

10 Steps

to a

Happier U



By Keith Andrews

STEPS TO A HAPPIER U

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Step 1

TAKE THE LONG VIEW OF LIFE – How to see the importance of U.

Step 2

PUT FIRST THINGS FIRST – How to build on a stable foundation.

Step 3

HAVE A "RIGHT" ATTITUDE – How to deal with the "ups and downs" of life.

Step 4

FORGIVE AND ACCEPT FORGIVENESS – How to survive those "difficult" relationships

Step 5

DON'T GO IT ALONE – How to benefit from good relationships.

Step 6

PRAY YOUR WAY THROUGH TROUBLES – How to see God in life's rough spots.

Step 7

KNOW YOUR ROLE, PLAY YOUR PART – How to see the importance of US.

Step 8

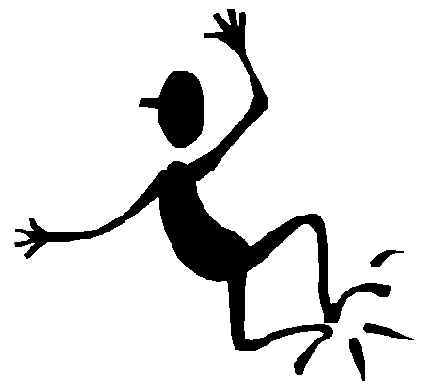
LET LOVE WORK – How to raise a godly generation in an ungodly world.

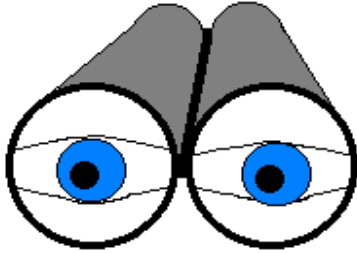
Step 9

TEACH BY EXAMPLE – How to be a godly leader at work and at home.

Step 10

KEEP YOUR BATTERY ON FULL CHARGE – How to become strong in faith and service.



STEP 1 

**TAKE THE *LONG*
VIEW OF LIFE**

I. YOU ARE THE DIFFERENCE!

We have all heard the contemporary wisdom that teaches the importance of living "one day at a time." It seems like a good philosophy. The problem is that when one puts it to practice he finds himself bumping into things he didn't expect. The fact is, the future is coming and we had better be prepared for it. There is more to life than today.

We *live* in the "now,"
but we must *learn* from the past
so we can *plan* for the future.

We must consider not only our own future, but that of our family, our friends, our children, and even our children's children. In the same way that the lives of our parents, grandparents, teachers, friends and ancestors affect us; the things we do--or fail to do--*today* reach into the *future*. As we begin this study, I ask you to consider two things: your *heritage* and your *legacy*.

What is your "heritage" _____

What is your "legacy"? _____

Your life is the point of conversion--it is through your *relationships* and *interactions* with others that your *heritage* becomes your *legacy*. This is particularly true within the family. It is the responsibility of parents to take the wisdom, the faith, and the values that have been handed down to them, and teach them to their children. READ Ps. 78:3-7.

Ps. 78:3-7 "What we have heard and known, what our fathers have told us we will not hide from the children. We will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the LORD, his power, and the wonders he has done. He decreed statutes for Jacob and established the law in Israel, which he commanded our forefathers to teach their children, so the next generation would know them, even the children yet to be born, and they in turn would tell their children. Then they would put their trust in God and would not forget his deeds but would keep his commands."

It

List at least five values that are essential for you to pass on to others:

II. YOUR FAMILY AND FRIENDS HAVE AN *ETERNAL* DESTINY

It is important to meet the material needs of your spouse and your family. It is also essential that fathers and mothers provide a home environment that is nurturing and loving. I submit, though, that it is infinitely more important to meet the *spiritual* needs of those we love. We must not forget that every man, woman, and child has an *eternal* destiny. We must learn to take the long view of life. Each one of us, you, me, your children, everyone you love, will one day stand before God. (SEE Heb. 9:27). The consequences of that encounter are clearly more significant than anything else in life. Jesus said: "What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul?" (Matt. 16:26).

Material things are important!
Emotional things are more important!!
Spiritual things are most important!!!

