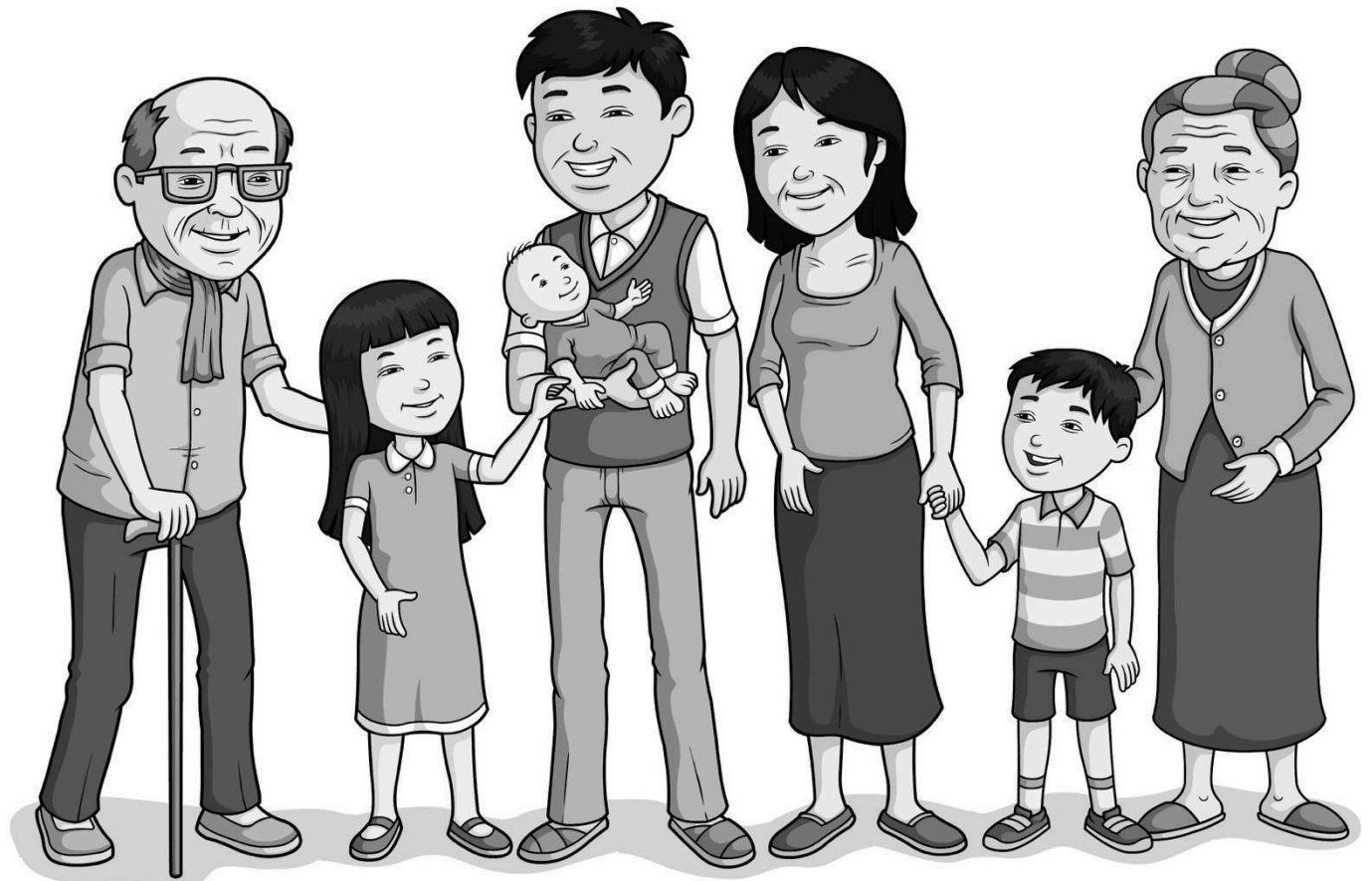


# TRUTH CENTERED TRANSFORMATION

MODULE



## MARRIAGE & FAMILY TEACHER GUIDE

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# Before You Get Started

## Special Facilitator Note for the Marriage & Family Module

These lessons are each about 2 hours—not the usual 1.5 hours. Ask the participants to invite their spouse to attend the training. Make some modifications for the couple discussions. Encourage everyone to participate in this training even if they are not married or if they do not have children. These topics are valuable for everyone to learn to develop healthy relationships in all communities.

