or applied to this? Can I make this my own?*
- **Therefore, the teacher** allows students to try new possibilities, to ask searching questions, to respond to the information in creative and personal ways. The teacher guides the students in an orderly balance of freedom and structure. Possible methods: Artistic responses encouraged such as drawings, dramas, applications of the information to other settings, problem solving, application through the formation of plans for things like service projects, worship services, and outreach, and discussion.
- **Jesus** allowed his disciples to freely question him and to suggest plans that he sometimes re-directed. Jesus' patience and willingness to endure their slowness to learn sets a challenging example for teachers in the church. □ In Matthew 14:25-32 as Jesus walks across the water to the boat carrying the disciples, Peter decides to try walking on the water too. Jesus encourages Peter's initiative and invites him to step out of the boat. Peter walked on the water until fear caused him to sink. Peter lacked the faith to trust Jesus completely. In John 14: 12-13 Jesus encouraged the disciples to have faith to dream and step out into greater things. *"I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. <sup>13</sup>And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father" (NIV).*



## Multiple Intelligences

A second aspect of human uniqueness proposed by psychologist Howard Gardner is intelligence, but not just in terms of I.Q. (Intelligence Quotient). People vary in the way they are intelligent. In the United States, we might use the expression that someone has "**street smarts**" meaning they are wise about how to handle themselves in a cosmopolitan setting and what dangers to avoid. This has nothing to do with their I.Q. (If you have access to the internet, there are many resources to learn more about this, to discover your dominant areas of intelligence, and to find ideas for teaching that touches each "smart person.")

The following list of "many intelligences" was presented at the 2001 Group Children's Ministry Seminars:

- **The Nature-Smart Person**—likes to be outdoors, feels most at ease outside.
- **The Picture-Smart Person**—likes visuals, colors, texture, movies, and photographs.
- **The Body-Smart Person**—likes hands-on, depends on the 5 Senses, active.
- **The Music-Smart Person**—likes rhythm and sound, movement and dance.
- **The Word-Smart Person**—likes to hear, say, and use words, write and read.
- **The Logic-Smart Person**—likes patterns and organizing, math, puzzles.
- **The Self-Smart Person**—likes time to think before responding to contemplative questions, sometimes a loner.



- **The People-Smart Person**—likes being with people, intuitive, talker, humor.

Teaching to all of these intelligences in a single lesson is probably not possible or necessary. The teacher who recognizes that people vary greatly from one another even in how they learn, can facilitate learning that is designed to reach each student and more importantly can demonstrate the love of Jesus Christ as each student is affirmed. Each person has a dominant form of intelligence, but there is typically a cluster of forms of intelligence. If a teacher prepares a lesson that will connect with several forms of intelligence, even if a child's dominant preference is not addressed, the child will have an increased likelihood of discovering that he or she is able to embrace the new skill or information.

### **The children: each unique in many ways**

I Corinthians 13 speaks of the absolute necessity of love in all that we do as Christians. Consideration of the uniqueness of the children that God has placed in our churches and communities is one of the greatest ways that we can demonstrate God's love to them. In addition to their learning preferences, there are several other factors that teachers should consider:

**Children's** ages are important. Their physical abilities, social interaction skills, and brain development mature as they grow. These things impact the way that they learn, play, relate to others, and receive and process information. Children also mature at different rates, so even in a group of children who are all the same age, a teacher must be observant of developmental variations and adjust activities so that every child can participate.

**Children** come from families and homes that may reflect many different types of structure. The teacher should be knowledgeable of and sensitive to these differences. Are all of the children from traditional families with a father and mother at home? Do some come from single-parent homes? Do some live with other family members? Is the child well-fed? Do the children all attend the same kind of school? Do the children's families have similar economic situations? Knowing this type of information will assist the teacher in preparing lessons that speak into the lives of the children. Another extremely important reason that a teacher may need to know this type of information is that a teacher may need to shield or protect children from careless, ignorant, or prejudiced comments or situations. All children should be welcomed. The church should be a place of safety and love for all.

**Children** sometimes have learning, behavioral, or physical disabilities. Knowing this, a teacher can plan lessons that will avoid embarrassment or exclusion of children with special needs.

**Children** come into the church with a variety of differences in educational background. They may also have differences in their Biblical knowledge and understanding.

**Children** also come into the class with different life experiences. Unfortunately some children have experienced great trauma such as the death of loved ones, physical or sexual abuse, or loss of their homes.

**Children** come to the church with different immediate needs.

- They may have physical needs such as hunger or cleanliness.
- They may be frightened or in danger.

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- They may have social or relational needs.
- They may need encouragement and motivation.
- Finally they may need an opportunity to realize their dreams.

This list of needs was organized into a hierarchy of needs by Abraham Maslow. □ The most critical need is the physiological need, so Maslow placed it at the base of the triangle. If children are hungry, they will have a difficult time learning a lesson until this basic need is met. If children are afraid, it will be hard for them to participate in a class, until they feel safe. Whether or not one agrees with Maslow, his theories help teachers to look and listen more closely to the needs that may possibly be motivating a child to come to church, to misbehave, to constantly talk, to sit alone, or to hold onto the teacher.

In the church, teaching must impact: **the mind**-- what we know and believe; **the heart**-- what we feel and love; **the body**-- how we choose to live and act; and **the soul**—our eternal self. In the church, teachers must prayerfully consider each child and seek to faithfully guide them to come to know God, their Heavenly Father; Jesus Christ, their Lord and Savior; the Holy Spirit, their Comforter and Helper; God's Word, a lamp to their feet; and the Church, their brothers and sisters in Christ.

### Questions for Discussion

1. What type of learner are you?

- Relational/ Experiential—You learn as you converse with others.
- Information oriented—You prefer to receive information and like theory.
- Hands On-- You are practical. If it works, it's worth learning.
- Creative—You are always thinking of the possibilities to make it better or apply it in a new way.

2. What style do you use for teaching? Why? Have you considered other ways to teach? Why or why not? Come up with a plan to try a new method to reach one of the learning preferences or multiple intelligence preferences that perhaps you have not connected with in the past. Share your ideas with the class.

3. Read the parable below. Work together on a plan for teaching this parable in eight different ways; each time teaching to a different one of the multiple intelligences. How can it be taught for those who excel in the context of the outdoors? How can it be taught for those who excel when there is music or rhythm? How about for those who excel with logic? Each time the story is taught, you may discover a layer of meaning and application that you had never considered. Please consider this both as an academic and spiritual exercise.

*Jesus replied with a story: "A Jewish man was traveling on a trip from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he was attacked by bandits. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him up, and left him half dead beside the road. "By chance a priest came along. But when he saw the man lying there, he crossed to the other side of the road and passed him by. A Temple assistant walked over and looked at him lying there, but he also passed by on the other side. Then a despised Samaritan came along, and when he saw the man, he felt compassion for him. Going over to him, the Samaritan soothed his wounds with olive oil and wine and bandaged them. Then he put the man on his own donkey and took him to an inn, where he took care of him. The next day he handed the innkeeper two silver coins, telling him, 'Take care of this man. If his bill runs higher than this, I'll pay you the next time I'm here.' "Now which of these three would you say was a neighbor to the man who was attacked by bandits?" Jesus asked. The man replied, "The one who showed him mercy." Then Jesus said, "Yes, now go and do the same" (Luke 10:30-37, NLT).*

4. What are the immediate or special needs of the children in your church and community? How is your church responding to the needs of these children? Is there more that can be done?

5. How are the children similar to each other in your ministry? How are they different from one another? Do they have different schooling? Cultural backgrounds? Prejudices? Special needs? What challenges do these differences pose in developing a ministry that personally reaches every child?

6. Take a ball or an item that can be safely tossed. Before one person tosses it to another, say the name of the person that you will toss it to and one of the qualities that you appreciate in his or her life. When that person catches the ball, they will do the same. Continue until everyone has had an opportunity to affirm one another and to receive affirmation. Start the game over, this time say the person's name and pray for God to strengthen and equip them with discernment to minister to each unique and wonderfully made child in his or her church. Continue until everyone has been prayed for. (This is active learning.)



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# Human Trafficking and Issues of Human Respect

~ Nathan Tilley and Bethany Ury



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### Training Objectives

This five part curriculum will introduce students to the problems of human trafficking, as well as presenting principles dealing with general issues of human respect. This material is intended to accomplish three objectives in the life of the student. First, this material is intended to bring a general understanding of the problems of human trafficking, gender inequality, child abuse and neglect, and other problems of human disrespect. Second, the curriculum is intended to present principles regarding the value of each human being—man, woman, and child—and to present Biblical examples of how to value men, women, and children with equality and justice. Third, this material is intended to provide practical instruction on how Christians ought to treat all individuals in the community with respect and how Christians can bring healing to those treated with disrespect.

### The Material Format

This curriculum is formatted to introduce the student to the *information or content*, and then to provide a **review** first in **summary** form, then in the form of **questions**. This form of learning *presents* the student with material, *reinforces* and *corrects* through repetition, then *evaluates* the student's comprehension with questions, further reinforcing the material. With specific goals, this format will move the student from **knowing** the information to **understanding** the ideas, and, eventually, to **applying** the material. This material is designed to be presented in a large group setting by a group leader, or to be used by an independent student.



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### **Notes on Capitalization**

In this curriculum, we have chosen to use certain conventions of grammar respecting certain concepts. The proper name of God given to the Israelites in the Old Testament is written as the four letters YHWH, and has not been pronounced by the Jews because of reverence for the sacred name. Thus, the name is often translated as LORD using small capital letters, and we have chosen to do the same, using capital letters—LORD. We have also written any of the names of God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, or any pronouns for a member of the Holy Trinity with the first letter capitalized in reverence for His divinity, as is traditionally done in written publications. We have also chosen to capitalize the name of each Gospel and references to the Cross or Crucifixion of Christ out of respect for Christ's life, death, and resurrection—the revelation of the path of salvation.

### **The Material Disclaimer**

The information contained in this material is not intended to be all encompassing, or totally comprehensive. These five lectures are intended to introduce students to common problems of human disrespect and provide principles with which Christians can confront these issues in their communities. Any student seeking further statistics or information on human trafficking, gender issues, or other issues of human respect may consult the sources listed in the bibliography or pursue further research.



# 1

# Human Trafficking

## LESSON Objective

- To inform listeners about human trafficking and encourage them to spread awareness in the fight against it.

## Introduction to Human Trafficking

### A Definition:

**Human trafficking is the act of buying and selling people to exploit them for profit.**

People in poverty are the primary targets of human trafficking because they are the most vulnerable and easy to access. Traffickers will buy and sell people through the use of force, fraud, and coercion. Someone does not have to be moved to another location to be trafficked; people can be trafficked within their own village or city. Most often, victims are trafficked across borders into other countries (international trafficking), although they may also be trafficked within their own country (domestic trafficking).

## The Reality of Human Trafficking

Imagine that you are walking through the market one day, picking out fresh fruit to buy. You look to your right and see a group of children with their hands and feet bound. They look young, scared, and malnourished. Beside them is a sign declaring that they are for sale at a low price. These children are being sold, as if they were fresh fruit or meat. Have you ever seen children being sold out in the open? The very idea sounds ridiculous. Although you may never see children being sold out in the open like this, the same thing is happening in secret throughout the world.

Currently there are more slaves in existence today than there have been at any other point in history. Kevin Bales, noted speaker and writer about the modern-day slave trade, states that at any given time there are 27 million people entrapped in slavery.<sup>1</sup> One reason for the increase in human trafficking is the massive growth in population over the last several decades. As the world population increases, the number of people in poverty grows. When there are more people in poverty, there is more opportunity for traffickers to exploit people through trafficking. Another reason trafficking is so prevalent is because of globalization. As different countries become connected through trade and commerce, it becomes much easier to transfer people from one country to another without drawing suspicion.

<sup>1</sup> Bales, Kevin. *Ending Slavery*. Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 2007.

## How to End Trafficking and Slavery:

Although there are more slaves today than ever before in history, the percentage of people in slavery is at an all-time low. It is realistic to hope that we can end slavery within our lifetime. To accomplish this, however, there are three key elements that are necessary: **prosecution, protection, and prevention.**

### Prosecution

As with any major criminal industry, proper laws and prosecution are necessary to bring criminals to justice. Although nearly every country has some kind of law in place concerning slavery, very few countries have a current law that prohibits human trafficking. Unless the proper laws are in place, traffickers cannot easily be brought to justice. If trafficking survivors do not think that the law will sentence the criminals responsible for trafficking, they may be less inclined to testify against their trafficker in court. Trafficking survivors have often been through so much trauma already that they fear the public humiliation a trial would bring. However, if they are assured that their government will make significant effort to bring justice to the situation, they will be more willing to testify against their victimizer. There are many countries in which very short prison terms are given to people convicted of trafficking. This is surprising, considering the fact that human trafficking is a combination of several of the worst crimes: abduction, rape, exploitation, etc. Only when a victimized citizen can have faith in the government to enforce anti-slavery laws will we see a decrease in human trafficking.

### Protection

Victims of human trafficking should not be put on trial with the trafficker, as if they were being punished for what had happened to them. Often victims do not expect to be believed, so they do not attempt to bring their victimizer to justice. However, if they are helped through the process and guided by law enforcement, they will be more inclined to testify against their trafficker, helping to prevent future crimes from occurring. Trafficking survivors deal with a multitude of problems related to trauma, and often require intensive aftercare to reintegrate back into society after what they have been through. They suffer from many physical problems due to the beatings, poor food, and sexual abuse they have endured, as well as emotional and psychological problems. They may become depressed or shown signs of self-destructive behavior. A key component in protecting survivors of trafficking is to provide them with the counseling and physical care they need to be restored.

### Prevention

After a country's government creates laws to prohibit human trafficking, citizens still need to be educated and informed about those laws. Otherwise, if they find themselves a victim of forced labor or sexual trafficking they may not even know that there are laws in place to protect and free them. Education is a key element in ending slavery in every country of the world. Citizens must be aware of their rights and of what they can do to ensure that their victimizer is brought to justice. In 2003 the United States government



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passed the U.S. PROTECT Act, which created more severe penalties for U.S. citizens who travel overseas to have sex with children in other countries where trafficking laws are not properly enforced. Since the Act was passed, dozens of Americans have been put on trial and convicted for their crimes overseas. This is an example of how governmental policies can make a significant change in the trafficking industry by ensuring that proper laws are in place.