How do you think you are doing providing for your *material* needs? Give yourself a score from 1 - 10 (ten being perfect). _____ If you scored under 10, how might you improve your score? _____

How do you think you are doing in meeting the *emotional* needs of friends and family? Give yourself a score from 1 - 10 (ten being perfect). _____ If you scored under 10, how might you improve your score? _____

How do you think you are doing in meeting the *spiritual* needs of yourself and others? Give yourself a score from 1 - 10 (ten being perfect). _____ If you scored under 10, how might you improve your score? _____

VERSE TO REMEMBER:

"I have been reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also."

2 Tim. 1:5

STEP 2

PUT *FIRST* THINGS *FIRST*



I. BUILD YOUR LIFE ON A STABLE FOUNDATION

Matt. 7:24-27 - "Everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a

Read Matt. 7:24-27. This is an interesting story that Jesus told to make a point about hearing His word and making it the foundation of our lives. What is the result of building on the rock? _____
 _____ What is the result of building on the sand? _____
 _____ What kind of person would build on the sand? _____

Establishing priorities in our lives is not easy. There are lots of things that cry out

for our attention. Everything is important and everything wants to be most important! When the phone is ringing and a pot is boiling over and the baby is crying and somebody is knocking on the door, it's hard to know what to do first. The Bible doesn't trivialize these kinds of everyday things. God knows all about those kinds of problems. The fact is that God knows and cares about details that we don't even know about ourselves! **(SEE Lk. 12:6-7).**

What the Bible teaches us is that we shouldn't *worry* about the things of life. (It actually says not to be "anxious" or "overcome with anxiety"). **Read Matt. 6:25-33.** If we are to follow this passage of Scripture, what should be the priority of our lives? Seeking the _____ and _____
 _____. Is there any relationship between "faith" and "worry"? Does one rule out the other? Why or why not _____

II. PUT CHRIST AHEAD OF EVERYTHING ELSE

Many people's lives resemble an old "pigeonhole" desk. They have a place for this and a place for that. There is a slot for their job and another slot for their girlfriend, boyfriend or spouse, another slot for their family or their children, another slot for their friends, and another slot for their leisure time activities. Some even make a slot for God. *The purpose for the pigeonholes is to keep the activities of life separate.* The problem with this way of thinking about life is that it fails to take into account the fact that

any one part of life affects all the others. How could one's relationship with his spouse not affect his children or his job, for example?

Rom. 8:5 – “Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires.”

Rom. 12:2 – “Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. . .”

2 Cor. 5:17 – “If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!”

How does your relationship with Christ affect your life as a whole? **CONSIDER Rom 8:5, 12:2; 2 Cor. 5:16-17.** _____

How would you respond to someone who says, "I have so many responsibilities that I don't have time to pray"? Or, "I'm just too busy to go to church. Sunday is the only day I have to be with my family"? _____

Do you have to choose between serving Christ and serving your family? Why or why not? _____

Do we have to choose between serving Christ and doing our jobs? Why or why not?

Do we have to choose between serving Christ and enjoying our friends? Why or why not? _____

**AN IMPORTANT SCRIPTURE PASSAGE TO
REMEMBER**

***"Trust in the LORD with all your heart
and lean not on your own understanding;
in all your ways acknowledge him,
and he will make your paths straight."***

--- Prov. 3:5-6

STEP 3

ATTITUDE

I HAVE AN ATTITUDE!

HAVE A RIGHT ATTITUDE

Rom. 8:29 – “For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.”

The ultimate hope of the Christian life is "to be like Jesus." It is the destiny of every believer to be conformed (restored) to the image of Christ. "OK," you might say, "but what does that little bit of *theology* have to

do with *me* and *my life* TODAY?" Answer: It would have nothing to do with our lives in the "here and now" if God saved His transforming work for the "there and then." He doesn't! **Read the following verses and write what each teaches us about God's work in our lives today:**

- Jn. 15:1-2** _____
- 1 Thess. 3:13** _____
- 1 Thess. 5:23-24** _____
- Acts 20:32** _____

Read Php. 3:12-14. The molding of character takes a lifetime. Even the Paul--a man who seemed to have given to serve Christ--makes this clear. Even end of his life, he did not claim to have achieved perfection. We can be like Paul in this way, however; what we lack in *action*, we can make up in *attitude*. Even though our walk may be a stumbling one, that walk can be in the right direction. How does Paul describe his own attitude in this passage?