All the Visual Aids are at the back of the Teacher Guide. If you do not print a Student Guide for participants, make one copy for each person of the Recognise our Differences in Lesson 2. Each church may want to pay for a copy of the Student Guide to remember the main ideas of this module.

## Preparing for Teaching a Lesson

1. Read through the **Teacher's Guide** carefully, several times if possible. Highlight or make notes on the sides of the pages to remind yourself of important points.
2. Look at the **main ideas** for each lesson so you know what students should learn through the lesson.
3. Read all **scripture** passages ahead.
4. Check to see what **materials** are needed in each lesson. Make copies of any handouts and other visual aids that are used in the lesson.
5. Make sure you are familiar with each **activity** in the lesson (role-plays, games, visual aids). You can practise it with your family or friends.
6. Take time to **pray** for God to prepare the students, for the students to hear what God wants them to hear, and for Him to help you teach the materials. Remember that it is only through God's strength that we will see people changed.

## How to Use This Teacher's Guide

1. **Main Ideas and Materials:** Each lesson begins with this section.
  - a. **Main Ideas** – These are the most important ideas that the students should clearly understand by the end of each lesson. At the end of the lesson take time to review and make sure the students understood these ideas.
  - b. **Materials** - The specific materials needed are listed for each lesson.
    - i. **VISUAL AIDS** – will be labelled like this. They should be printed ahead of time.
    - ii. We recommend having poster paper, a whiteboard, or a chalkboard to use with the large group.
    - iii. Student Guides are optional. Any section of the lesson that has corresponding pages in the Student Guide is labelled in the Teacher Guide like this: **(SG)**.
2. **Facilitator Instructions:** There are special instructions in the lesson to help you lead the training well. These are not meant to be shared with the students. Read these ahead so you are prepared to lead discussions and activities. Some questions will also have italicised answers to help you as a facilitator know what ideas to emphasise with the students. These are not the only good answers, just some good answers.

# Lesson 1: Roles in Marriage

## Main Ideas

1. Men have two roles in marriage. They are to be the leader of the family and they are to love their wives in the same way that Christ loved the Church and in the same way that they love and care for themselves.
2. Women have two roles in marriage. They are to love, respect, and submit to their husbands the way the Bible teaches and to be a godly helper.

## Materials

1. Visual Aid: Recognise Our Differences – one copy for each participant (front and back)
2. Optional Student Guide (SG)
  - a. Roles of Husbands and Wives

## Introduction

### LARGE GROUP DISCUSSION

The success of our marriages calls for men and women to live in harmony and to relate the way Christ intended. One of the key aspects of building your marriage is to understand the different roles of spouses.

**Facilitator Instructions:** Read each story and discuss the questions in the large group.

### Leah's Story

Leah squatted in the doorway cleaning vegetables for dinner. Every now and then she would nudge the hammock where her baby was asleep to keep it swaying back and forth. Her mother-in-law lay on a bamboo mat nearby snoring softly in the afternoon heat. Leah had only been married two years, and already her life was very different than she expected. She felt old and tired. She missed her friends and wished she could visit her mother and father. Instead she had to care for the baby and keep house for her husband's family.

Leah knew her mother-in-law would expect everything to be ready for dinner when she woke up. Leah stretched and rubbed a sore place at the back of her neck. When she and Timeus were first married, he sometimes came home from work early and they would go for a walk or take a drive on the motorbike. Now he always stayed out late with his friends. He came home smelling like alcohol and cigarettes and barely said a few words before going to bed.

Leah had met Timeus at the church youth group. Before they were married, he seemed to like going to church. She imagined that he would be a good husband and a good father. Timeus was not cruel. He did not hit Leah and she knew he didn't go out with other women, but his heart was always far away. Even on Sunday afternoons when he was home, he seemed distant. He never played with the baby or talked with Leah. He only slept or watched TV. If the baby cried or if his mother complained about Leah, Timeus argued with Leah and shouted at her. Leah began to wish she had never gotten married. She never imagined that life could be so difficult.

### Timeus' Story

Later that same evening Timeus sat drinking coffee with his friends. Baara was telling a joke about women that made them all laugh. Timeus thought of Leah and shivered. He knew she would be waiting for him when he got home and that she would be angry. She was never happy. She always complained about Timeus' mother and about all the work she had to do around the house. Timeus knew his mother could be

difficult, but he wished Leah could be more patient. His mother had worked hard all her life and she deserved to rest now that she was older. Leah should understand that.