### **Forms of Human Trafficking**

#### **Labor Trafficking**

Labor trafficking is the act of taking a person by force, fraud, or coercion and using them for labor exploitation. Men, women, and children are victims of labor trafficking. Listed below are some of the various ways people are exploited for labor services:

- Domestic servitude (maids, nannies)
- Sweatshops (factories that demand long hours of work for little or no pay)
- Beauty salons
- Construction work
- Farming
- Restaurants and bars
- Street begging (children are often injured and put out on the street as beggars to earn money for traffickers)
- Brick making

In many countries, such as Haiti and Sierra Leone, domestic service is the primary form of human trafficking. Women who are nannies or maids may be forced to work long hours for little or no pay. They are beaten if they do not work quickly enough or if they try to escape. Most girls and women who are victims of forced labor in homes are also sexually abused by their employers.

#### **Child Soldiers in Africa**

In some countries of the world, particularly in Africa, thousands of children are stripped of their innocence and forced to become murderers against their will. In times of war and tribal conflict, children are victimized and forced to murder innocent civilians. For the past couple of decades the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) has promoted a terrorist movement in Northern Uganda in which they have enslaved young boys and girls. When the LRA attacks specific villages, soldiers will recruit young boys and girls into military service against their will. The children are "initiated" into the army by performing some kind of violent act, such as rape or murder, to prove their allegiance to the LRA. Usually the LRA ensures that this act of violence is against one of the child's own family members. The soldiers brainwash the child soldiers into believing that because they have murdered people from their own village, they will be rejected if they try to go back home. This manipulation ensures that the children will not leave the LRA, because they feel they have nothing else to live for but to kill.

## Story of a Child Soldier

*Ishmael*

As a boy growing up in Sierra Leone, I learned from a young age about the wars that were destroying our country. But I was just a boy. I didn't think the war would affect me. I liked playing with my friends. We would teach each other hip-hop dance moves. One day my brother, Junior, and I went to compete in a dance contest held in a neighboring village called Mattru Jong. When we reached Mattru Jong we learned that rebel soldiers had attacked our home village and were now heading our way. We ran to hide in the forest. I saw a woman fleeing, carrying a dead baby on her back. I thought to myself, what kind of liberation movement shoots civilians, like that little baby girl? Eventually, my brother and I became separated while fleeing. I was never to see him again. I returned to my home village only to find destruction and dead bodies. I sought safety in the city of Yele, where government troops were headquartered. One day the lieutenant lined me up with some other boys and told me that now was the time to fight for him and to avenge our families. He placed an AK-47 in my 13 year-old hands. I was told to kill or be killed. From that time on, I killed innocent people. I did unspeakable things, in the name of the government. I watched my friends, who were hardly big enough to carry their rifles, die beside me as we attacked villages. The soldiers gave me drugs to cloud my mind. I was so drugged, so angry, that all I knew how to do was to kill. My life had been taken from me; my family had been killed. Now I had nothing more to live for than to avenge their deaths. I became a monster. One day, workers from UNICEF pulled up in a truck. They took me and a few other boys away to a rehabilitation center. Do they really think they can take away my memory? Every night all I see are dead bodies. My hands are covered in blood. I wonder if I will ever be free.<sup>2</sup>

## Sex Trafficking

Sex trafficking is the use of people for sexual exploitation through prostitution, pornography, and other forms of commercial sexual exploitation. Women, girls, and boys are victims of sexual trafficking in nearly every country of the world, although the vast majority of sex trafficking victims are female. Sex trafficking usually includes not only sexual violence, but also other forms of physical abuse to subdue the victim and make them perform sexually. Various elements present in sex trafficking include:

- Sexual violence (rape and gang rape)
- Sexually transmitted diseases/AIDS
- Limited food and water
- Lack of medical attention
- Torture
- Verbal abuse/threats
- Forced drug usage
- Seizure of travel documentation/passports

Sex trafficking degrades women, girls and boys, and treats them as objects to be bought and sold. The purchasers of commercial sex show no respect for that person's worth and value as a human being. Women and girls who engage in prostitution through the sex trade are often forced to provide sex for ten to 30 men

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<sup>2</sup> Beah, Ishmael. *A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier*. New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 2007.

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per night. In countries such as Cambodia, brothels are known to have prostitutes as young as six years old. The women and girls in brothels are treated as objects and forced to perform sexually. Traffickers will often coerce a woman into staying in the sex trade by making threats against her or her family. The trafficker may say that if she tries to run away he will kill her family or replace her with one of her younger sisters. The more the trafficker threatens, the more the victim will be convinced that if she leaves, harm will come to someone that she loves. Typically, traffickers also use pornographic images of a trafficking victim as blackmail, coercing her into staying by threatening to publicize the images of her if she runs away. The victim comes to believe that it would be better to stay in the sex trade than to go back to her home village and bear the shame of what has happened to her.

### How People Are Trafficked

Traffickers enslave people through the means of force, fraud, or coercion. Trafficking through force is using violence and physical power to enslave people. This might include kidnapping the victim, or physically forcing them into trafficking. Traffickers who traffic by means of fraud, use lies and deception to trick victims into being trafficked. Coercion is the third means of trafficking, and it involves manipulation and threats to ensure that the victims remain enslaved. For example, a trafficker may threaten to kill the victim's family if he or she runs away. It is common for more than one of these elements to be present in a single trafficking case, although not all three are necessary.

### Force

People who are trafficked by force are often kidnapped or stolen from their homes or from public places and are physically forced into sex or labor trafficking. These methods of force include rape, gang rape, beatings, and torture. Sometimes parents are forced to give up custody of their children to repay a debt, giving their child to be trafficked. In 1999, a group of 30 girls was tricked into leaving their homes in northwestern Russia and were taken to a town in Germany where they were locked up as prisoners. The girls were not allowed to leave and were beaten frequently. They were forced into various brothels and raped by up to ten men a day. Many were eventually freed through escape raids by the police.<sup>3</sup>

When women are first brought into a brothel as trafficking victims, they are initiated through what is known as the "seasoning process." Usually within the first few hours of her abduction, the trafficking victim is raped repeatedly, often by more than one of the male traffickers. Traffickers beat and torture women and girls during the seasoning process to subdue them and break down their willpower. Their goal is for the victim to fear the trafficker enough that she will do whatever he commands her to do.

### Fraud

Fraud is using lies and deception to trick a person into becoming a slave. Those who are uneducated and live in impoverished areas are especially vulnerable to fraud. Traffickers posing as wealthy businessman will

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<sup>3</sup> Grant, Beth and Hudlin, Cindy Lopez. *Hands That Heal: International Curriculum to Train Caregivers of Trafficking Survivors, Community-Based Edition, Part II*. Springfield, MO: Faith Alliance Against Slavery and Trafficking, 2007. p. 48

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often seek out villagers and persuade them to come to the city for a good job. The good job they describe actually turns out to be enslavement. Traffickers are often trained men who know exactly the right things to say to convince people to come and work for them. Imagine a family living in poverty, unable to provide their daughter with a good education. A trafficker might come to the family and tell them of an opportunity he has in a big city for the daughter to get both an education and a paid job. The family is thrilled, because this seems to answer all of their prayers for good opportunities for their daughter. When the girl arrives in the city, however, she discovers that her new job is actually prostitution. The trafficker strips away her dignity and tells her that now she must work for him. The girl's family, thinking that she is doing well in her new job, is unaware of what is really going on until it is too late.

Often times, women and girls are tricked into going to bigger cities for a "modeling job," which actually turns out to be a job in the sex industry such as strip dancing or pornography. The opportunity to go to the big city is a dream-come-true for many foreign women, so they do not think about the possibility that they are being tricked into the sex industry.

### **Coercion**

Sometimes victims of trafficking are coerced and manipulated into being trafficked. One of the main reasons that pimps and traffickers put new girls through the "seasoning process" is to make them feel as though they are damaged goods. In many cultures, women who lose their virginity before marriage are seen as unclean and may be rejected by the people in their home-town, or even by their own family. To coerce a girl to remain in prostitution, a trafficker or pimp may tell her repeatedly that she is now worthless and soiled, no longer good for anything but to remain in the sex industry. The victimizer will also make threats against the girl's family, telling her that if she leaves the sex industry, he will find her family and kill them.

Another way that traffickers coerce victims into slavery is convincing them that remaining in slavery is their only option. A trafficker may go to a very poor couple with several children and offer to buy one of their children at a high price. Needing the money to provide for the rest of their family, the couple may eventually give in and decide to sell one child for the sake of the others.

### **Recognizing the Different Methods of Trafficking**

Read the stories below and answer the following questions.

#### *Irina*

Several businessmen offered me a job as a waitress in a big city. When I got there, however, they took my passport away from me. They told me that instead of being a waitress I was to be a prostitute, and give all the money that I made to them. I immediately said no and told them I wanted to go home. I had no desire to work as a prostitute. But they had paid for my ticket to travel into the city, and now they said that I owed them an enormous sum of money. The only way I could pay it back was to work for them. I tried to get away, but they beat me. I wanted to go to the police to get protection, but I learned that the police had been paid off and would not help me anyway. The police were working alongside the pimps to regulate the other girls who were in the brothels. I didn't want to believe that what they were saying was true, but they showed me pictures of dead girls who had tried to escape. Slowly I began to realize that unless I cooperated, I was going

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to be killed just like the girls in the photographs had been. The pimp repeatedly told me that if I tried to run away he would go after my family. I did not want that to happen. So I stayed.<sup>4</sup>

1. Was Irina trafficked through force, fraud, or coercion?
2. How was Irina persuaded to enter prostitution?

Neary

I grew up in rural Cambodia. My parents died when I was just a young child. My sister, hoping to give me a better life, married me off to a man I barely knew. I thought that things were looking up, and that I was starting a new chapter in my life. Three months later, I went with my husband to a fishing village. He rented a room in what appeared to be a guest-house. I had been looking forward to this; I thought it would be like a honeymoon, a break from the monotony of my everyday life. But when I woke the next morning, my husband was gone. The owner of the “guest-house” told me I was actually in a brothel. My husband had sold me for \$300. For five years, I was raped by five to seven men every day. I was physically beaten and abused. Eventually I was infected with HIV and contracted AIDS. When the owner of the brothel discovered my illness, I was thrown out. I found my way to a local shelter. Now I am 23, and slowly dying of AIDS.<sup>5</sup>

1. Was Neary trafficked through force, fraud, or coercion?
2. What were some of the physical problems Neary suffered due to her abuse?
3. What do you think were some of the emotional problems she may have faced?

Lindita

When I was a senior in high school, I fell in love with a boy who did not go to my school. He was kind, attractive, and treated me well. After a time, we fell in love with each other—or so I thought at the time. He was my “first love”, and I hadn’t had much experience with boys romantically prior to that. After dating for a time, he convinced me to go to Belgium with him. He said that he could get a good job there and told me about what wonderful place it was: how clean, how beautiful, and how many opportunities there would be for us. He proposed to me, and our plan was to leave Albania illegally, since we would not qualify for visas. He said once we got there he would find work and we would marry. I was in love, and I believed him. Once we got to Belgium, however, he totally changed. He became abusive of me and violated me many times. He threatened my life and the lives of my family members. I did not speak the language there and was totally dependent on him; I had nowhere else to go and was afraid. He trafficked me for six months. It was the worst period in my life.

I was able to find shelter there with people to help me return to Albania. I wanted to return to my family, but my father would not accept me and was abusive of me and my mother. He blames me for being trafficked.<sup>6</sup>

1. Was Lindita trafficked through force, fraud, or coercion?
2. How did Lindita’s trafficking situation affect the rest of her life?

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4 Chalke, Steve. *Stop the Traffik*. Chicago, IL: Lion Book, 2009.

5 Ibid.

6 Ibid.

## Why People Are Trafficked

### Supply and Demand

Human trafficking is one of the top three criminal industries in the world. It is also the fastest growing form of organized crime. Research reveals that there are 1.2 million new children being trafficked every year.<sup>7</sup> Each year 800,000 new slaves are trafficked across international borders. Kevin Bales of "Free the Slaves" estimates that there are currently 27 million people entrapped in slavery worldwide.<sup>8</sup> Human trafficking is a criminal industry driven by supply and demand. If there were not people seeking out prostitutes, the sex trade would not exist. The more people that desire to use slaves for labor or sexual purposes, the higher the demand for slaves.

### Cultural Lies

In the story of Neary, her new husband thought of her as his property and decided to sell her with no regard to her value as a person. Although some cultures believe that a husband owns his wife, this belief cannot be justified by Scripture. In Ephesians, Paul exhorts husbands to love their wives, "just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her."<sup>9</sup> Wives are not to be treated as a commodity, but are to be valued in a marriage. When God created man and woman He made both in His own image. If we are disrespecting women by devaluing them, we are disrespecting a person that has been made in the image of God, and are therefore disrespecting God.

Parents who sell their own children into prostitution or forced labor may think that it is acceptable to dispose of children as if they were property. However, the psalmist says that children are a reward from the Lord.<sup>10</sup> They are a blessing from God, and they are the way which Christ continues to grow and expand His Church. Children should be valued, since they represent the future generation. In the Gospels, Jesus reached out to and loved children. He even told the disciples that they could not enter the Kingdom of Heaven unless they became like little children, possessing innocence and purity. God's intention for His people is that we respect and value the lives of children. They are made in His image and have a special place in His heart. Children are to be treated as a gift from Him rather than as property to be bought and sold.

### Africa

Africa is mainly a country of origin rather than of transit and destination. This means that victims are usually taken from Africa and trafficked into other countries, rather than being trafficked into Africa. It is estimated that 1,000 girls are trafficked annually from Mozambique into South Africa for prostitution. In Uganda, thousands of girls have been kidnapped and forced to serve in the military as servants and sex

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7 Mwangi, Anothy. UNICEF. 2010. Accessed on 22 July 2010 at <http://www.unicefusa.org/news/news-from-the-field/combating-child-trafficking-in-africa.html>.

8 Bales, Kevin. *Ending Slavery: How We Free Today's Slaves*. Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press. 2007.

9 Ephesians 5:25, NIV

10 Psalm 127:3



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slaves. President of the Economic Community of West African States, H.E. James Victor Gbeho, says that human trafficking in the western regions of Africa is linked to “poverty, large family size, lack of education opportunities, unemployment, low status of women and children, and ignorance.”<sup>11</sup> Education is a key component in helping to end sex and labor trafficking in Africa. The more people know about the prevalence of human trafficking, the more they can be prepared for how to detect it and prevent it from happening.

## **Review**

### **Summary**

Reflect on the phrase “human trafficking.” What are some of the words or ideas that you associate with it? Do you think your definition of human trafficking has changed since beginning this lesson? While studying this lesson we have seen the reality of the existence of human trafficking and slavery in our world today. We have looked at how serious an issue it is to buy and sell other people and to treat them as a commodity. We have also read several real life stories of people who have been victims of modern-day slavery. These people were trafficked through force, fraud, or coercion. Sometimes people are trafficked through a combination of these three methods.

It is always important to remember that human trafficking victims are not just numbers or statistics. Every time you hear that a certain number of people have been trafficked for sex, remember that those are individual people, with faces, names, and families. If we think of trafficking as nothing more than a social issue, we will forget that the whole reason behind ending human trafficking is to free the victims.