**SANCTIFICATION . . .
It takes a lifetime!**

your apostle his all at the

- There are three Christ-like attitudes that constitute the foundation of good Christian character. Those are:
- 1) An attitude of *selflessness*
 - 2) An attitude of *acceptance*
 - 3) An attitude of *love*

Let's look at these attitudes one at a time.

I. AN ATTITUDE OF SELFLESSNESS

A *selfless* attitude leads one to put the needs and desires of others first. It is the opposite of *selfishness*. If we are honest in our assessment of human nature, we quickly realize that such an attitude must have a supernatural source! The attitude of selflessness is a Christ-like attitude. **Read Jn. 10:17-18; Gal. 1:3-5.** How was this attitude demonstrated in the life of Jesus? _____

Read Php. 2:3-4; Rom 12:10. How should we manifest selflessness itself in our lives?

How would our homes be different if each member of our family was willing to put the needs and desires of others first? _____
_____ What changes could you make to be more selfless? _____

II. AN ATTITUDE OF ACCEPTANCE

An attitude of acceptance leads one to be tolerant of the shortcomings of others. The Bible makes it clear that we are not to be insensitive to sin or its consequences. We are, however, to be willing to accept the sinner as a sinner and love him in spite of his sinful condition. An attitude of acceptance is a truly Christ-like attitude. **Read Mk. 2:16-17.** For who is Jesus' ministry intended? _____ **Read Rom. 5:6, 8 and Titus 3:3-7.** What was the response of God to man's sin?

How would our homes be different if each member of our family was willing to accept the shortcomings of the others? _____
_____ What changes could you make to be more accepting? _____

This is how we know what love is, that Jesus Christ laid down his life for us--and we ought to lay down our lives for one another. 1 John 3:16



Unforgiveness is a destructive force. It can, by itself, tear any relationship apart. Friends part. Marriages end. Children become estranged. All because some small (or large) hurt has been allowed to produce a seemingly un-crossable gulf. What does the Bible teach us about the necessity for forgiveness? Does God's Word give us a *practical* means to deal with our feelings? What happens when we don't (or can't) forgive? What about our *own* failings? Can we expect to be forgiven? Can we forgive ourselves?!

I. FORGIVENESS IS NOT OPTIONAL

God is certainly aware of people's natural tendencies to bump and scrape and "rub each other the wrong way." It is not an issue of whether there will be conflicts between people. The issue is how we *deal* with conflicts *when* they arise. Our natural "fleshly" instincts would have us "respond in kind;" to "do unto others what they have done unto us"! **Read Lk. 6:27-35; Rom. 12:17-18; 1 Thess. 5:15; and 1 Pet. 3:9.** How does the Scripture teach us to respond? _____

The teachings of Jesus on forgiveness are not easy to accept. Why is it so hard for us to "turn the other cheek"? _____

Read Matt. 6:12-15; Mk. 11:25. How do forgiving and being forgiven relate? _____

Read and discuss Matt. 18:21-35, the parable Jesus told to teach his disciples about forgiveness and being forgiven.

II. DEALING WITH DIFFICULT RELATIONSHIPS

The passages that we have looked at seem to focus on our forgiving the hurts that others cause us. *We also cause hurts.* Do you think that it is easy or difficult to *accept* forgiveness? Explain your answer. _____

Read Eph. 4:32; Col. 3:13. Who should be our model as we deal with difficult situations and relationships? _____

Consider the following passages. In each case, identify the person(s) forgiven, the person forgiving and the offense.