Timeus had started staying out with friends and finding excuses to be away from home because he did not want to listen to all the arguments between Leah and his mother. He was tired of Leah's complaints about her work and the baby. She always seemed so angry with him. Didn't she understand that he worked all day and he just needed to be quiet and rest in the evening?

He even avoided going to church with Leah. He hated pretending like everything was fine between them. Whenever they went to Sunday morning services Leah dressed up the baby and ironed Timeus' best shirt. It was as if she wanted everyone to believe they were prosperous and happy. The truth was that they struggled to make enough money and were never happy at home. Timeus had started to wonder if anyone was really as happy as they pretended to be. He felt so discouraged that he did not even want to go to church anymore. He was not sure there was any meaning to it. He never imagined that life could be so confusing.

- What happened in these two stories?
- How does this compare to families in our community?

#### **SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION**

- What advice would you give to Leah? Think about what Timeus needs; what could she do to look after Timeus better?
- What advice would you give to Timeus? Think about what Leah needs; what could he do to look after Leah better?

In this lesson, we are going to examine the role of the husband and wife in marriage. God has given us guiding principles to help us to have successful marriages.

## **Role of the Husband**

#### **LARGE GROUP DISCUSSION**

- How would you describe the role of a husband in marriage?

Read Ephesians 5:23, 25, 28-29.

- What do these verses say about the role of a husband?
  - *The husband is the head of the wife.*
  - *The husband is to love his wife as Christ loved the church.*
  - *The husband is to love his wife as he loves and cares for his own body.*
- The husband is to be the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church. How does Christ act as the head of the church? How should a husband act as head of the wife? What are some practical examples?
  - *The husband is the leader.*
  - *Jesus laid down His life and His rights as God to be our Saviour so the husband must make sacrifices to take care of, protect, and provide for his wife and not just to do what is best for himself.*
  - *He does not force his wife to submit but loves her unconditionally. (Christ never forces the church to submit.)*
  - *When a husband makes decisions, he should discuss them with his wife and consider what is best for his wife, not just what is best for himself.*

- Since the husband should love his wife the way Christ loves His Church, how would you describe God's love?

### SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION (SG)

Read 1 Corinthians 13:4-8 and Philippians 2:1-8 and answer the following questions:

- How do each of these verses describe God's love?
  - 1 Corinthians: 13:4-8 – *patient, kind, does not envy, does not boast, is not proud, does not dishonour, is not self-seeking, is not easily angered, does not keep account of wrongs. It does not delight in evil but in truth. It protects, trusts, hopes and perseveres. Love never fails.*
  - Philippians 2:1-8 – *humble, considering others' interests first, serving and sacrificing.*
- How can a husband show love for his wife in these ways? In your groups come up with 10 practical things that a husband could do to demonstrate this kind of love for his wife.
  - *Forgive his wife when they have a disagreement*
  - *Listen to his wife's ideas when they are making a decision*
  - *Help look after the baby – give the baby a bath*
  - *Collect water for his wife*
  - *Be faithful to his wife*
  - *Look after the children so his wife has time to visit others*
  - *Consider his wife's own needs before his needs*
  - *Be a good spiritual example – make sure the family attends church every week*
  - *Pray for his wife*
  - *Seek her ideas and talk about important decisions together*
- If a husband treated his wife the way the Bible teaches, what effect do you think it would have on a marriage?

**REPORT BACK** - Review questions above.

### LARGE GROUP DISCUSSION

God has given husbands two primary roles in marriage—to be the head of the wife and to love their wives as they love themselves, just as Christ does for the Church. Jesus modelled an attitude of a servant, washing His disciples' feet and giving up His life as a sacrifice for our salvation. Jesus was caring and kind, gave up His rights as God, and was not dominating.

It is important that we understand how Jesus modelled these roles and that we do not follow one of these two roles and forget the other. If we look at the life of Abraham, we see sometimes he emphasized one over the other and each time it resulted in problems.