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<sup>11</sup> Mwangi, Anothy. UNICEF. 2010. Accessed on 22 July 2010 at <http://www.unicefusa.org/news/news-from-the-field/combating-child-trafficking-in-africa.html>.

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### Review Questions

1. What is human trafficking?  
Human trafficking is the act of buying and selling people to exploit them for profit.
2. What forms of trafficking exist in the world?  
There are two main forms of trafficking: labor trafficking and sex trafficking. Labor trafficking is taking a person by force, fraud, or coercion and using them for labor exploitation. Sex trafficking is the purchasing and selling of people for sexual exploitation through prostitution, pornography, and other forms of commercial sexual exploitation.
3. How do we go about ending trafficking?  
There are three key elements to ending trafficking. **Prosecution** involves the government taking a stand against trafficking through enforcing proper laws and punishment for traffickers. When victims are trafficked, they should also receive **protection** through the government so that they can testify against their trafficker. The third key factor in ending trafficking is through **prevention**, by informing the general public about laws that have been put in place and making them aware of their rights.
4. Name one fact or statistic about human trafficking that alarmed you.
5. In a small group, discuss signs of trafficking you see in your village or country. What steps do you think that the Church can take to help victims in those situations? Be prepared to share your thoughts with the class.

### Devotional

Now that we have become more familiar with the subject of human trafficking, think about what this will mean in the way that we live our lives. Knowing that we have been called by God to bring justice and light into the darkness of this world, what can we do to take a stand against trafficking? If you feel slightly overwhelmed by the size of this issue, remember that “He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.”<sup>12</sup> God does not expect us to eliminate all the evil practices in the world; that would be impossible. He has called us, however, as His disciples to reach out to the people that we can help and to offer them the hope of Christ. In Hebrews, we are commanded to “Remember those who are in prison as if you were their fellow prisoner, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering.”<sup>13</sup> The true meaning of compassion is to bear someone else’s burden and to suffer along with them, in this case, those who are in prison and those who are mistreated. Christ gave us an example of true compassion and mercy by His life of purity and righteousness. If we are His followers, we too should remember the victims of trafficking in our times of prayer, and in our daily lives. What are some ways that we as individuals can personally take a stand against the injustice of human trafficking? (Examples might be starting a prayer group that meets regularly to pray for trafficking victims, initiating an education program in your community to create awareness about human trafficking, or participating in after-care with trafficking survivors.)

**“Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute.” —  
Proverbs 31:8, NIV**

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<sup>12</sup> Colossians 1:17, NIV

<sup>13</sup> Hebrews 13:3, NIV





# 2

## Human Respect

It only takes a quick self-examination to realize that we care far more about ourselves than others. It is not hard for most of us to recognize our inner dignity, as humans above the world of animals. Most humans have felt joy in an act of generosity or kindness, or sensed the pang of responsibility for a bad choice, or even experienced the wonder of true beauty. These are all experiences unique to humans. Not only have we experienced these things, but we know that other humans also experience these things. While walking down a road in the cool evening, an older man stops to admire the brilliant sunset. Though he is amazed by the beautiful sky, his herd of cows continues walking down the road, never looking up to admire the beauty. In this, we recognize that humans perceive beauty, while animals cannot. From limited experience alone, we know that every man, woman, and child shares a nature that is set apart from the animal kingdom. Each human being has inherent dignity, but we still often do not respect each other. In this lecture, we will consider the inherent dignity in each human life. Then, as a result, we hope to convince and compel you to treat every individual you meet with the respect due to a fellow human being.

### Definition of Respect

What does it mean to treat another person with respect? What does it look like when someone treats you with respect? We know that we have been treated with respect when someone takes time to consider what we might think about his or her actions and how they will make us feel. This might be recognizing that hitting our friend in anger will make him also feel angry and will not help the situation. It also could be realizing that our children feel hunger and sadness if we neglect them or do not feed them. We should treat our friends and our children differently if we can recognize their thoughts and emotions. When we respect a person, we show him or her that we not only recognize their dignity as a rational human being, but we give them worth. We esteem their dignity and nobility, as they are made in the image of God. This is to treat others as we would treat ourselves, or even better than we would treat ourselves. Showing respect to another human is to *show consideration of the thoughts and emotions of others, thereby regarding and esteeming the image of God in them*. Every individual is a unique human being and deserves to be treated respectfully as such.

### Theology of the Dignity of Every Individual

#### Created in the Image of God, Sharing in His Nature

"God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female he created them."<sup>14</sup> God created humans in *His own image*. What an incredible act of love, for God to allow us to share

<sup>14</sup> Genesis 1:27, NASB

in His image! But what does it mean to be made in the image of something? There are many kinds of images, whether a painting, a drawing, a carving, a statue, or other kinds of art. A true image is a symbol of something. This means that an image retains characteristics of its original, or, in other words, an image will have the essential elements of what it represents. For example, an image of an antelope may not look like an antelope might appear to the eyes, but it must retain characteristics of the antelope to be an image of one. The characteristics could be the color of its fur, or the shape of its body drawn realistically, or a representation of an antelope's quick running or its high jumps. No matter the way it is done, an image of a thing must retain characteristics of that thing to be a true representation. God created humans in His own image in this same fashion. The image of God in us means that we have characteristics of the original, that we have some of the characteristics of God's nature. As humans, we do not look like God to the eyes, because he does not have a material body, but we can think and perceive abstract things and we can make moral decisions based on those decisions, just as God has intellectual and moral characteristics. We have a share of His divinity! What an incredible blessing! Not only do we have God's nature, but, so does all of humanity—men, women, and children.

### **Each Individual to be Respected Because of the Image of God**

A medieval Christian, Thomas à Kempis, wrote, "If thy heart were right, then every creature would be a mirror of life and a book of holy doctrine. There is no creature so small and abject, but it reflects the goodness of God".<sup>15</sup> What he means is that each human being is a wonderful thing, being a reflection of God's divinity, because he or she is made in the image of God. Each living and breathing human is an image of Almighty God and is worthy of great respect. Humans are worthy of respect, but not worship. We are simply the image, a likeness of God, and not the fullness of the original. The second commandment states, "You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. You shall not worship them or serve them".<sup>16</sup> The second commandment recognizes that images of created things are not to be worshipped, as they are simply a reflection and not the fullness of the creator. In the same way, we do not worship the image of God in another human, as it is only a likeness, but we do show utmost respect for it. Every human is created in the wonderful and noble image of God and, therefore, deserves the respect due to such a wonderful and noble creation.

### **Jesus' Respect for All Humanity**

#### **Shunned and Sinful Individuals**

As Christians, we are committed to following Christ and using His life as the standard for our actions. Jesus, speaking to the religious leaders of the time, said that the entire Jewish Law was dependent on two commandments—to love God and to love your neighbor as yourself. The man asked, "Teacher, what is the great commandment in the Law?" And He said to him, 'You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind'... The second is like it, 'You shall love your neighbor as

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<sup>15</sup> Thomas à Kempis. *My Imitation of Christ*. Brooklyn: Confraternity of the Precious Blood, 1982. p. 115

<sup>16</sup> Exodus 20:4-5

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yourself”.<sup>17</sup> He is giving us a high responsibility to other individuals. Do you remember how we talked about what it means for every person to have dignity? It means that every individual is created in the image of God with some of His characteristics, and that that person deserves respect. Jesus knew that each human has this dignity that is not dependent on his or her gender, race, or ethnicity. The commandment to love your neighbor as yourself is a call for Christians to follow His example of respect for all people.

Jesus did not spend most of his time with those who were wealthy and thought to be holy. He, instead, spent his time with all different types of individuals, even those who were considered socially low or immoral. The writer of one of the Gospels, Matthew, was a tax collector, despised by most people. Tax collectors were known for being dishonest and were therefore shunned, especially by the religious officials who considered them to be religiously unclean. Jesus did not avoid them, but actually called Matthew to be one of his disciples. When the religious leaders asked Jesus why he treated tax collectors respectfully as humans, He answered, “It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick. But go and learn what this means: ‘I desire compassion and not sacrifice,’ for I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners.”<sup>18</sup> Jesus was telling the religious leaders that He was not concerned with the social status of those with whom he associated himself, but that, as human beings, even the people classified as sinners deserve to be treated with respect. All men are in need of compassion and forgiveness, and so Jesus treated the sick and the outcasts with respect and love.

### Women

Not only did Jesus spend time with those considered to be sinful or ceremonially unclean, but Jesus also treated women with respect. During the time between the Old and New Testaments, a Jewish woman was almost always in a place of inferiority in normal and religious life. One scholar writes, “In religious life, contrary to the Old Testament practice, women were largely excluded from participation in public worship, being considered unfit to learn and inappropriate to teach.”<sup>19</sup> Jesus, however, treated women with the respect due to any human being, male or female. For example, Jesus healed many men, but he also healed many women. In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus healed a woman suffering from chronic bleeding who touched His garment wanting to be healed by His power. Jesus was not angry or condemning of her actions, even though she was an outcast, but he encouraged her in her faith.<sup>20</sup> Later in Matthew’s Gospel, Jesus encountered a Canaanite woman whose daughter was demon-possessed.<sup>21</sup> This woman was not only socially lower because of her gender, but was also a Gentile, an individual not from Israel. The disciples, men who claimed to be following Christ, asked Him to send her away because she was causing a scene. He recognized her great faith and treated her with respect, regardless of her gender and ethnicity. Also, the first people to discover His resurrection were Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Mary the mother of James. These women went back to tell the male disciples that Christ had risen, and the apostles did not believe the women who had been given this wonderful truth. From the stories recorded in the Gospels, it is evident that Jesus had great love and respect for women, as well as men, as he spent time with women, healed them, and

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17 Matthew 22:36-39

18 Matthew 9:12-13

19 Bacchiocchi, Samuele. *Women in the Church: A Biblical Study on the Role of Women in the Church*. Berrien Springs: Biblical Perspectives, 1995. Accessed at [http://www.biblicalpherspectives.com/books/women\\_church/2.html](http://www.biblicalpherspectives.com/books/women_church/2.html) on 15 July 2010. Much of the discussion in this lecture of Jesus’ attitude towards women comes from ideas mentioned on this web page.

20 Matthew 9:22

21 Matthew 15:22-28

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offered them forgiveness. Throughout the Gospel accounts, Jesus' treatment of women shows us the special dignity of women and compels us to do likewise and treat them with respect.

## **Children**

It is evident that Jesus treated both men and women with respect, but what of the children? Did Jesus shun the immaturity and weakness of children? By no means! In addition to healing many of them during His earthly ministry, Jesus spoke often of the importance of children. At one point, the disciples wanted to protect Jesus' ministry, so they rebuked some who were bringing little children to Him. Mark describes Jesus' response in his Gospel, writing, "But when Jesus saw this, He was indignant and said to them, 'Permit the children to come to Me; do not hinder them; for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these'".<sup>22</sup> Jesus not only wanted children to come to Him, but He highly valued them. Children, according to Jesus, have a special place in God's kingdom! From this alone, it is evident that Christ treated all children with great love and respect and that He valued them highly. Jesus went on to say, "Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it at all".<sup>23</sup> This is a stern warning to all who want to be mature adults and have much control over their lives, desires, and emotions. A child is innocent and simple. A child trusts wholly and is trying to learn more than he or she knew the day before. Likewise, we are to be as children, acting with humility in what we know, with innocence in our actions, and with complete trust in our heavenly Father. We must strive to be like children in the things of God, and we must also recognize their value and treat them with respect.

## **Christ's Call to Us—The Law of Love**

From the Gospel accounts, we see that Jesus treated all humanity with equal respect, considering no man, woman, or child greater or lesser than another. Jesus loved men, women, children, and the sinful, diseased, or socially outcast. At the Last Supper, Jesus gave His disciples a new command which we are to follow, saying, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another".<sup>24</sup> This command is a high standard to meet. To love someone as Jesus did means that we are required to give our lives sacrificially to others, just as He sacrificed His life for us in love on the Cross. Not only this, but His life is now the model for our lives. When Jesus tells us to love as He loved us, He is asking us to treat each human being as He did—with great respect. We must not shun the sick and outcast person, we must not be unfair or disrespectful towards women, and we must not neglect or minimize children. Jesus treated each person with the respect that he or she deserves as a human being, and we are without excuse if we do otherwise.

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<sup>22</sup> Mark 10:14

<sup>23</sup> Mark 10:15

<sup>24</sup> John 13:34

## Love of All Humans is True Love of God

We are not following Christ if we treat an individual disrespectfully. John writes, “If someone says, ‘I love God’ and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen.”<sup>25</sup> We cannot possibly love God, the invisible Creator and Preserver of humankind, if we do not love men, women, and children, who are near and visible, possessing the image of God. To truly love God means that we must treat every individual with the respect due to him or her as a human being with dignity. Without this, we cannot love God and are not following Christ.

## Causes of Disrespect

### Objectification

Disrespect may appear in many different forms in our daily experience. For men, in particular, must be wary of how they treat women. Men are guilty of disrespecting the humanity of women, most often, when they treat them as objects solely for their use. The uses can be grievous sins—using a woman for sexual gratification or as a household slave—or the uses might be subtle vices—using a woman only for the visual pleasure of her body or only for her cooking or housework. An attitude of objectification is very sinful, for when a man views a woman as an object of utility, she is no longer valued as a human. Her dignity as a human comes from the image of God in each woman, the image that is not part of inanimate objects. Paul writes to the Corinthians that woman is a human deserving of respect, saying, “For a man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God, but woman is the glory of man. For man was not made from woman, but woman from man. Neither was man created for woman, but woman for man. That is why a wife ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels. Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man nor man of woman; for as woman was made from man, so man is now born of woman. And all things are from God.”<sup>26</sup> Both man and woman are gifts from God and are equal in His sight. Neither is better or has priority with God. Eve was created from Adam, but now every man is born from a woman. God shows us that neither a man nor a woman is better than the other, but, rather, that men and women are created with different roles to need and help each other.

Within many homes, women are seen as inferior, or as weaker humans. This is seen in cultures that prefer male children, countries that allow child brides, countries that limit female education, and governments that do nothing about domestic violence.<sup>27</sup> Women in oppressive circumstances are not only disrespected by these injustices, but are also pushed by them into deeper oppression. Women are then often forced into abortions, uneducated and trapped, or are transformed into commodities for men. One person writes that discrimination and abuse in the home causes women to become easier prey for human traffickers, as they become trapped in sexual exploitation and domestic servitude. She writes, “If violence and sexual abuse in the home or community is tolerated, it is easier for men to see women as commodities and accept them being bought and sold.”<sup>28</sup> A society of respect is the only remedy for such injustices, and abuse must be brought into the light and become unacceptable. What a man does in his own home is more than his own

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25 1 John 4:20

26 1 Corinthians 11:7-12

27 Blair, Cherie. *Stop the Traffik: Chapter 2, Women*. Oxford: Lion Hudson, 2009. pp. 26-30

28 Ibid.



business. A home is a part of the community and is the heart of its moral and social development. It is the work of the community to eliminate the causes of the oppression—the abuse of women that originates in the home. A Christian man cannot truly love God if he mistreats his wife.