Gen. 50:20-21 _____

Lk. 23:34 _____

Jn. 8:3-11 _____

Acts 7:59-60 _____

2 Tim. 4:16-17 _____

III. MOVING FORWARD

"You always hurt the one you love, the one you shouldn't hurt at all . . ." It's sad, but true. People have to learn how to move on after an offense. If you are married, you have promised to love, "for better *or* for worse." I have heard it said that in marriages, often the better comes *after* the worse. Frequently, though, couples give up in the tough times and, as a result, miss the better that is to come! I believe this is true of all kinds of relationships. **Read Ps. 103:8-14.** What does this passage teach us about a godly response to an offense? _____

If a relationship is to recover from a major hurt and move forward positively, there must also be a response by the offender. What did Jesus tell the woman caught in adultery in **Jn. 8:11** to do? _____

Forgiveness provides an opportunity to start again and do it right!

The "flip side" of forgiveness is *repentance*. We are not to see forgiveness as a means to sin even more. Forgiveness is an opportunity to *start again* and *do it right!* **Read 2 Cor. 7:9-10.** What do you think Paul means by "worldly sorrow"? _____

What do you think Paul means by "godly sorrow"? _____

What is the result (outcome) of "godly sorrow"? _____

**AN IMPORTANT SCRIPTURE
PASSAGE TO REMEMBER**

"If you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you."

---Matt. 6:14



I. THE IMPORTANCE OF *FELLOWSHIP*

Acts 2:41-42 – “Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.” They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.”

What were the four things to which the initial converts in the Jerusalem church were devoted?)

From its very beginning, the Christian church recognized the need for fellowship. The word used in the original text in vs. 42 is *koinonia*. It means "fellowship," "communion," or "communication."

Fellowship provides believers with the support and enjoyment of the company of people of like faith.

Communion is the celebration of our spiritual unity--we are one in Christ. When we gather we have communion with Christ and with one another.

Communication is the open and honest sharing of our lives--our joys, our pains, our struggles.

This early body of believers saw themselves as one large family. We know from history that the early church was not "communal" in the 20th century sense. They did, however, feel such a close bond with one another that they were willing to share their resources for the common good. Would you feel comfortable coming to your close friends for help in a time of need? Why or why not? _____

_____ How would you feel if a close friend of yours had to come to you for help? _____

The early church carry on its business did not meet in church buildings. They carried on the business of the church in the temple courts and in each other's homes. The result was that the Lord added to their number daily!

II. WHY DO I NEED *CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP*?

In his letter to the Philippians Paul encourages them to be: “. . . *like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose.* He goes on to instruct the members of the church there to “look out for the interests of others.” That is hardly a natural thing for people to do. If we expect to have such selfless relationships with people outside of the body of Christ we are likely to be disappointed. We quickly learn to draw strength and encouragement from one another. Faith does not grow well in isolation. It grows within the context of our immediate and extended Christian families.

2 Cor. 6:14 – “Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness?”

Does this verse tell us not to have anything to do with unbelievers? _____ Why wouldn't that be practical?

What does the word "yoked" mean and how does it apply to the meaning of the passage? _____

In America we highly esteem the individual who can "pull himself up by his own bootstraps." We tend to hold up rugged individuality as a model for our children. The truth is however, that we are stronger together than we are individually. We need to encourage one another, help one another, and depend on one another. We have to learn to lean; first on Christ, and then on each other for support and direction. Fellowship, communion, and communication are God's gifts to the church, and precious gifts they are!


A SCRIPTURE TO REMEMBER

"If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin."

--- 1 Jn. 1:6-7

Lesson 6

Pray Your Way Through Troubles



I. WHAT GOOD DOES IT DO TO PRAY?

What is prayer? _____ How important is prayer to our Christian walk? _____ Sometimes we look hopelessly at the situations in which we find ourselves and wonder, what good does it do to pray? Does God hear my prayers? Does He care about me and my life? Can even God do anything about this? Read the following passages and record what each says about prayer:

Isa. 55:6-7 _____

Ps. 10:17 _____

Ps. 62:8 _____

Prov. 15:8 _____

Jas. 5:16 _____

1 Jn. 5:14 _____

It is obvious from the Scripture that God not only tolerates, but welcomes and even desires, the prayers of His people. It is important, though, as believers in divine grace, that we approach our Sovereign with the right attitudes.

What attitudes do each of the following passages commend?