1. **Acting as the head, but without love (Genesis 12:10-16):** Abraham took his wife to Egypt to escape the famine. He told his wife to tell everyone that she was his sister so that he would not be harmed. However, this meant that Sarah was taken by Pharaoh to become one of his wives. In this case, we can see that Abraham was acting as head of the household and trying to solve the problem of the famine for his family. However, he was not loving his wife by asking her to lie and become another man's wife. God had to intervene and save Sarah from that situation.
2. **Loving, but not acting as the head of the household (Genesis 16:1-4):** Sarah asked Abraham to sleep with Hagar so that she could have a child through her and then, when problems arose, she asked Abraham to get rid of Hagar. Abraham went along with Sarah's desires without even praying about whether it was the right decision. He loved Sarah but, as the head of his wife, he should have reminded Sarah of God's commands for sex to be for married couples and not agreed to go along with her plans.

In both cases Abraham was not a good husband. If a man is to be a good husband, he must both be the head of his wife AND love his wife the way Jesus loves the Church. One without the other will harm a marriage.

## Role of the Wife

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### LARGE GROUP DISCUSSION

- In your area, what is the typical role of the wife?

Read Genesis 2:18, 20.

- How does God describe the woman? (*helper*)
- How would you define a 'helper'? What things does a helper typically do?

Read Deuteronomy 33:29 and Psalm 121:1-2.

- Who is our helper in these verses?
- How would you describe the helper in these verses?

In Hebrew (the original language) the same word for 'helper' is used in each of these verses. When God described women as a helper, He used the same word that He used to describe Himself. Satan has lied to us and given us a wrong understanding of 'helper.' It is not the same idea of being a servant or slave. The real definition of 'helper' that God used for the woman means 'a strong person that comes to support and provide help for a person in need.' This same word is used 16 times referring to aspects of God's character: He is our strength, our rescuer, our protector, and our help! God created Eve to provide valuable strength and assistance for Adam.

- How does understanding the biblical idea of 'helper' change our understanding of the role of the wife?

Read Ephesians 5:22,24, 33; and I Peter 3:5.

- What do these verses say about the role of the wife?
  - *The wife should submit to her husband as to the Lord.*
  - *The wife should treat him with respect.*

God has given wives two primary roles in a marriage. The first is to love, respect, and submit to her husband as the leader of the family. The second is to be a godly helper that is both strong and capable.

### SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION (SG)

- What are some ways to be a 'helper' and show godly submission and respect to husbands? In groups try to think of 10 examples.
  - *Prepare meals, clean house, etc.*
  - *Make sure that the family has clean clothes*
  - *Support him in his work*
  - *Create a happy home*
  - *Encourage our husbands*
  - *Share our ideas and thoughts with our husbands*
  - *Pray for our husbands*
  - *Obey our husbands*
  - *Speak well of our husbands*
- How would it affect a marriage if a wife did these sorts of things?

**REPORT BACK** - Have each group share their answers.

## A Godly Marriage

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### LARGE GROUP DISCUSSION

Read Proverbs 31:10-31.

- Who were these verses written about? (*an honoured wife*)
- Who were the verses written to? (*vs. 2 – men*)
- List what activities this wife is doing
  - *She works with her hands making things – clothes and household items*
  - *She prepares good food for her family*
  - *Buys land*
  - *Plants a vineyard*
  - *She buys and trades successfully in the marketplace*
  - *She works hard*
  - *Cares for the poor and needy*
  - *Takes care of the household*
- Which activities are common for women to do in your area? Which are not typically allowed for women to do in your area?
- How does the husband treat his wife (verses 28-31)? (*He praises her, honours her, and gives her the fruit of her hands.*)
- In verse 30 why does the husband praise his wife and call her excellent? (Because she fears the Lord)
- How do you honour your wife?

This passage was written by the King's mother to help him to understand what a godly wife looks like and how valuable and powerful such a woman is (look at verse 10) It is not about giving a list of things that a wife must do or a justification for treating a wife as a slave. It does not promote laziness for a husband but instead calls the husband to treat his wife well.

## Love and Respect

### LARGE GROUP DISCUSSION

Read Ephesians 5:33.

- What does this verse show us about the roles of husbands and wives in a godly marriage?

We are given two simple commands, one for the husband and one for the wife. Husbands, LOVE your wives. Wives, RESPECT your husbands. Why do you think it is different? Why are wives told to respect and husbands told to love? Because God knows us; He knows exactly what we need. He knows that men need respect and women need love. Men still like to be loved and women to be respected, but men prefer respect and women love.

You can see this in common life. In the military, a place dominated by males, respect and honour are important. Men aspire to move up the ranks to get more respect. Disrespectful behaviour is not tolerated. Disliking your commander is not a problem. Commanders do not desire to be liked; they desire to be respected. Women, on the other hand, build nurturing environments—they want to be loved; they are not as worried about being respected.