Beyond visible societal injustices, we all too easily disrespect women through what we read and see. The women are no longer seen as humans, but now as a collection of body parts, arranged for appeal to the male eye. This sort of disrespect is subtle, but leads to a decrease in respect for women as dignified human individuals. Just as with domestic abuse, men begin to subconsciously view women as solely physical objects or, further, as objects solely for their own visual pleasure. These attitudes are the same as those of the individuals who seek or sell prostitutes. In both cases, the individual comes to believe that women are objects to be used for pleasure or profit. Seemingly small issues of disrespect in society are the sins that can lead to more severe abuses of women, for they are the sins that create our moral framework. We must actively protect our minds and the minds of those we love from thinking that disrespects or minimizes women.

## Anger

It is incredibly easy to disrespect someone in a moment of passion. When our pride is challenged or when we feel that we have been wronged or deprived in some way, our temper rises, and anger causes us to act sinfully. Anger is one of the most prevalent causes of disrespect and can be shown through physical or verbal abuse. An angry husband might hurt his wife by physically beating her, or he might also hurt her by using harsh words or insults that harm her soul. Anger, in its most extreme form can even result in murder. In the Old Testament, murder was a crime punishable by death, because of the idea of respect. We do not love God if we hate His image by hating humankind. God said, “Whoever sheds man’s blood, by man his blood shall be shed, for in the image of God He made man”.<sup>29</sup> Murder shows that the killer does not have true respect for the image of God in the one that he or she wants to murder, and, therefore, cannot love God. Murder is the most extreme form of disrespect to a person’s humanity, but Jesus extends the punishment for murder to anything we might do to disrespect a fellow human. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, “You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.’ But I say to you that **everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment;** whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, ‘You fool!’ will be liable to the hell of fire”.<sup>30</sup> These words are sobering—that Christ gives equal moral responsibility to those who insult or disrespect another human and to those who are murderers. Jesus is showing us that murder does not happen accidentally, that a murderer is angry with a person, which then leads to the act of killing. Anyone who disrespects another human has already killed him or her by treating them with disrespect, not treating them as a human being. We are human because of the image of God in us, and when that image is disrespected, the person has essentially been killed. This is why Jesus calls us to examine our words and attitudes towards others in this part of the Sermon on the Mount. He calls us to not be angry or say harsh words to others, because we cannot follow Christ if we are angry and insulting to other men, women, and children. He wills each person to treat every other person as a human created by God in His image—to treat everyone with respect.

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<sup>29</sup> Gen 9:6

<sup>30</sup> Matthew 5:21-22, ESV

## Prejudice

We also disrespect our fellow humans through our personal and societal prejudices. In almost every culture, one's wealth or social standing has a connection to his or her reputation and, then, to the way he or she is treated. Prejudice can be damaging, because it bases the worth of a particular person on something not connected with their identity as a human made in the image of God. Usually prejudice defines a person by an external characteristic such as political office, social position, race, wealth, or gender. Prejudice is such a damaging instance of disrespect because it hits at the heart of our identity as individuals. The image of God is neglected when prejudice defines an individual by these characteristics rather than by the image of God in us. Jesus often acted against the common prejudices in His time, confronting the disrespect common even in religious circles. For example, at one point, Jesus was asked by a lawyer, "Who is my neighbor?," so that he might love him or her as himself, in keeping with the command. Jesus then told a story about a man who was attacked by robbers and left for dead. Two religious leaders passed by the man who was injured and did not want to stop and help him. The man who did stop was a Samaritan, one who was not Jewish and was a victim of prejudice from the Jewish people. Jesus wanted those hearing the story to realize that a person's race, ethnicity, wealth, or political position should not affect how they are treated. To love one's neighbor as Christ did means treating all people with respect, regardless of their race, ethnicity, gender, or any other social or cultural characteristic.

## Bitterness

Both anger and prejudice are huge problems of disrespect, but these two attitudes can mix together and become a dangerous cycle of bitterness. In the Old Testament Law, God said, "You shall not hate your fellow countryman in your heart; you may surely reprove your neighbor, but you shall not incur sin because of him. You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the sons of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself; I am the LORD."<sup>31</sup> He commanded the Israelites to be free from grudges and malice because they were to be His holy people, set apart as an example for the world. God often gave the Israelites great mercy and forgiveness, and He wanted them to demonstrate His love by showing forgiveness to all people. This is the same command that Jesus gave regarding forgiveness, saying, "For if you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions."<sup>32</sup> As followers of Christ, we cannot hold grudges against others, because God has forgiven our grievous sins against Him. How can we show gratitude for God's forgiveness of our sins if we hold bitter grudges against other humans? Instead, Christ calls us to forgive unconditionally, without limit, following the example of God's own forgiveness.

## Our Calling to Show Respect

It may be true that we claim to believe and follow Christ and the teachings of Scripture, but our true claims and our beliefs are those shown by our actions. Scripture teaches that all of humanity is made in the image of God, but we can only claim to believe that all humans are created with dignity if we treat all humans with dignity. How can we follow Christ if we hate or are afraid of those who are sick and outcast? If a man is sick

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<sup>31</sup> Leviticus 19:17-18, NASB

<sup>32</sup> Matthew 6:14-15

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and hungry, outcast from society, Jesus commands us to take him in and care for him, treating him with respect. Jesus calls us to care for the “least of these.”<sup>33</sup> He calls Christians to treat the victims of prejudice as humans, showing them proper respect and not discriminating against them. Also, Jesus showed the value and beauty of women by caring for them and treating them with respect. Men cannot claim to follow Christ unless they treat women with respect. Men cannot mistreat a woman or speak to her in sinful anger, for women are created in the image of God and ought to be treated with deep respect. How can men pray to God and worship Him, and yet treat a woman, made in His image, with disrespect? This is intolerable for a man of God. Furthermore, men must love their children with the love of Christ. Children were always welcomed by Jesus and hold a special place in the Kingdom of God. Our families, especially the children, are a blessing and ought to be recipients of our greatest love and respect. How can we possibly love our heavenly Father if we abuse our children, if we do not feed them, or if we shun them? Children are meant to be loved, cared for, and educated to have the mind of Christ. Mary and Joseph respected their child, Jesus, in ways that caused Him to grow “in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.”<sup>34</sup> We also should wish for our children to grow in those ways. We treat all men, women, and children with respect because each person is created in the image of God, with inherent dignity as a human being.

### Review

### Summary

Respect is a key part of our Christian responsibility to all people. Every human is made in the image of God and therefore deserves to be treated with respect. To treat someone with respect is to show consideration for his or her thoughts and feelings. In other words, respecting another human means to recognize the worth of that person with whom you share the image of God. Jesus provided examples of treating all people with respect throughout His earthly ministry. He spent time with men who were social outcasts, sinful, immoral, and sickly, showing that all men deserve respect, regardless of their condition. Also, Jesus showed respect towards the intelligence and faith of all women, often regarding them as close friends and always considering them able to understand spiritual teaching. Jesus also loved and respected children, always allowing them to be with Him and considering them to be valuable individuals in the kingdom of God. One of the most common instances of disrespect towards others is when a woman is treated as an object rather than a human, whether an object of sexual gratification and appeal or an object used for domestic servitude. Another instance of disrespect is any action done in anger, often physical abuse or verbal abuse. A third source of disrespect is prejudice based on social status, wealth, or any characteristics of a person other than being made in the image of God. Lastly, these specific attitudes of objectification, anger, and prejudice can mix into a cycle of bitterness and grudges against others, which causes disrespect. These examples of disrespect, as well as any other instances of disrespect towards another human, are unacceptable for a follower of Christ. They are disobedient to the direct commands of Christ, as well as inconsistent with the principles and theology of the Old and New Testament. One cannot truly love God if the individual treats a man, woman or child with disrespect, devaluing the image of God in that person.

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<sup>33</sup> Matthew 25:31-46

<sup>34</sup> Luke 2:52



## Review Questions

1. What does it mean to respect another individual?  
It means to show consideration for the humanity of another individual, recognizing their intellect, will, and emotions. In other words, it is to recognize that every human being has value simply because they are created by God, in His own image, with His characteristics present in that person. We respect an individual by recognizing the characteristics of God present in every human being as a result of each individual being made in the image of God.
2. What does it mean to be “made in the image of God”?  
It means that each human being has been created to reflect God’s unique characteristics. To be made in the image of God is to possess His unique characteristics and therefore to have dignity. Each person has the image of God simply by being a living human, created by Him.
3. How did Jesus treat men?  
He treated all men with respect, spending time with sinners, social outcasts (tax collectors and fisherman). Social class, physical health, and wealth did not affect how he treated others. In fact, Christ spent more time with those who were sinners and socially outcast than He did with the religious and political leaders of his time.<sup>35</sup>
4. How did Jesus treat women?  
Jesus treated women as persons who had as much value as men. He kept close company with various women and stayed at their homes. Jesus healed various women and taught them about spiritual things that Jewish religious leaders would never have thought that they could understand.<sup>36</sup>
5. How did Jesus view children?  
Jesus loved children and rebuked those who did not allow them to come to Him. During His ministry He healed many children, male and female. He taught that children have a special place in the kingdom of God, and that we must receive the kingdom of God like a child.<sup>37</sup>
6. What are the most common causes of disrespectful treatment?
  1. Objectification of women – using women for a purpose such as sexual gratification, sexual appeal, domestic servitude, etc.
  2. Anger – Causing verbal or physical abuse against another person because of anger
  3. Prejudice – Treating someone differently because of differences in external characteristics, such as social status, race, ethnicity, health, wealth, age, or gender
  4. Bitterness – A cycle of various attitudes, especially a combination of anger and prejudice that creates a long period in which an individual or an entire group of people are treated disrespectfully

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35 Matthew 8:1-4, Jesus heals a leper—social outcasts in society; Matthew 9:9-12, Jesus eats with tax-collectors who were despised as dishonest.

36 Luke 8:1-3, Jesus travelled with various women; Luke 10:38-42, Jesus went to the homes of women and taught them; John 4:7-30, Jesus teaches even though she was a Samaritan, immoral, and a woman; Matthew 15:21-28, Jesus heals a Canaanite woman though a Gentile.

37 Luke 18:15-17, Jesus calls the children to himself; Mark 9:35-37, Jesus shows that loving children is part of loving Him; Mark 5:21-43, Jesus heals a child, the daughter of a religious official.

## Devotional

“But all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you all are one in Christ Jesus.”  
– Galatians 3:27-28

After the Fall, humanity no longer was unified. Humanity scattered out of one location, the Garden, and then was divided into different languages following the Tower of Babel. Christ came to bring redemption to the world, to our souls, but also to the divisions that exist in our world. The kingdom of God, the redeemed of the Lord, is the picture of the redeemed world. In this passage, Paul is describing the kingdom of God, showing specifically that a part of redemption is the complete unity of humankind. Humanity was made in the image of God, separated through divisions caused by sin, and now finally will be redeemed into a royal priesthood of believers, without the divisions of language and race, master or slave, or male or female. By respecting all humans as Jesus showed us in His life, we are able to help bring the kingdom of God here to earth. This is the fulfillment of Jesus’ very prayer: “May Your Kingdom come and Your Will be done, on earth as it is in heaven”.<sup>38</sup> May we all work to have Christ’s vision of unity in redemption by promoting unity through human respect, making God’s kingdom come to pass here on earth through our actions.

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38 Matthew 6:10



# 3

## Respect for Women

### **Objective**

To teach God's respect of women and create cultural change concerning gender injustice.

### **Definition of Female Respect**

Female respect is the practice of holding women in high regard and value, and to show consideration for them as human beings. This means valuing their opinions and ideas, and recognizing that they are worthy of being treated well. The opposite of female respect would be the suppression and oppression of women through physical violence, verbal abuse, or objectification. This lesson intends to focus on the cultural misconception of viewing women as subservient to men.

### **Theology of Female Equality and Respect**

#### **Deborah – Capable Female Community Leader**

To fully understand the extent of the respect God shows for women, we have to examine Scripture. Both the Old and New Testaments give examples of women who have been spiritual leaders in their communities and have been used by the Lord in extraordinary ways to bring about His purposes. In the book of Judges we read about Deborah, who was one of the most famous judges of her time. Scripture says that “the people of Israel came to her to have their disputes decided.”<sup>39</sup> The people of Israel, both men and women, looked to her as a wise spiritual leader. She was in a high position of authority, and even worked alongside Barak, the general of the Israelite army. During times of war and confusion, she guided the people of Israel with wisdom and grace. God obviously blessed her with leadership gifts and the ability to be His voice among the people. She had wisdom and discernment which came directly from Him. Deborah was not only a judge, but a prophetess and wife. As a prophetess, she was filled with the Holy Spirit and capable of speaking to and hearing from the Lord. She was an instrument used by God to speak to His people, and she played a vital role in Israel during a dark period of injustice. A chief purpose in including the story of Deborah with the stories of male judges is to show Israel that women are equally capable of being used by God as spiritual leaders.

<sup>39</sup> Judges 4:5, NIV

## New Testament Theology of Women

In the New Testament we also find women who walked with and heard from the Lord. Jesus' own mother, Mary, was only a young girl when an angel visited her to tell her she would bear the Messiah.<sup>40</sup> The angel told her that she was highly favored by God, and that the Lord was present with her. Zechariah the priest, who was John the Baptist's father, was married to a woman named Elizabeth who was equally upright in the sight of God, "observing all the Lord's commandments and regulations blamelessly."<sup>41</sup> God obviously did not think either of them was more worthy of worshipping Him than the other. Similarly, following the birth of Jesus, Mary and Joseph presented Jesus in the temple to a man and a woman, Simeon and Anna. Simeon was a righteous and devout man of God, promised by the Holy Spirit that he would not die until he had seen Christ. The prophetess Anna was also a righteous and Spirit-filled person. Scripture says that "she never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying."<sup>42</sup> Other women who were prophets include Miriam<sup>43</sup>, Huldah<sup>44</sup>, and the four daughters of Philip<sup>45</sup>.