Ps. 145:18 _____

Heb. 4:16 _____

Mk. 11:23 _____

Read Php. 4:6-7. Does this verse promise that God will give the believer whatever he asks for? _____ What is the promise of this verse? _____

How can we know *how* to pray and *what* to pray for? Read and consider **Jn. 15:7; Jude 1:20; and Eph. 6:18** before you answer. _____

II. WHY SHOULD FAMILIES PRAY TOGETHER?

It is very important for parents to provide their children with godly examples of behavior. Children, by nature, are far more likely to do what we *do* than what we *say* to do! What better way could there be to build their faith than for our children to see us turn to God in times of difficulty. How important do you think it is for our children to also see us praise the Lord in the good times? Explain your answer. _____

Do you think that the consistency of one's prayer life can serve as a gauge of their overall relationship with the Lord? Why or why not? _____

III. WHY DOESN'T GOD KEEP US FROM HAVING TROUBLES?

A few years ago, Andre Crouch wrote a song called "Through it All." One line of the song says: "If I'd never had a problem, I'd never know that He could solve them; I'd never know what faith in God could do." **Read James 1:2-4.** God uses the pressures of this life to build our faith and increase our ability to persevere. In the same way that a runner must run--sometimes through pain--in order to build his strength and endurance, we have to trust Christ--sometimes through pain--in order to build our faith.

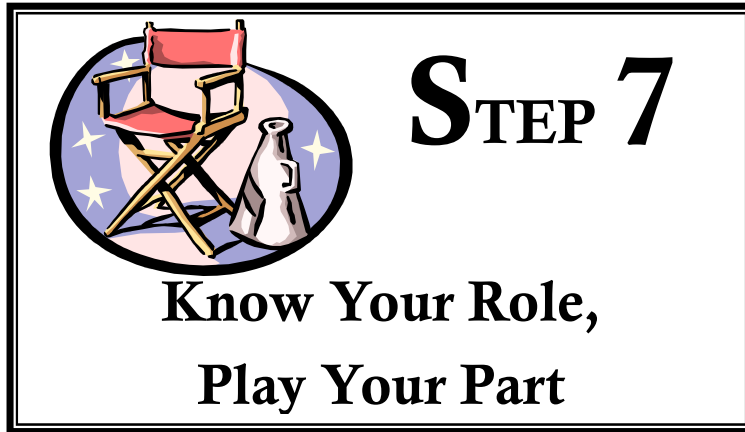
**Effective prayer changes
THINGS because
effective prayer changes
US!**

Read Deut. 31:8 and Matt. 28:20. God doesn't promise that He will eliminate all of the pressures and difficulties of life. What does He promise? _____

AN IMPORTANT PASSAGE TO REMEMBER

*"This is the confidence we have in
approaching God: that if we ask anything
according to his will, he hears us. And if we
know that he hears us--whatever we ask--we
know that we have what we asked of him."*

1 John 5:14-15



I. GOD'S PLAN FOR YOUR FAMILY

In the animal kingdom, which God created, there are some species whose young are virtually independent from the moment of their birth. Those animal parents take neither responsibility for nor interest in the survival of their offspring. This is clearly not God's plan for mankind. A baby is not able to provide for itself and, if left on its own for even a short period of time, will not survive. It takes well over a decade of care and nurturing before a child's behavior can be expected to even resemble that of an adult. Even at that age, however, it would be the rare child who could fend for himself. The family is God's provision for bringing a baby to adulthood.

THE FAMILY PROVIDES THESE FOUR BASIC NEEDS FOR THE CHILD'S GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT:

- The physical necessities of life
- A loving and caring growth environment
- Protection from threats to life and limb
- Education and training for independence

Do you see any parallels between a family's provision for a child's growth and the church's provision for the spiritual growth of new believers? Explain. _____

Read Gen. 18:18-19; Prov. 4:1-5, 22:6; 2 Tim. 1:5. God's plan for the family is perfect. It consists of loving parents who raise their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; parents who work together to provide all of their children's physical, emotional and spiritual needs. God's plan is perfect; our world is not. How does sin effect family relationships? _____

Do you think these problems are greater in our generation than in previous generations? Why or why not? **Consider Gen. 4:1-8.** _____

Read Rom. 12:10, 13; Eph. 4:32; Php 4:12-13. How are we to deal with "less than perfect" family situations that exist in our present society? _____

Childhood cannot last forever. At what point and in what way does a parent's responsibility end? **Consider 1 Cor. 13:11.** _____

II. THE FAMILY: A DIVERSE UNITY

ONE FAMILY

The Bible presents a picture of the family that is somewhat more extended than what we think of today. The biblical family consists of all who live together as a unit under the leadership of a single head. The family always included parents and children, but often included grandparents, servants and their children as well. In any case, the family is treated in the Scripture as a single entity.