What often happens is that women do not show respect to their husbands, then husbands do not show love to their wives. Because they feel unloved, women don't show respect, and men who feel disrespected don't show love. It becomes a cycle. It can start with either the husband or the wife, but once started it just goes around and around—a cycle of disrespect and lack of love.

Listen to this story and see if it sounds like a typical situation.

It had been a hard week working in the fields. The sun seemed especially hot and the heat was unbearable out in the fields where there was little relief. Matthew was excited that he would be home soon to see his wife. He had been away for 10 days; it was such a long time to be away from the



family. As he drove up the road, he hoped that she would be just as excited to see him as he was to see her.

Mary was at home; she was tired after looking after the children without much help, and frustrated that they did not seem to be behaving. She was looking forward to her husband coming home. She had called him earlier that day to remind him to bring home some rice. She had not been able to get out because it was too hard to take the young children anywhere. She hoped he would be back soon—the children were already getting hungry and she did not have anything to feed them.

"I'm home," called Matthew.

"Finally!" said Mary. "Where's the rice?"

"Oh," replied Matthew, "I forgot it—I had so much to remember today."

"How could you do that?" Mary felt her voice rising. "What are the children going to eat?"

"Don't you have any rice at all?"

"NO! That's why I asked you to bring some. Sometimes I think you care more about your friends than the family. You never forget to go out to coffee with them."

"Fine, I'll get some!" Matthew shouted as he stormed out the door. The happiness that they had both had at the idea of seeing each other had vanished already, replaced by anger and hurt.

- What happened in this story?
- What was Mary's response to Matthew?
  - *Mary was frustrated he forgot the rice*
- What was Matthew's response to Mary?
  - *He got angry*
- What happened in the end?
  - *Matthew walked out*

**Facilitator Instructions:** Remind the class – this argument is NOT about rice. It is about Mary feeling like her husband has forgotten her because he forgot the one thing she asked for. It is about Matthew feeling unloved because his wife did not appreciate all he had done but instead nagged at him.

Ladies, sometimes this (walking out) is a good thing. Sometimes (y)our husbands are so mad with (y)our comments that they need time to calm down, so they do not respond in an ungodly way, like hitting or using hurtful language.

However, what do you think women think when men walk out? HE DOESN'T LOVE ME. He does not even love me enough to solve the problem!

Men, you need to remember to communicate clearly as you walk out. "I am extremely angry right now. I love you and want to treat you in God-honouring ways, but I need some time to calm down."

How could this story have been different?

- What could Mary have said differently?
  - *"I so appreciate all that you have done to provide for the family, all your work and efforts. However, we do need some rice—could you do one more thing and get some?"*
- What could Matthew have said differently?
  - *"I was so busy thinking about how happy I would be to see you; how much I love and appreciate you that the rice flew out of my brain. Let me go and get some now; it will just take a minute."*

In every case someone must stop the cycle and either show love or respect. Even when we do not want to, we need to remember—we are commanded! The Bible does not say, ‘When your husband is being lovely, respect him. When your wife is being kind, love her.’ Christ did not wait until we were good to love us. We must remember, even if we do not want to, out of our love for God, we need to love and respect one another.

### **SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION**

Remember the story of Timeus and Leah.

- How do you think the problem of love and respect is reflected in this story?
- What advice would you give Timeus?
- What advice would you give Leah?

### **WITH A PARTNER**

1. Make a list of things that your husband or wife does to help you. (For single people, what do your father and mother do to help you?)
2. Looking over the list, pray and thank God for your husband or wife (or parents).

### **PERSONAL REFLECTION**

What can you do right after this training to improve your relationship with your spouse or family?

1. In the next day:
  - **Husbands:** Tell your wife you are thankful for her and for what she does to care for your family. Ask her if there is anything you can do to make her life less difficult. Remember that she wants to know you love her.
  - **Wives:** Tell your husband you are thankful for him and that you appreciate his hard work to care for your family. Ask him if there is anything you can do to make his life less difficult. Remember that he wants to know you respect him.
  - **Singles:** Tell your parents that you are thankful for them and all they do for your family. Ask them if there is anything you can do to make their lives less difficult.
2. Then, each day after, try to do at least one thing to show your husband or wife (or parents) that you love her or respect him.
3. Take time now to write down a few ideas of your own of what you can do each day this week. Pray and ask God to help you do these things.