## A Biblical View of Women — Equal and Capable

In Proverbs, Solomon describes a woman who is the ideal wife.<sup>46</sup> She possesses qualities such as wisdom and compassion, and she has many talents. Her variety of skills helps her to feed her family, as well as to serve people in need around her. She is a woman of "strength and dignity" who "speaks with wisdom."<sup>47</sup> All of these abilities have been given to her by God. The author points out that this woman's husband "has full confidence in her"<sup>48</sup> and that he praises her abilities. This passage is a portrayal of what God intends women to be, and the role that He means for her to have in her family. She is to be a helper to her husband and a loving mother to her children. There is nothing here to suggest that God looks down upon women or that He intended males to dominate females. Rather, we see that a woman is capable of being strong and doing any task that a man can do, and that women of this high character are worthy of respect.

## Instances of Disrespect Shown Towards Women

### Prostitution

In Lesson One, we were informed about sex trafficking and the horrible ways in which women are devalued and mistreated through the sex trade. When we look at Scripture we see that God intended for women to be respected and treated well, not to be seen as a commodity. Women do not enjoy selling their bodies for a living. Life as a prostitute causes many problems for women, some of which include abuse by their clients,

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40 Luke 1:26-38

41 Luke 1:6, NIV

42 Luke 2:37, NIV

43 Exodus 15:20

44 2 Kings 22:14

45 Acts 21:9

46 Proverbs 31:10-31

47 Proverbs 31:25, 26, NIV

48 Proverbs 31:11, NIV

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risk of contracting a sexually transmitted disease, lack of emotional stability, and lack of self-worth. It is not a life that women choose willingly. Some are trafficked into it, and some are coerced into prostitution because they see no other option for their lives. However, a life in prostitution is both dangerous and unfulfilling. Prostituted women are abused by their pimps and by the buyers of commercial sex acts. They suffer physical and emotional trauma, and think very little of their worth as a human.

Aside from the effects it has on the women involved, prostitution is also an issue that destroys the way we view families and morality in society. The more that sexual immorality is approved and accepted of, the more prostitution will be rampant. Prostitution is driven by supply and demand. If more men seek after sex with prostitutes, the number of prostituted women will increase. If there were not a demand for sex with prostitutes, then prostitution would not exist. Women are exploited through a variety of different ways including prostitution and pornography. Both of these destroy the way that women are viewed because instead of being looked at as God-given gifts of beauty, they are treated as products. To combat the effects of prostitution in our world today will take a large movement by the Church towards moral purity and respect for women as more than just sexual objects.

### **Incest**

Although some may deny that we still live in a world dominated by men, the reality is that many cultures still suppress women and girls, often treating them as little better than slaves. Incest, the practice of engaging in sexual relations with a female member of one's own family, is common in certain cultures. Worldwide, 94% of child rape victims under age 12 were sexually abused by a family member or close acquaintance.<sup>49</sup> The majority of sexual abuse cases are not reported to the police, many times because the victim does not want to bring shame to her family. Also, the victim is usually afraid of not being believed by the authorities.

### **Female Genital Mutilation**

Societies in which women are viewed as the weaker sex will often mistreat women in heinous ways. Female genital mutilation (FGM) is the act of cutting or injuring the female genital organs for non-medical reasons. This is often done during times of war to disgrace women in the opposing country, but in some cultures, such as Somalia and Sudan, FGM is a common way of suppressing women. Female genital mutilation is practiced mostly in Asia and Africa. Worldwide, 130 million women and girls have been affected by FGM.<sup>50</sup> Female genital mutilation is a culturally misguided practice which cannot be justified by any Scripture. God certainly did not intend for women to be injured in this way. FGM disrespects a woman's body, and injures her dignity as a human being.

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49 Yello Dyno. "Rape Statistics." 1997. Accessed at [http://www.yellodyno.com/html/rape\\_stats.html](http://www.yellodyno.com/html/rape_stats.html).

50 Amnesty International U.S.A. "Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting." 2010. Accessed on 22 July 2010 at <http://www.amnestyusa.org/violence-against-women/stop-violence-against-women-svaw/female-genital-mutilation/page.do?id=1108226>.

## Rape

Another way that women are devalued is through the crime of rape. Rape occurs when one person forces another person to have sexual intercourse with them against that person's will. One third of women worldwide have been raped or sexually attacked in her lifetime.<sup>51</sup> In South Africa, it is estimated that a woman is raped every 17 seconds.<sup>52</sup> Rape traumatizes women, and significantly impacts their future because of the humiliation associated with it. The crime of rape is a result of the twisted nature of man, wanting to have control and power over the body of another person.

## HIV/ AIDS

Many women and girls who are used as sexual slaves or prostitutes contract HIV/AIDS due to their many sexual partners. Immoral sexual activity is one of the main ways that the AIDS virus is spread. Prostitutes may contract HIV/AIDS from the men they serve, and then those men run risk passing the virus along to their own wife or girlfriend. There are several cultural myths that contribute to the spread of HIV/AIDS. The best way to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS is to remain chaste before marriage and faithful to your spouse after marriage.

- Myth #1: If I have sex with a virgin I will be cured of the AIDS virus

**Truth:** Having sex with a virgin will infect them with the virus too, but it will not cure you of your virus.

- Myth #2: If a person looks healthy and acts healthy, they do not have HIV/AIDS

**Truth:** Someone who appears to be healthy may have AIDS; often the disease takes time to show its effects on a person's physical appearance.

- Myth #3: If I use a condom when I have sex, I will not get HIV/AIDS.

**Truth:** Abstinence is the only way to guarantee safety from AIDS

## Barrenness

Many African and Middle-Eastern cultures shun women who are barren. Because these women cannot have children they are seen as cursed and worthless to their husband and to society. Scripture shows, however, that God loves and values barren women. Though barrenness was seen as a disgrace by society in the Old Testament and New Testament, God still listened to and connected with barren women. Although we know now that oftentimes it was really the man who was infertile rather than his wife, the woman was the one who was blamed and was seen as disgraceful. There is no mention in Scripture of God being displeased with barren women or of Him not showing respect to them. Rather, God blessed several barren women in the Old Testament by answering their prayers for children.

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51 George Mason University Sexual Assault Services. "Worldwide Sexual Assault Statistics." 2005. Accessed at <http://www.gmu.edu/facstaff/sexual/brochures/WorldStats2005.pdf>.

52 Cunningham, Loren. 2006. 30 Days of Prayer for the Voiceless. PhotogenX.

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Also, during His ministry on earth, Jesus extended mercy to a woman in public who was shunned by society. She was suffering from chronic bleeding, and while in the midst of a crowd she reached out to touch Jesus' garment, wanting to be healed by His power. This woman had been bleeding for about 12 years, meaning that she was most likely unable to have children. For most married women, it was common to have a baby almost every year, but this woman's bleeding problem prevented her from becoming pregnant. Her husband would shun her because she could not have a child, and her future was dark because she would have no family in her old age. Even more, the woman was ceremonially unclean because of her bleeding. During this time, she probably would have been put in a separate section of the city to keep her away from other people. When she came to touch Jesus, she was taking a risk. She was an unclean woman touching a religious man, but Jesus was not angry or condemning towards her. He encouraged her in her faith, saying, "Daughter, your faith has healed you."<sup>53</sup> He healed her of her ailment and did not disregard her because she was barren or because she was unclean. Jesus treated her with dignity by taking notice of her, respecting her faith, and healing her infirmity.

### **Lack of Education**

Another way that women are suppressed in the world is keeping them out of the schools. Of the one billion illiterate adults in the world today, 2/3 are female.<sup>54</sup> Similarly, 2/3 of the 130 million children worldwide who are not in school are girls.<sup>55</sup> In most impoverished countries, families who can only afford to send one of their children to school will send the boy, because they believe his education is more important. Even in homes that are not extremely poor, the daughters are often forced to stay at home and do housework, rather than to go to school with the boys. When girls are deprived of the opportunity to get an education, they are less likely to provide an education for their own daughters in the future. As a result, females are stuck in a cycle of illiteracy and poverty from which it is hard to break free. In Africa alone, 24 million females are deprived of an elementary school education.<sup>56</sup> African countries would greatly benefit from having those millions of additional women educated to be valuable members of society. The more opportunities that women have to be educated, the more likely it is that they will be able to improve their country. Women can be powerful agents of change in their communities, but only if they are given a voice and means of expressing themselves.

### **Misconceptions of Male Dominance and a Proper View of Male Leadership**

#### **Male Desire for Control and Dominance**

Many men hold a false assumption that in order to gain respect they need to cause others to be disrespected. They think that a man has to dominate over a woman's body if he is truly to gain respect.

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53 Mark 5:34, NIV

54 United Nations. "Women at a Glance." 1997. Accessed on 26 July 2010 at <http://www.un.org/ecosocdev/geninfo/women/women96.htm>.

55 Ibid.

56 The Olympian. "The Plight of Women in Sub-Saharan Africa". Accessed at <http://www.theolympian.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20060123/LIVING0301/60123033/1076>.



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Criminals who rape women are trying to prove their dominance and control over them. Psychology experts agree that when a man rapes a woman his motivation is not sexual gratification, but rather a desire to dominate and rule over her. When this desire to dominate takes root in a culture, women are viewed as subservient to men, and the true definition of manhood is neglected. When we assume that men are the stronger sex and that women are the weaker sex, we are overlooking some of the unique strengths of a woman. We are also assuming that strength means physically causing someone else to feel weak and disrespected. True strength is strength of character.

Almost all gender injustice is ultimately caused by men wanting to be in the position of control. Many men feel that they are strong when they are in control. However, this mindset is really a display of weakness. A man who respects his wife and the women around him is a much stronger person. Strength is not the ability to have physical control over another person, but to have the strength of character to treat others around you with respect and love, even at times when you feel offended.

### **Jesus – Strength in Humility**

The greatest example of a strong and humble person that we have is the person of Jesus Christ. Jesus came to the earth as God Himself, in the flesh, to shed His blood on the Cross as an atonement for our sins. Scripture tells us that Christ “humbled Himself and became obedient to death, even death on a cross.”<sup>57</sup> He showed His humility in sacrificing physical strength through what appeared to be a moment of weakness on the Cross. Jesus reminded His followers in the Gospel of Mark that “even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”<sup>58</sup> Jesus’ humility was what truly revealed His strength. One of the most vivid illustrations of Christ’s humility portrayed in Scripture is His washing of the disciples’ feet during the Last Supper.<sup>59</sup> Foot washing was normally done by servants during that time, so for Jesus to willingly kneel down before the disciples and wash their dirty feet is a true indication that He values humility and servanthood.

### **Healthy Role of Male Leadership**

When God created man He gave him an innate desire to provide for and lead his family. However, men sometimes feel these desires in misguided ways, leading them to be controlling. God has uniquely designed men to be leaders in their families and communities, as well as to have an attitude of healthy control. While it is not wrong for men to feel the need to be leaders, many of the problems caused against women come from a misplaced desire for dominance. When men think that they have to prove their manhood by dominating women and gaining control, this proves that they are not truly confident in their position of God-given leadership. Men with strong character know how to respect, love, and value their families and friends because they are confident in their role as a leader. They will know the proper way to value women and to appreciate them.

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57 Philippians 2:8, NIV

58 Matthew 20:28, NIV

59 John 13:1-17



## Jesus' Respect for Women

### Jesus' Revolutionary Attitudes Towards Women

During His ministry on earth, Jesus was known for His radical approach in bringing Jewish people back to the heart of the Law. His teachings both frightened and offended the Pharisees, as well as spurred them to jealousy because so many people believed what Jesus was teaching. Some of His teachings stood in stark contrast to that of the Pharisees and religious leaders. Perhaps one of Jesus' most radical actions was allowing so many women to follow Him closely during His ministry. Jesus respected the thoughts and ideas of women, and He shocked the religious leaders by allowing an adulteress woman to touch Him and pour perfume on His feet in worship.<sup>60</sup> In the Gospel of John, Jesus met and talked with a woman with whom other rabbis would have been ashamed to speak. Just the fact that she was a woman was enough reason for Him not to speak with her in public, yet Jesus chose to engage her in conversation. She was also a Samaritan, an outcast at that time, and an adulterous woman. The woman was surprised that a religious teacher would even speak with her. Jesus did not talk down to her, but He respected her intelligence by speaking to her about spiritual concepts. This woman was one of the first people to whom Jesus openly revealed Himself as the Messiah. Inspired by her conversation with Jesus, the Samaritan woman went and told her entire village about Him. Jesus used her as an agent of His ministry, and as one of the first evangelists.

### Jesus' Respect for Disgraced Women

In the Gospel of John, Jesus was in the temple when the religious leaders brought in a woman who was caught in adultery. The religious leaders were only punishing the woman, but not the man who was equally responsible for the sin of adultery. They were planning to stone the woman, and they tested Jesus by asking Him what should be done with her. He replied, "If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her".<sup>61</sup> None of the leaders stayed to convict her, and Jesus said to the woman, "Then neither do I condemn you. Go now and leave your life of sin".<sup>62</sup> Jesus showed the religious leaders that a woman is worthy to receive forgiveness. He did not shun her because of her sin and did not disrespect her because she was a woman, but rather defended her and offered her grace. The priests treated the woman unfairly by punishing her and not the man, but Jesus showed respect to her as a woman and was willing to take away the shame caused by her actions.

## Review

### Summary

During this lesson we have looked at the causes of disrespect towards females, as well as the correct way to treat women, shown to us by Jesus in the Gospels. Even though culture often portrays women as weaker than men, we have learned that women are capable of working hard, of being strong, and of being used

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60 Luke 7:36-50  
61 John 8:7, NIV  
62 John 8:11, NIV

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by God for His holy purposes. Genesis tells us that God created both man and woman in His image.<sup>63</sup> In God's plan of Creation we see that God made man first, and then He saw that man was incomplete without woman. He created Eve to be Adam's helper and companion, to be united with Adam as an equal. To truly fulfill God's plan for the unity between man and woman we need to learn to value what both genders have to offer. When cultures deny women the same privileges as men, such as an education and basic human rights, they are damaging their own culture by holding back the valuable input and talents that women possess.