In what ways does the biblical concept of the family differ from that of our modern, "politically correct" culture? _____

DIFFERENT ROLES

We all play a variety of roles in life. One person can be a mother, daughter, sister, friend, nurse, etc. What roles do you play? _____ What are your roles in the family? _____

Even though we play many different roles, it is a simple fact that we can only play those for which we are suited. Not everyone is tall enough or fast enough to play in the NBA and not everyone has the musical skills to play in the New York Philharmonic. Roles in life are determined by two factors: necessity and capability. We must remember that it is God -- who knows both our needs and our capabilities -- who has designed the family. **Read Gen. 2:18.** The Lord has made us different so that the strength in one will compensate for the weakness in the other. That is, so that we can serve as "helpers" to one another. How can husbands and wives complement one another? _____

Read Eph. 5:21 and Php. 2:3-5. What is the basis for our relationships with others? _____ How does this apply in the family situation? _____

Keeping this basis in mind, **read Eph. 5:22-6:9 and Col. 3:18-24.** List the roles and responsibilities of each of the following:

Husbands _____

Wives _____

Children _____

Workers _____

Employers _____

The husband is called the "head" of the family. This should be understood in terms of *accountability* rather than *authority*. What is the difference between the two? **(Consider Matt. 20:25-28).** _____

**AN IMPORTANT SCRIPTURE PASSAGE TO
REMEMBER**

“You received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, ‘Abba, Father.’ The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children.”
-- Rom. 8:15-16



I. THE NEED FOR ORDER

Isn't the universe a wonderful place? Have you noticed how well everything seems to work together? Stars and planets and asteroids and moons are all moving at tremendous speeds, and yet things rarely collide. The interactions of things on our own little planet are amazingly complex and yet, everything works together. Even our own bodies are an amazing bit of engineering--we have all kinds of different parts that do different kinds of things and yet they all come together to produce "us." We can see, from the things that God has made, that He is a God of order. **Read Rom. 1:20; Rev. 4:11; 1 Cor. 14:40.** What are the benefits of order in our lives and in our homes?

What causes disorder in the relationships between people? _____
 _____ Many parents find it difficult to believe or accept that their children are sinners at heart. **Read Isa. 53:6, Rom. 3:10; Rom. 3:23.** What does this tell us about every person? _____

The universe doesn't operate on its own accord. It was designed by its Creator to do certain things and to not do other things. Planets and stars have no will of their own, and therefore can't be disobedient to the will of God. How about people? People obviously need to *learn* obedience. Discipline is the means by which obedience is learned. **Read Deut. 8:5-9; Job 5:17; Prov. 1:7-9, 3:11-12.** What do these verses teach us about the discipline of God and the discipline of parents? Does God's discipline demonstrate his anger or his love?

_____ Is it God's purpose to *punish the offense* or to *correct the behavior*? _____

DISCIPLINE
 is the means
 by which
OBEDIENCE
 is learned.

II. HOW TO DISCIPLINE

There is no question that *order* in the home leads to *happiness* in the home. Children thrive in an orderly environment where they know what is expected and where the results of disobedience are not in question. **Read Prov. 29:17.** How does discipline effect parents? _____

It is very important that a distinction be made between *discipline* and *punishment*.