### **Review Questions**

1. What is female respect?  
Female respect is holding women and girls in high regard and esteem, and showing consideration for them. This means valuing their opinions and ideas, and recognizing that they are worthy of being treated well.
2. Name three different ways that women are mistreated in society:  
Prostitution, incest, female genital mutilation, rape, HIV/AIDS, barrenness, and lack of education
3. How did Jesus show respect to women during His earthly ministry?  
Jesus showed respect to women by speaking with them when they were shunned by the rest of society. He openly spoke with and defended women on several occasions. While visiting a Pharisee named Simon, Jesus allowed a sinful woman to clean His feet with her tears and to anoint Him with perfume. Even though Simon appeared to be disgusted with Jesus for allowing a sinful woman to touch Him, Jesus not only allowed the woman to continue washing His feet but He defended her actions.<sup>64</sup> He also spoke with a woman in public who was both a foreigner rejected by the Jews, and living a sinful life with a man that was not her husband.<sup>65</sup> Although Jesus never approved of the sin of these women, He showed that He respected and valued them. It was because of His loving grace and mercy that they realized their brokenness and came to Him in repentance.
4. Why was this such a revolutionary approach?  
The cultural belief in Jesus' time was that women were inferior and less capable than men. Religious leaders would not bother to teach women because they thought women were incapable of grasping spiritual concepts. This is why it was so revolutionary for Jesus to encourage women to follow Him and to listen to the Scriptural truths He spoke about. He showed respect for the intelligence and faith of women. Jesus also overturned cultural tradition by interacting with adulterous women. Women living in sexual sin were seen as despicable by the rest of society. Even though the sin of adultery included both a man and a woman, the woman was often the only one that was punished for her sin, as seen in John chapter 8. Jesus' attitude towards women was revolutionary because instead of rejecting them for their sin, He openly forgave and valued them.
5. Discuss the way that you view the differences between men and women. Are there any changes you need to make in the way you view either?

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63 Genesis 1:27

64 Luke 7:36-50

65 John 4:1-42

## Devotional

In Galatians, Paul tells us that through our faith in Christ all believers are made heirs of God. He says that in the family of Christ “there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”<sup>66</sup> God has created different types of people to have different roles in His Church. He doesn’t distinguish between male and female in the way that so many cultures do today. Man and woman were created equally, yet are capable of possessing different skills and capabilities. Men are gifted in certain ways that women may not be gifted in, and vice versa. God created man and woman to complement each other, and finally in marriage to bring out the very best in one another.

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<sup>66</sup> Galatians 3:28, NIV



# 4

## Respecting and Loving Children

Children are a central part of human existence. We could not be here as adults if we had not passed through years of childhood. The most dignified ruler, the sharpest academic mind, and the most debased criminal all had to mature from birth through a period of childhood. No one is exempt from this phase, and it can be one of the most important parts of a human's life and development. During childhood, one learns how to walk, talk, and function as a person. Childhood is also the time when we each determine who we are, what we are here for, and what is important to us. In this crucial stage of life, children need attention, guidance, and lots of love from their parents, so that they can grow into mature Christian men and women who love God and love their peers. Though children can be cute, loving, and innocent, they can also be difficult to deal with as they mature. Because of their weakness, many children suffer from abuse, neglect, and poverty. They are unable to defend themselves against abuse, and are forgotten by their families and communities. Without mature, healthy children, a community cannot survive, as they will have no individuals to carry on the legacy. In this lecture, we hope to lead each of you to recognize the value and dignity of children and to exhort you to treat all children with the respect and love that they need and deserve.

### Definition of Child Respect

We have discussed what it means to treat every human with respect, but what does it mean to specifically respect a child? Just as with any man or woman, a child is wonderfully created in the image of God, and therefore has some of God's essential characteristics. Not only this, but a child is not yet a mature adult and requires much attention, physical and spiritual nourishment, and emotional and intellectual guidance. The combination of a child's dignity as a human being and his or her need for growth and development means that respecting a child requires more care than most adults. To truly respect a child is to spend time with him or her, caring for the child's physical needs by touching and feeding him or her and it is also to care for the child's spiritual, emotional, and moral development. Parents, especially fathers, must teach children the stories of the Bible and teach the child what it means to love God and to follow Christ. Not only are we responsible for respecting our own children, but also any children in the community. There are many children around us, especially orphans who have many needs, and we can show love to them by caring for their physical, intellectual, emotional, and spiritual needs.

## Children in the Old Testament

### A Wonderful Creation from God

From the very beginning, children were a part of blessedness. In the Garden of Eden, God commanded Adam and Eve to procreate as part of His blessing on them, as Genesis reads, “God blessed them; and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth...’”<sup>67</sup> Our God-given responsibility as humans is to be fruitful and multiply, having children to multiply across the earth. Our sexual nature shows this, as sexual unity in marriage is not simply for the purpose of the husband and wife uniting in the act of sexual intercourse, but also for the purpose of creating new life. God is the creator of all life, and, through His grace, he allows us to share in the creative act, to be the physical means of His new creation. The psalmist writes, “For You formed my inward parts; You wove me in my mother’s womb”, proclaiming the beauty of birth—that God is the Original Creator of each baby.<sup>68</sup> Even though the husband and wife create the physical body of a child, the new person ultimately comes from God. This is an incredible blessing for a husband and wife, to be co-creators with God, and the psalmist goes on to praise God for His role in creating a child, writing, “I will give thanks to You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; wonderful are Your works, and my soul knows it very well.”<sup>69</sup> God’s specific, careful creation of each life reveals the value of each child, as all of His works are wonderful and wonderfully made, especially children.

### The Blessings of God

In the Old Testament, children are not only God’s wonderful creation, but also His blessing. Hebrew theology did not have a large focus on blessings in the afterlife, but, rather, often focused on the earthly blessings of a righteous man. For the Israelites, a blessed righteous man would have plenty of livestock, good land, and, especially, many children and descendants. Children are a joy, but they are also the future of their parents. When a married couple grows old, their only care might come from their children, and the children are the only legacy of the parents. When God came to Abraham, to make a covenant with Him, He said, “Do not fear, Abram, your reward shall be very great... Now look toward the heavens, and count the stars, if you are able to count them... So shall your descendants be.”<sup>70</sup> God’s blessing to Abraham was to give him many children and descendants, eventually including Christ. These children would carry on his legacy of faithfulness and would maintain his family name. Later in Jewish history, the psalmist writes, “Behold, children are a gift of the LORD, the fruit of the womb is a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, so are the children of one’s youth. How blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them.”<sup>71</sup> This psalm tells us that children are a reward! Children are like arrows, because they are able to support and defend parents in their old age. To have children, especially many of them, is a blessing from God.

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67 Genesis 1:28, NASB

68 Psalm 139:14

69 Psalm 139:15

70 Genesis 15:1,5

71 Psalm 127:3-5

## Instances of Child Respect

In the Old Testament, we see children as blessings to their parents, and we also can see how parents viewed their children. During Solomon's reign as king, two women came to him with a strange predicament. Each woman had just given birth to a son, but in the night, one of the sons had died. The mother of the dead son discovered it while the other was sleeping, so she switched her baby with the other living son. In the morning, the other mother awoke and found that her son was dead. Looking closer, however, she realized that it was not her son. Both women now claimed to be the mother of the living son. When they brought this dispute to Solomon, he commanded his servants to cut the living baby into halves so that each mother might have half of a share. At this, the mother of the living baby said, "Oh my lord, give her the living child, and by no means kill him", and Solomon was able to see that this was the true mother of the child.<sup>72</sup> She loved the baby so much, that she was willing to give him away so that she could save his life. This mother was willing to sacrifice her own desire to raise the child so that he might live, showing her deep love for her son. Children are not simply the product of a marriage, and they are not simply workers to be used for whatever the mother or father need. Children, rather, are a precious gift, and God intends parents to see their child's life as worthy to save, regardless of what it may require of the parents.

## Children as Examples of Faithfulness

Not only are children a joy and a blessing to their parents, but they are often used by God. During the time when Israel had evil kings, one king came along who was to restore Israel to faithfulness and obedience to God. This king was a boy named Josiah, who became king of Israel at eight years of age. Though Josiah was only a boy, he was an incredible example of faithfulness. Josiah obeyed God with all his heart. Though Israel had been wicked and disobedient, Josiah's faithfulness and sorrow for the sins of the nation brought the renewal of God's covenant with Israel and the repair of the Temple, and, subsequently, the reformation of the nation. His life is described in the Second Book of the Kings, reading, "Before him there was no king like him who turned to the LORD with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his might, according to all the law of Moses; nor did any like him arise after him."<sup>73</sup>

Another example of faithfulness and strength in a child is King David, another king of Israel. David grew up as a shepherd, tending sheep. One day, when his brothers were off fighting with the Israelites against the Philistines, David was sent to them to bring supplies and some bread. While there, he saw that the Israelite army was locked in paralyzing fear of a giant named Goliath. Goliath was asking for an Israelite to come and fight him as a representative of the nation, but no one would go out to fight him, for the Israelites were terrified. David, though a young boy, volunteered to fight. The king thought it was ridiculous for a boy to go and fight a grown giant, saying, "You are not able to go against this Philistine... for you are but a youth, while he has been a warrior from his youth."<sup>74</sup> After the king decided to allow him to fight, even Goliath mocked his young age. David, however, trusted in God and killed Goliath, freeing the Israelites and defeating the Philistines. After this battle, David fought for Saul, eventually becoming the King of Israel, and a faithful man of God. Though David was a young boy and physically inferior, he loved God and trusted him for protection, and God used him for His purposes.

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<sup>72</sup> 2 Kings 3:16-28

<sup>73</sup> 2 Kings 23:25

<sup>74</sup> 1 Samuel 17:33



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In the New Testament, Paul writes to Timothy, another young man who Paul was teaching to be a leader in the church, saying, “Let no one look down on your youthfulness, but rather in speech, conduct, love, faith, and purity, show yourself an example of those who believe.”<sup>75</sup> Paul did not think that Timothy was unable to have faith or be a leader in the church because he was young. He, instead, calls Timothy to be a leader, being an example to others, including people who are older than him. As we see in this passage, and in the stories of Josiah and David, God is able to use the young for his purposes just as much as the older, mature adults. We, therefore, ought to treat children with respect, growing them into men and women of God who are able to serve as examples of Christ to the world.

### **The Responsibility of Parents to their Children**

In this way, children are not a completely free blessing. There is responsibility associated with the blessings of children—raising them to be mature men and women who are faithful to God. God specifically emphasizes the importance of training one’s children in the ways of God in giving the Old Testament Law, saying, “These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up.”<sup>76</sup> In Jewish families, it is the responsibility of the father to teach the stories of the Scripture to his children, from his own mouth, before they are seven years old. In this way, the children will learn the Law of God and will learn how to follow God’s commands through the examples of the stories of Scripture. God commands fathers to teach His commands to his children wherever they are—when you are at home, when you move around, at the end or at the beginning of the day. He says this because He expects fathers to keep their children near, and to teach them and show them, through example, about morality, integrity, and loving God. It is impossible to teach your children if they are never around you. Wise King Solomon wrote, “A wise son makes a father glad” and “...he who sires a wise son will be glad in him.”<sup>77</sup> Fathers must take responsibility for teaching their children the stories of the Bible so that they follow God’s commands and grow in faith.

### **Jesus and Children**

#### **Jesus’ Love and Respect for Children**

In a few stories of the Gospel it is evident that Jesus also loved children very much. In the Gospel of Mark, some were bringing children to Jesus, but the disciples sent them away, not wanting to bother Him. Jesus, however, was angry at the disciples, as Mark writes, “Permit the children to come to Me; do not hinder them; for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it at all.’ And He took them in His arms and began blessing them, laying His hands on them.”<sup>78</sup> This story shows two things, in particular, about Jesus’ respect for children. First, he showed their worth in the kingdom of God, saying that, in fact, the kingdom belongs to them. These children have worth and have a significant place in God’s heart. Second, Jesus showed us how we ought to

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<sup>75</sup> 1 Timothy 4:12

<sup>76</sup> Deuteronomy 6:6-7

<sup>77</sup> Proverbs 10:1; 23:24

<sup>78</sup> Mark 10:13-16

treat children if we are to follow His example. Jesus was willing to take children in His arms, touching them, speaking to them, and even blessing them. He was not afraid to be near them and he was very willing to show them affection. As followers of Christ, we are called to obey His command to follow Him, as He said, “love one another, even as I have loved you,” and we ought to treat children the same way.<sup>79</sup> We must be willing to touch children, teach them, and speak words of encouragement to them, showing them the love of Christ.

### **Children as Examples for Our Spiritual Life**

Jesus not only loved children, but He often used them as examples for spiritual principles. Matthew writes, “At that time, the disciples came to Jesus and said, ‘Who then is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?’ And He called a child to Himself and set him before them, and said, ‘Truly I say to you, unless you are converted and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever then humbles himself as this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.’<sup>80</sup> Jesus recognized the importance of children to show us true humility, trust and innocence. They readily trust the goodness of their father and provide the model for our faith. To be recognized in the kingdom of heaven, we must have the faith of a child, readily trusting in God, our Father. The innocence and trust of children help us to realize how loving God truly is, for He guides us in our innocence and ignorance. Like children who know no better, we sin, and yet return to Him asking forgiveness, which He lovingly provides. Jesus, in showing the disciples how to pray, began by saying, “Our Father, who is in heaven...” showing that God is our Father and that we should be as children to Him.<sup>81</sup> Paul writes, “So also we, while we were children, were held in bondage to the elemental things of the world. But when the time came, God sent forth His Son... so that He might redeem those who were under the Law that we might receive the adoption as sons... Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God,” saying that we have been adopted as sons through Christ. We are not only part of God’s family as an adopted son, but we are grafted in as heirs—sons that are loved and blessed by our Heavenly Father. Like children, we must love and trust Him freely, accepting His discipline and instruction just as we might accept instruction from our earthly father. We are part of His family, and His gifts, discipline, and instruction all come as a result of our being adopted as sons. If a child is what we must be like to enter the kingdom of heaven, how much more can we learn and grow in faith by being around and learning from children. Caring for a child truly allows one to see the physical child learn, fail occasionally, and develop slowly, helping to show what it means to grow in Christ as a child, slowly learning and growing faith in Christ in humility.

### **Our Responsibility to Children**

#### **Commands for Us to Provide for Our Children’s Needs**

Beyond Jesus’ example of loving children, Paul also writes about a parent’s responsibility to his or her child. In Titus, he writes to older women, encouraging them to be an example to younger women, saying, “Older women likewise are to be reverent in their behavior... teaching what is good, so that they may encourage

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<sup>79</sup> John 13:34

<sup>80</sup> Matthew 18:3-4

<sup>81</sup> Matthew 6:9



the young women... to love their children".<sup>82</sup> He is saying that it is good for women to love their children. He is encouraging older women to be an example because it is the natural role of young women to love their children by caring for them and being with them. In his Letter to the Corinthians, Paul writes, "Here for this third time I am ready to come to you, and I will not be a burden to you; for I do not seek what is yours, but you; for children are not responsible to save up for their parents, but parents for their children".<sup>83</sup> Paul is using commonly expected responsibilities of a parent to show how he is as a spiritual parent to those who he is visiting and will not expect them to provide for him. He assumes that parents will provide for their children, so that he can show how he will provide for his spiritual children. Those who are reading the letter would think that this was an obvious statement—that parents are the ones who provide food, care, and guidance for their children, and not children for their parents.

It is expected for each of us to care for our children in our homes. Jesus, when talking about God's role as our Father, assumes that parents provide for their children, saying, "Or which of you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will you give him a serpent? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask!"<sup>84</sup> The answer to His two questions was obvious to those listening, and He shows this by acknowledging that the listeners do know how to give good gifts to their children. Likewise, this is what we are called to do as parents—to provide for our children's physical, intellectual, and emotional needs and for their moral and spiritual growth.

## Orphans

### God's Respect and Care for the Orphans

In our communities, children are not only found in families, but many live alone. These orphans might be alone because their parents have died from HIV/AIDS, or because their parents have neglected them. God has a deep love and respect for these orphaned children who may be living alone or even being a part to their younger brothers and sisters. In Genesis, a woman named Hagar was unable to feed her child, so she was going to leave him under a bush to die. Hagar was the slave of Abraham, and had this child because Abraham's wife was infertile and the pregnancy was arranged to ensure that he would have offspring. Abraham's wife, Sarah, then had a baby and the entire situation changed. Hagar now was scorned in the house, and she and her baby were sent away into the desert. Hagar was now a single mother with a baby, cast out of her household and community, and left with no food and no home. Just as she was ready to give up her baby for dead, however, she realized that God saw their troubles. The story reads,

**When the water in the skin was gone, she put the child under one of the bushes. Then she went and sat down opposite him a good way off, about the distance of a bowshot, for she said, "Let me not look on the death of the child." And as she sat opposite him, she lifted up her voice and wept. And God heard the voice of the boy, and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven and said to her, "What troubles you, Hagar? Fear not, for God has heard the voice of the boy where he is. Up! Lift up the boy, and hold him fast with your hand, for I will make him into a great nation." Then God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water. And she went and filled the skin with water and gave the boy a drink. And God was with the boy.**<sup>85</sup>

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82 Titus 2:3-4

83 1 Corinthians 12:14

84 Matthew 7:9-11, ESV

85 Genesis 21:15-20, ESV

God heard the boy's cry, saw the baby's needs, and comforted Hagar. He provided water for them, but also promised to bless Ishmael and make him into a great nation, even though he was an outcast. God cares for all orphans, just as He cared for Ishmael. The Bible tells us that God specifically heard Ishmael's cry, though Hagar was also praying for him. The cry of the smallest child does not escape God's ears, and He wants to provide for their needs. God does hear the cries of those who are poor, hungry, and alone, as the psalmist says, "He does not forget the cry of the afflicted".<sup>86</sup> He provides for them, as He says of himself, "He executes justice for the orphan and the widow, and shows His love for the alien by giving him food and clothing".<sup>87</sup> Those who are alone and afflicted can trust that God hears their cries and that he cares for them.<sup>88</sup>

### **Our Call to Respect and Care for the Orphans**

Ishmael was not only crying out to God when his mother was going to abandon him, but he was also calling to all of humanity. He had been abandoned by his community and then by his mother, left to die alone. This is not, however, how God calls us to treat orphans. In the Old Testament, God says to the Israelites, "You shall not afflict any widow or orphan. If you afflict him at all, and if he does cry out to Me, I will surely hear his cry; and My anger will be kindled, and I will kill you with the sword, and your wives shall become widows and your children fatherless". God commands them not to harm or disregard an orphan, and gives very harsh punishments for those who do. Additionally, God commands the Israelites to provide food for children without parents, as He says, "When you beat the olives from your trees, do not go over the branches a second time. Leave what remains for the alien, the fatherless and the widow. When you harvest the grapes in your vineyard, do not go over the vines again. Leave what remains for the alien, the fatherless and the widow".<sup>89</sup> In the same way, we are called to provide food for the orphans in need. Not only are we commanded to feed them, but we also to bring them into our community and care for them. James writes, "Pure and genuine religion in the sight of God the Father means caring for orphans and widows in their distress and refusing to let the world corrupt you," saying that caring for orphans is part of the essential duty of a Christian.<sup>90</sup> As Christians we are called to take care of the orphans and widows in our communities. We can provide them with food, but also with loving parents and friends who will teach them about God's love and how to follow Christ. If we neglect these children, we are not following God's commands, and we cannot truly love God if we disobey His commands.

### **Review**

#### **Summary**

Children are valuable human beings who have value because they are made in the image of God. Because they have this value simply by being human, they deserve to be treated with respect. To treat a child with respect means caring for his or her physical needs by providing food and water, and also caring for his or

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86 Psalm 9:12

87 Deuteronomy 10:18

88 Malherbe, Dr. Johannes. 2004. *Child Theology in Africa?* In *Hear the Cry Conference, Nairobi*. Nairobi: Petra College. Accessed 21 July 2010 at <http://www.petra.co.za/docs/Child%20Theology%20in%20Africa.pdf>. Many of the ideas in this curriculum relating to orphans came from this lecture by Dr. Malherbe.

89 Deuteronomy 24:20-21

90 James 1:27, NLT

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her emotional, intellectual, and spiritual needs by spending frequent time with the child and teaching him or her the stories of the Bible and showing what it means to love and follow Christ daily. Respecting children also includes caring for the children in the community, feeding the orphans and taking them into the community. The community, then, should show them attention and love that any child might get from a parent. We respect and care for children not only because they are human, but because they are special to God. The Old Testament shows that children were considered an incredible blessing to parents. There are also stories of children who were used by God as examples of faithfulness to do His work. Jesus also loved children, as He touched them, blessed them, and spoke to them. He also said that children are our model for faith, and that we must be like a child in order to enter the kingdom of heaven. Because children are so precious, as shown in the Old and New Testaments, parents have a large responsibility to raise them with care and respect. Parents must not neglect their child, abuse their child, or cause it to starve, because children are a blessing and a responsibility given by God. He gives children to parents with the understanding that they must provide for the child's various needs and also that they will raise him to follow God and obey His commands. Communities as a whole also have responsibilities for children, as there are almost always orphans in a community who need care and respect. God hears the cries of orphans and calls His people to care for them, providing for their physical needs and giving them friends and family. As Christians, it is unacceptable for us to neglect or abuse our children or the children in our community. Instead, we must follow Christ's example and treat all children with the care and respect which they need and deserve.

### **Review Questions**

1. What does scripture say about children?  
Scripture teaches that children are valuable, because they are made in the image of God, just as any human, and therefore deserve to be treated with the respect due to any man or woman. Also, the stories of the Old Testament, as well as the Psalms, show that children are a valuable gift from God to bring joy and support to parents. The Old Testament also shows that children can be used by God as examples of faithfulness, even to adults. Also, Jesus loved children, as He was willing to touch, bless, and speak to them, and He used them as the standard of behavior for those who will enter the kingdom of heaven. In this way, scripture commands parents to recognize the value and joy of children, and to fulfill the responsibility of a parent to provide for their children's physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual needs. Parents truly love and respect their child by spending time with the child, teaching the stories of the Bible and how to love and follow God.
2. What does it mean to treat a child with respect?  
Treating a child with respect is most basically to treat him or her as you would like to be treated, considering what the child might think or feel about your actions. For children, this specifically includes the responsibility of parents to support, provide for, and raise their children. It is physical support and nourishment through food and watching over them. It is also emotional, intellectual, and spiritual support and guidance, taking time to be with the child and to teach him or her the stories of the Bible and morality, and to show what it means to love God and follow Christ.
3. What does God think about orphans and how does He say that Christians ought to treat them?  
God cares deeply about orphaned children. He hears their cries of hunger, pain, and loneliness, and wants to provide for them. To help orphans, He uses His people, followers of Christ, to care for the hunger and loneliness of children without living parents, and to welcome them into a community that can serve

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as their family. Christians are called to help orphans and to treat them as family, raising them and guiding them into righteousness.

**Devotional**

“They came to Capernaum; and when He was in the house, He began to question them, ‘What were you discussing on the way?’ But they kept silent, for on the way they had discussed with one another which of them was the greatest. Sitting down, He called the twelve and said to them, ‘If anyone wants to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all.’ Taking a child, He set him before them, and taking him in His arms, He said to them, ‘Whoever receives one child like this in My name receives Me; and whoever receives Me does not receive Me, but Him who sent Me.’” – Mark 9:36-37

In this story, the disciples were discussing a quest for greatness. Jesus does not tell them to stop seeking greatness, but instead redefines greatness. He recognizes that every human’s quest for greatness is a good thing, but it has been corrupted by sin to be a quest to be known as great or to be greater than someone else. Jesus says that greatness is not to be second, or third, or fourth, but to be intentionally last. Also, it is not to be in a position for others to praise you, but to be in a position where you can serve as many as possible. He goes on to say to the disciples, if you really want to be great, you must be a servant of children like this. Children are unable to give political payback, or praise you for your service, or acknowledge your hard work. In this way, children prove your true greatness, because you probably will not get any sort of reward on earth if you take time for them. It is significant that He is speaking to the twelve disciples, all men, for caring for children is not only the work of women. Men, especially, must be willing to spend time with children and to not despise them, caring for them and teaching them. In this, they can be truly great.

In giving reasons for the importance of serving children, Jesus could have said how valuable children are as humans, talking about how any child is as valuable as a king or the emperor. Instead, He chose to say, “Whoever receives one child like this in My name receives Me,” saying that we receive children with love because we are receiving Christ. In this, we serve a child not only for his or her own sake, but because of our love for Christ. We love and respect children so that we can ultimately show them the joy and happiness that comes from loving and following Christ in their own lives. How can we teach children about the joy that comes from loving God if we are never around our children, or if we beat them, or if we do not feed them? We must show God’s love to children by loving them and respecting them, so that they will come to love God for His love. Our desire to serve children must begin with our desire to serve God, because He is the ultimate source of joy and happiness for us, and for that child. Jesus is calling us to redirect our quest for greatness—to stop seeking man’s praise and begin to pursue God. This redirection means that we must be servants of children. “Stop trying to receive praise in the service of men and start receiving God in the service of children. What do you want? Do you want the fleeting praise of mortal men? Or do you want God?”<sup>91</sup>

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91 Piper, John. “Receiving Children in Jesus’ Name.” *Desiring God*. Sermon at Bethlehem Baptist Church, Minneapolis, 23 February 1992. Accessed 22 July 2010 at [http://www.desiringgod.org/ResourceLibrary/Sermons/ByTopic/116/790\\_Receiving\\_Children\\_in\\_Jesus\\_Name](http://www.desiringgod.org/ResourceLibrary/Sermons/ByTopic/116/790_Receiving_Children_in_Jesus_Name). The ideas for this devotional came primarily from this wonderful sermon by John Piper, pastor at Bethlehem Baptist Church, from *Desiring God Resources*.



# 5

## Community Reflection and Evaluation

Now, after four lectures, we have introduced you to the problems of sex and labor trafficking, issues of human respect and female respect, and how to love and respect children. It is easy to sit back and think about all of the problems with disrespecting women and children and with human trafficking, without ever turning back to examine ourselves. Simply because we are Christians does not mean that we do not have problems with human respect in our community. In his letter to the Corinthians, Paul writes, "Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves!"<sup>92</sup> How can we know whether we are truly following Christ, unless we act in a way that is obedient to His commands and in a way that reflects the principles of His life? In this way, we want you to examine your own actions towards others in the community and evaluate which areas need improvement. It is my prayer that God uses this lesson to convict your hearts where you or your community is not treating certain individuals with respect, and that it may cause the beginnings of repentance in the community, and then redemption for those individuals. This lesson will also give some suggestions as to how your Christian community can bring justice, peace, and healing to those who are oppressed by injustice and disrespect.

### Where have we gone wrong?

#### Human Trafficking

#### Force, Fraud, and Coercion

Review the definitions of force, fraud, and coercion. Discuss the way that these play a major role in human trafficking. In your small groups, do role-plays to illustrate force, fraud, and coercion. For example, someone may pretend to be a wealthy businessman trying to persuade a family to let their daughter come with him for a job as a "waitress" in the big city.

#### The Three P's

Name the three P's of combating human trafficking.

- Do you see your community actively taking steps to end human trafficking?
- Do people in your community seem to be aware of and concerned about human trafficking? Why or why not?

<sup>92</sup> 2 Corinthians 13:5, NASB



## Sex and Labor Trafficking

- List three different ways people are trafficked for labor purposes.
- List three different ways people are trafficked for sexual purposes.
- What does trafficking say about the way some people view human life?
- Look at the way people in your community treat families that are in poverty. Do you see a relation between the way these types of people are treated and the increase in human trafficking?

Reflect on how you answered these questions. Does it seem like the poor and marginalized in your community are regarded as little more than slaves? What can Christians do to help change this mindset? Have you learned anything new about the way that society's perception of women affects the number of women in the sex trade?

- What do you think is your community's general view about morality and sexuality?
- What is your smaller Christian community's view about morality and sexuality?
- What role do you think these perceptions and views play in the issue of human trafficking?
- What role does supply and demand play in the issue of human trafficking at large?
- In the lecture on human trafficking we discussed some cultural lies which contribute to the prevalence of human trafficking in the world. Do you think any of these cultural lies have taken root in your community? How?

## Respecting All Humans

### Objectification

- Think about the women in your home and community.
- What are the primary roles of women in your household?
- Are women in your household only used for household duties, such as cooking, cleaning, and caring for the children?
- How do women dress in your community? Is this related to the way that men view them, or is it based on something else?
- Do the women in your community feel like they are only valued for the pleasure of the appearance of their bodies?
- How do the men in your community view women? Are they objects of visual pleasure and sexual gratification to be used by men?

Think about your answers to these questions. Does it seem as though women are treated as objects that are to be used? How do these attitudes about women cause them to be treated? As we have seen throughout this curriculum, women are made in the image of God, and are therefore just as valuable as men in God's eyes. Jesus loved women and treated them with respect through talking to them, being with them, teaching them theological ideas, showing that women are just as capable as men to think and understand spiritual things. God intends for women to be a valuable part of the community, beyond simply being at home, caring for children, and being objects of sexual pleasure. In fact, though these roles are part of what a woman is—a mother and a sexual person—these roles are abused and distorted. Paul says, "...woman is

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the glory of man. For man was not made from woman, but woman from man"<sup>93</sup>, saying that a woman is not subservient or less than man. Instead, God created men and women to need each other's strengths, working in complimentary roles.

When women are only viewed and treated as objects to be used, they are not only disrespected, but, more importantly, they become pushed into deeper injustice. If you, as a man, prefer male children over female children, or if your community limits the education that women can receive, you are making women more vulnerable to worse injustices. The abuse and suppression of women in private homes make prostitution and human trafficking more acceptable in the community because women are only seen as objects. If you see that women are abused physically or verbally by men in your community, confront the men. These attitudes are especially unacceptable for Christians, as we are called to peace and to respect all men and women, both made in the image of God. If you and your community do nothing to stop violence in private homes, women will continue to be suppressed and may be forced into slavery in prostitution or other sex trafficking. Be aware of how women are viewed in your community, work to confront those who abuse women, and promote a view of women that encourages them to participate in the community in equal roles as the men.