PUNISHMENT: Punishment is retaliation for harm done. Punishment usually comes from a background of anger or resentment. Read **Lev. 19:18; Rom. 12:19.** What do these verses tell us about punishment? _____
_____ **Read Eph. 4:26-27; James 1:19-20.** What do these verses tell us about anger? _____

DISCIPLINE: Discipline has the purpose of bring about a correction of undesirable behavior. It comes from a background of love and compassion. **Read 2 Tim. 4:1-2.** Paul has instructed Timothy to "correct, rebuke and encourage." How is he to do this? _____
_____ **Read Prov. 13:24, 19:18.** How do you think these verses might apply to parents today? _____

HINTS FOR PARENTS:

- A. Be *Clear* – Children shouldn't have to "read your mind." Tell them exactly what you expect and require.
- B. Be *consistent* – What is acceptable today should be acceptable tomorrow. Don't change the rules. Don't "make it up as you go."
- C. Solve *small problems* -- Don't wait until the forest is ablaze to try to put the fire out. Deal with disobedience and defiance NOW!

III. AVOIDING THE PITFALLS

Read Eph. 6:4; Col. 3:21. The "exasperation," or "frustration," or "discouragement" of children comes most often as a result of inconsistent rather than excessive discipline. B.M. Palmer, in his book, *The Family*, gives the following instructions to parents to avoid these pitfalls:

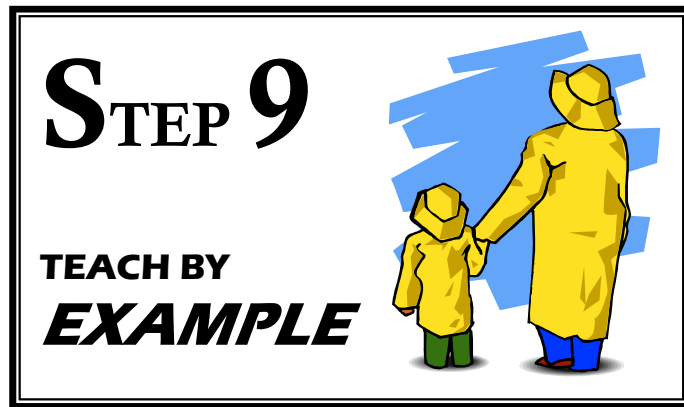
- 1) **Avoid habitual sternness** -- Don't be aloof from your children. A parent must not exercise *authority* without *relationship*.
- 2) **Avoid constant and unnecessary criticism** -- *Correction* is necessary, but *praise* is necessary as well. Balance the two.
- 3) **Avoid favoritism and unfavorable comparisons** -- Such judgments provide a source for *jealousy* and *resentment*, neither of which is productive.
- 4) **Avoid unnecessary application of parental authority** -- Parents must relinquish control as *self-discipline* takes over.

It is the responsibility of parents to correct their children. We have to recognize, however, that we are not perfect ourselves. Even when we know the Lord's instruction, we often fail to live by it. We must always look to God for direction, for instruction, for strength and for forgiveness. Parental instruction is "on the job training." Do you see any new ways that you might improve your parenting skills? What are they?

A VERSE TO REMEMBER

**"My son, do not despise the Lord's discipline
and do not resent his rebuke, because the LORD
disciplines those he loves, as a father the son he
delights in."**

Prov. 3:11-12



I. BE IMITATORS OF GOD

Read Eph. 5:1-2. This verse is a simile. In other words, the behavior of "beloved children" is being *compared* to the way we should act toward God. It could be paraphrased, "In the same way that your beloved children imitate you, you should imitate God." In many ways our children become our mirrors, reflecting back images of ourselves. The closer the relationship between parent and child, the closer the image will be to the original. It is the same way with God's children; the closer our relationship is with Him, the more we will resemble His character, think His thoughts, say His words, do his will. **Read Gen. 1:27.** In whose image were we created?

_____ Sin, of course, tarnished that image in man. How has God provided the solution to that problem? **Read Rom. 8:28-29.** _____

The closer our relationship is with Christ, the more we will resemble His character, think His thoughts, speak His words, and do His will.

It is important to note that a child does not make a conscious choice to walk, talk and think like his parent. He resembles his parent for two reasons:

- 1) He is of the same "stuff" as his parents--his physical, mental, and emotional characteristics come from his parents.
- 2) He learns to speak from hearing his parents speak, he learns to walk by watching his parents walk.