### Anger

Think about everyone who you know in the community, whether a friend, family member, co-worker, or just someone in the community.

- Have you been angry with anyone recently?

If so, how did you deal with your anger? Did you say anything? Did you do something about it?

Anger is not an entirely bad thing. The Scriptures tell us of times when God was angry with people when they sinned or were hesitant to obey Him. There are also stories in the Gospels when Jesus was angry. In one story, he went into the Temple and cleansed it of people who were doing business there. Jesus also grew angry at the religious leaders when they were trying to accuse Him of violating the Sabbath, when He was healing someone. There was a man in the Temple with a withered hand, and Jesus called the man forward to heal him. Before healing him, Jesus asked the religious leaders who were watching him whether it is against the Jewish Law to do good on the Sabbath. Mark writes, "And He said to them, 'Is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the Sabbath, to save a life or to kill?' But they kept silent. After looking around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart, He said to the man, 'Stretch out your hand.' And he stretched it out and his hand was restored."<sup>94</sup> Jesus recognized when anger is appropriate.

Anger is not a sin in itself, but it can often lead to sin, as Paul writes, "Be angry, and yet do not sin..."<sup>95</sup> Has your anger caused you to do something sinful? Did you say something harsh, false, or insulting to the person with whom you were angry? Have you physically hit someone out of anger? Do you treat your wife with patience and respect, or do you get angry easily and curse her or hit her? Do you get angry with your children and shout at them and beat them? These are all sins and you must repent of them if you are to claim to follow Christ. Someone who loves God does not beat his or her children or his wife.

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<sup>93</sup> 1 Corinthians 11:7-8, ESV

<sup>94</sup> Mark 3:4-5

<sup>95</sup> Ephesians 4:26

If you have sinned in anger, first repent and ask God for forgiveness. Then, go to the man or woman against whom you sinned in anger, and ask for their forgiveness. If you have hit your wife out of anger, go to her in humble sorrow for your sins against her and ask for her forgiveness. These actions are sins against God and against those made in His image, and the sins need to be forgiven. Part of forgiveness is repentance, which is more than asking for forgiveness for the sin. Repentance means a complete turn away from the sin. Sins out of anger must not be a part of a Christian's life, and we must ask God to help us to stop physically or verbally abusing others out of anger. James writes that we must keep a guard on our temper and work to be slow to anger, saying, "But everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak, and slow to anger; for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God".<sup>96</sup> True repentance from sins of anger will mean a change in heart. Your heart will be filled with more of God's love, and you will not be as quick to anger.

Now spend some time praying for God's forgiveness for sinful anger, and His help in removing an angry spirit from your hearts.

### **Bitterness**

- Think again about those people with whom you have been angry.
- Has your anger been momentary, or lasted for a long time?
- Have you allowed small problems or annoyances to grow into long-lasting grudges?
- Is there anyone with whom you have a grudge to whom you need to go and ask forgiveness?

Bitterness and grudges are not only a sin against another person, but they also are destructive to your own soul. A grudge eats away at you, because you continually think about and spend your energy on the anger. The other person may know that you are angry with them, but often they have no idea how much the anger consumes your time and energy.

As Christians we are called to forgive others, because God has forgiven us. The disciples asked Jesus how many times they ought to forgive someone who sins against them, and Jesus responded by telling them a parable. He said,

**Therefore, the Kingdom of Heaven can be compared to a king who decided to bring his accounts up to date with servants who had borrowed money from him. In the process, one of his debtors was brought in who owed him millions of dollars. He couldn't pay, so his master ordered that he be sold—along with his wife, his children, and everything he owned—to pay the debt. But the man fell down before his master and begged him, 'Please, be patient with me, and I will pay it all.' Then his master was filled with pity for him, and he released him and forgave his debt. But when the man left the king, he went to a fellow servant who owed him a few thousand dollars. He grabbed him by the throat and demanded instant payment. His fellow servant fell down before him and begged for a little more time. 'Be patient with me, and I will pay it,' he pleaded. But his creditor wouldn't wait. He had the man arrested and put in prison until the debt could be paid in full. When some of the other servants saw this, they were very upset. They went to the king and told him everything that had happened. Then the king called in the man he had forgiven and said, 'You evil servant! I forgave you that tremendous debt because you pleaded with me. Shouldn't you have mercy on your fellow servant, just as I had**

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<sup>96</sup> James 1:19



**mercy on you?' Then the angry king sent the man to prison to be tortured until he had paid his entire debt. That's what my heavenly Father will do to you if you refuse to forgive your brothers and sisters from your heart.<sup>97</sup>**

In the same way, how can we, who have been forgiven all of our sins by God, not forgive other humans for sins against us? The psalmist writes, "Be angry, and yet do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and do not give the devil an opportunity", saying that a grudge is an opportunity for the devil to cause you to sin, and for him to cause division.<sup>98</sup> Do not allow your anger or sins against you to become grudges against those people. An unforgiving spirit will not be forgiven its sins by God.

Spend some time praying that God will forgive you for your bitterness and help you to let go of your grudges. Pray also that His forgiveness will cause you also to be forgiving.

### **Prejudice**

- Think about all of the people you know and what you think about them.
- How do you treat people from different countries, or different villages? Does their different ethnicity affect the way that you see them as humans?
- Are there any groups of people who are disrespected because of how much money that they have, or because of where they come from? Maybe poor people or strangers from other places?

Often, an entire group of people become a victim of disrespect, simply because of their race or their ethnicity. People from a different country or a different village will often have different customs, foods, practices, or beliefs, and these differences can be taken as reasons to hate them or mistreat them. Think about these groups in your community and why you treat them with disrespect. Are these reasons anything that is under their control? Can someone change where they were born, or what race that they are? In Jesus' time, there were people who were different and were disrespected who were called Samaritans. These people were shunned by almost all Jewish individuals, and were outcasts in the society. Jesus, however, did not treat them with disrespect. The apostle John writes, "There came a woman of Samaria to draw water [from the well which Jesus was sitting near]. Jesus said to her, 'Give Me a drink.' For his disciples had gone away to the city to buy food. Therefore the Samaritan woman said to Him, 'How is it that You, being a Jew, ask me for a drink, since I am a Samaritan woman?' (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans)".<sup>99</sup> Jesus did not treat others differently because of their race or because of which place from which that individual might have come. He treated each person without prejudice, just as we should. To follow Christ, we must not treat others with prejudice. If there are individuals in your community from another community or village, treat them just as you would those in your own community. Each human is made in the image of God, and that does not change simply because they are from another village. If one of you says "I hate this person because he is from..." or "I hate this person because he is a..."; then you are not showing love to that individual, and therefore are not loving God. John writes, "If someone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also".<sup>100</sup>

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97 Matthew 18:23-35

98 Ephesians 4:26

99 John 4:7-9

100 1 John 4:20

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Loving our brothers and sisters means to treat them as we would treat ourselves, and in particular, without prejudice. We cannot hate someone or treat them differently simply because they are a different race or from a different place, because we would not want to treat ourselves that way. Again, we have no control over where we are from or which race we are born, and we ought not to treat others with such prejudice.

### **Respecting Women**

- Take awhile to reflect on and evaluate the way that women and girls are treated within your community.
- How much are women allowed to say to their husbands and to other men in the community?
- Are women allowed to participate in the decision-making processes in the community?
- What do you think the role of a woman should be in your community?
- Do you see signs of prostitution and/or pornography in your community? How do you think this affects the way that women are viewed?

In the Gospels we get a clear view of the way that Jesus treated and valued women. He respected their thoughts and opinions, as well as extended mercy and grace to them. Read the following passages of Jesus' ministry to women, then answer the questions that follow:

***Luke 7:36-50***

***John 4:1-42***

***John 8:1-11***

Summarize each of these passages in your own words.

- What did the three women in each of these passages have in common?
- Describe the way that Jesus viewed these women, compared to the way that other people such as the disciples and Pharisees viewed them.
- What was Jesus' general attitude towards these women? How can you tell from His dialogue with them that He was loving and gracious?
- When Jesus met with the woman at the well, He spoke with her about several theological concepts. This shows that He thought of her as an intelligent person who was capable of understanding spiritual things; specifically that He was the Messiah. List the theological concepts He spoke to her about. What does Jesus' whole conversation with her say about the way that we should share our faith with others?
- In John 8:1-11 Jesus extended grace to a woman caught in adultery. What was His message to the crowd who stood prepared to stone her?
- Why was Simon the Pharisee so upset about the woman who anointed Jesus' feet in Luke chapter 7?
- What might a similar situation look like today?
- Are there people that we believe are not worthy to sit at the feet of Jesus?
- What does this passage teach us about His love and forgiveness?

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Read each of the following Scripture passages and then write a few sentences about what each says of Jesus' value for the women in His life.

***Matthew 15:21-28***

***John 19:25-27***

***Mark 15:40-41***

***John 20:10-18***

***Mark 5:21-43***

***Luke 7:11-17***

- As Jesus' followers today, how can we show respect for women in the same way that Jesus did during His ministry on earth?
- What are your thoughts about the way women are currently suppressed and oppressed in the world?
- What does "strength" mean in your community? What does it mean to you personally?
- How was Jesus an example of both strength and humility? Was His act of death on the Cross a show of weakness or of strength? Why?
- How can the women in your community encourage the men to be strong leaders?
- How can the men in your community show respect to women in the way they treat them?

### **Respecting Children**

- Do you have children of your own? What do you think about them? What role do they have in your home?
- How do you show your child how much that you value them and recognize their worth?
- How often do you see your children? Do you eat together with your children? Do you talk together? Do you play together?
- Have you ever taught them a story or multiple stories from the Bible? Do they know that you are a Christian? Do you pray with your children?

Children are a large responsibility, but also a great blessing and joy. If you truly love your children and want the best for them, you must be intentional about spending time with them. A child needs his father and mother to be physically with him to touch and love him, but also to encourage and guide him to become mature. The father, especially, has a large responsibility to teach his children the stories of the Bible, so that children will know how to obey God. By the time his children are seven years of age, a good Jewish father typically will have taught his children all of the stories of the Old Testament, because he is obeying God's commands to fathers. If you have children, take time to sit with them and teach them about the Bible and about loving Christ. If your children are still young, make it your goal to have told them all of the stories of the Bible by the time that they are seven years old. In this way, they will learn how to follow God's commands, and how to love Christ through the examples and the failings of those in the Scriptures.

One way to help to guide and care for your children is to eat dinner together as a family. When you meet together for a meal, you show the children that you truly care about them because you are willing to be with them. Also, it gives you an opportunity to teach the children what it means to follow Christ through the stories of Scripture. In this way, you also will ensure that the children are getting enough physical food

to eat, because you are able to tell if there are any problems with them getting food. Simply spending time with your children will help them to grow into mature, capable adults, if you are patient with them and teach them to follow God as they grow.

Sometimes, as children grow and are learning how to act, they can be frustrating and difficult to deal with. For this, we must remember what we discussed regarding anger. Christians must be patient with every person, even difficult children. Each of you had to go through childhood development and learn how to act, and your child also must grow and learn how to act. It is not right for a Christian parent to be angry and abuse their child. It is good for a parent to discipline their child to keep them from doing what is sinful or dangerous to them, but correction must be done in love and not in anger. If you have hit your child or abused him or her out of anger, go to your child and ask for forgiveness. How can your child understand that God is our loving Father in heaven, if his earthly father and mother beat him or her and are always angry? Ask your child for forgiveness, and pray for God to work in your heart to give you patience with your children.

### **How can we help to bring peace, justice, and healing to our community?**

#### **God's Passion for Justice**

God is a God of justice. It is His desire that all men would be treated justly and with respect as human beings. In Scripture, God speaks many times about how He loves justice and hates those who bring injustice. He says, "For I, the LORD, love justice. I hate robbery and wrongdoing", and the psalmist tells us that, "He loves righteousness and justice; the earth is full of the lovingkindness of the LORD".<sup>101</sup> God cares deeply about bringing justice to all those here on earth, especially the victims of deep injustice. He hears the cries of those in poverty and the groans of those who are in slavery. He wants to provide help and justice to those who are oppressed by others. To bring justice to earth, however, He uses His people to do His will by helping the oppressed and the victims of injustice.

#### **Christians as God's Vessels of Justice**

"Thus says the Lord, 'Do justice and righteousness, and deliver the one who has been robbed from the power of his oppressor. Also do not mistreat or do violence to the stranger, the orphan, or the widow; and do not shed innocent blood in this place.'"<sup>102</sup> God calls His followers to be the deliverer of anyone who is suffering from injustice and oppression. We must not do injustice, whether to visitors in our land, or to our wives and children, or to anyone in our community. Also, we must work to stop injustice wherever it is found in our communities. Jesus told his disciples to pray to God, "Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven", meaning that Christ wants every Christian to pray that God's desires would be done here on earth.<sup>103</sup> As we have seen, one of these desires is for all men to be treated justly, with respect. As Christians, we are called to pray Christ's same prayer in faith, to help to make His kingdom come to earth and His will to be done through our actions. The prophet Micah says to Israel, "He has told you, O man, what is good; and

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101 Isaiah 61:8, Psalm 33:5

102 Jeremiahs 22:3

103 Matthew 6:10

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what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?"<sup>104</sup>  
We can help to expand God's kingdom by walking with God, loving kindness, and therefore doing justice wherever we are.

### **The Challenge to Be a Healer in Your Community**

Helping to do justice and to expand God's kingdom by stopping oppression seems like a large task. Think, however, about where there is injustice or opportunities for love in your community. Are there groups of people in your community who are victims of prejudice and are shunned by the community? Follow Christ's love for all people and invite them into your church, your home, and your Christian community. Work to stop the injustice that is done against them.

- Are there single mothers in the community who are struggling to raise their children?
- How can your community of Christians provide for these mothers?

Find ways to provide them with food or money for education, if they are struggling with those things. Also, bring them into the church and introduce them to other women with whom they can be friends and find love and emotional support.

Do you have any orphans in your community? What can you or your church do to help and provide for orphans in your community? Find ways to provide food and shelter for orphans who are poor and hungry. Also, work to find them a home where they can have loving parents who will give them food and guidance as they grow and develop. God cares for orphans and He wants you also to care for them, being His hands and feet to show love to the orphans here on earth.

Are there children in the community who are functioning as the parent for their brothers and sisters? Find ways to help them, whether by providing them with food, or by helping them to send the children to school. Also, maybe find a way for parents or older couples in the church to be parts for children from child-run homes.

Are there children in the community who are outcast and suffering from HIV/AIDS? Show them love by accepting them and not shunning them for the condition. Provide or help them to get medical help with the symptoms. Find other ways to help them to deal with the condition by providing activities for them, or connecting them with other children who can be friends to them.



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