How can we share "stuff" with God? **Read Jn. 3:1-7.** _____

How can we learn to walk and speak like Jesus did? **Read Mk. 1:10-12; Jn. 15:4-8; Gal. 5:16, 25.** _____

II. WE LEARN BY IMITATING OTHERS

You can buy bracelets and other forms of jewelry with the letters "WWJD" on them. These letters stand for, "What Would Jesus Do?" Though we may not always have the exact answer to the question, it is still a valid question to ask. If our lives are to be "Christ-like" then we must do as Jesus would have done. **Read Matt. 16:24; Lk. 14:27; Jn. 12:26.** What is the message of these passages?

The following passages deal with another kind of imitation. Read and comment on each.

1 Cor. 4:14 _____

1 Thess. 1:4-7 _____

Heb. 6:10-12 _____

Heb. 13:7 _____

3 Jn. 1:11 _____

III. OUR CHILDREN LEARN FROM OUR EXAMPLE

When it comes to the teaching of children "more is *caught* than *taught*." In other words, it is more likely that children will learn from what we *do* than from what we *say*. Our attitudes become their attitudes. Our preferences become their preferences. Our values become their values. And, unfortunately, our weaknesses become their weaknesses. What ways have you observed this truth in your own children or in other children? _____

How might these things apply to the responsibility of the parent to "bring up the child in the nurture and admonition of the Lord?" _____

AN IMPORTANT SCRIPTURE PASSAGE TO REMEMBER

***"Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children
and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us
and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering
and sacrifice to God."***

Eph. 5:1-2



I. FINDING YOUR PLACE IN THE BODY OF CHRIST

Read Rom. 12:4-5; 1 Cor. 12:12-13; Gal. 3:28. These passages use the phrase, "the body of Christ." Who or what is the body of Christ? _____

It is extremely important for us to understand that each and every member of Christ's body is essential. How do the individual members of the church relate to each other?

What happens if a member is hurting? _____

What happens if a member is inactive? _____

Read Eph. 4:11-13. The activities of the church should have these effects:

- The church as a whole should be built up.
- The individual members should become mature.

We might understand the term "built up" to mean built up numerically. It might also mean that the individuals are "built up" in their *knowledge, wisdom, and faith*. Do you think that you would benefit from a better understanding of God's Word? Why or why not? _____

Jesus' disciples ask Him, "increase our faith" (Lk. 17:5). Do you feel the need for an increased faith? Why or why not? _____

Read Heb. 10:24-25. The truth of the matter is that, if we try to live the Christian life on our own, we soon begin to suffer from a "low spiritual battery charge." We tend to *fall back into worldly ways of thinking about things*. We tend to *worry more and pray less*. We tend to fall back into *old* habits and patterns of life. Like the battery in your car which needs constant recharging, we need to have our spiritual batteries recharged. We need to feed on the Word, on praise, and on fellowship with other believers.

The following passages all deal with the ways that Christians can and should minister to "one another." Read each and write down the ways that we can build one another up. Discuss how each might apply to your life and your home.

- Rom. 12:10 _____

- Rom. 12:16 _____

- Rom. 15:7 _____

- Gal. 5:13 _____

- Eph. 4:2 _____

- Eph. 4:32 _____

- Eph. 5:19-21 _____

- Col. 3:13-16 _____

- 1 Thess. 5:11 _____

- 1 Pet. 1:22 _____

- 1 Pet. 3:8 _____

- 2 Jn. 1:5 _____

***"This is my commandment,
that you love one another"***

II. THE MEANS OF MINISTRY

As believers and members of the body of Christ, we must recognize that we are not only recipients of the grace of God; we are also participants in ministering that grace to others. Our immediate reaction is probably, "what can I do? Who am I to minister to others?" If we were called to build one another up in our own strength and wisdom that would be a valid question. God has a better plan than that, though. **Read Rom. 12:5-8; 1 Cor. 12:4-7; 1 Pet. 4:10-11.** What has God given His people to equip them for ministry? _____

_____ Do you think that God has given you gifts to enable you to minister to others? Why or why not? _____

What gifts do you think you have been given? _____

Look again at 1 Pet. 4:10-11. What is the result of the exercise of spiritual gifts?

A VERSE TO REMEMBER

"Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given us."

Rom. 12:4-6