These steps may sound too difficult. If you are not ready to talk to your husband or wife (or parents), then start by praying for him or her every day. Pray every time you feel sad or angry. Thank God for your husband or wife and ask God to help you in your marriage.

# Lesson 2: A Happy Marriage

## Main Ideas

1. We can have happy marriages by becoming aware of the differences we have with our spouse or close family member.
2. We need to learn healthy and biblical ways to address our differences and resolve conflicts.

## Materials

1. Visual Aid
  - a. Recognise Our Differences Worksheet (front and back – one copy for each participant)
2. Optional Student Guide (SG)
  - a. Recognise Our Differences
  - b. Resolving Disagreements

## A Happy Marriage

Some conflict is always going to happen even in a healthy marriage.

- What are things that couples often disagree about?

### SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

Read the following verses—what can we understand from these verses that help us to understand how to deal with conflict better?

- 1 Corinthians 15:41 & 1 Corinthians 12:4-7 – *God has made each of us unique; we have different pasts and have been given different talents. We need to understand the differences and be willing to accept how God has made each of us different.*

### REPORT BACK

### LARGE GROUP DISCUSSION

**God has made each of us different.** As we saw in 1 Corinthians, we have different talents, skills, and strengths. This does NOT make one person better than the other. We are each as God made us. God did not make us all the same. He made us unique. In the next exercise, we will see some of the ways that God has made us unique. Remember for each of these points, it is not that one person is better than another, it's a reflection of the way that God made us.

### INDIVIDUAL AND SPOUSE ACTIVITY (SG)

**Facilitator Instructions:** Each person will need a copy of **VISUAL AID** – Recognise our Differences. You can also have men on one side of the room and women on the other. If people cannot read, or if they do not understand the statements, then you can read each topic and have them mark on the line. It is important to provide very clear instructions for this activity! Clear directions are given below (after the chart).

Disagreements		
Sort it out immediately	_____	Keep the peace
Money		
Spend	_____	Save

<b>People</b>		
Spend time with others	_____	Spend time alone
<b>Planning</b>		
Make plans and stick to them	_____	Be spontaneous
<b>Punctuality</b>		
Arrive early	_____	Arrive just in time or late
<b>Relaxation</b>		
Go out	_____	Stay home
<b>Sleeping</b>		
Go to bed late	_____	Go to bed early
<b>Sport</b>		
Enthusiast	_____	Uninterested
<b>Clothes</b>		
Formal	_____	Casual
<b>Tidiness</b>		
Very tidy	_____	Messy
<b>T.V.</b>		
Keep it on	_____	Throw it out

**DIRECTIONS:**

We will go through the handout two times:

1. The first time – read each topic and mark on the line with an “X” what **you** like.

- Let's do the first one together. People – would you prefer to spend time with people or to be alone? If you love to be around people, then put the "X" near the right end of the line. If you like both then you might put the "X" near the middle of the line. If you prefer to be alone put the "X" at the left end of the line. (*Demonstrate on the board*)
  - Go through the whole page and mark what you prefer in each situation.
2. The second time – read each topic and mark on the line with an "O" what you think **your spouse or close family member** would like. Do not discuss this with your spouse.
  3. When you and your spouse are done with 1 and 2 then show each other your paper. Discuss each topic and the questions on the back.
    - Did you have a correct understanding of the other person's preferences? Were you surprised by anything?
    - Did you and your spouse (or close family member) always have the same answers for each of these topics?
    - In which areas are you the most similar and you find it easier to agree?
    - In which areas are you the most different?
    - Which topics create disagreements in your marriage or relationship?
    - Talk about how you could handle these areas of your differences.
    - How can you use each person's strengths to build your marriage or relationship?

**4. Write a plan together:** Make a plan to deal with the areas where you are very different. Choose 2 areas of difference and write down your plan for how you will resolve them.

#### Example 1 – Money

If your spouse likes to spend and you like to save, then make a plan for how you will spend some money and save some money. Maybe you agree to save a specific amount, while your spouse can have an allowance each week/month to spend on the needs of the family based on what you have agreed together.

#### Example 2 – Relaxing

If your way of relaxing is to be at home and your partner likes to go out, then agree on a way you can both be happy. You can agree to go out together one night a week and stay home and relax together one night a week. Or you can agree that for one or two nights a week your spouse will go out and you will stay home.

### REPORT BACK

**Facilitator Instructions:** Ask one or two couples to share their plan for one difference.

Our differences can lead to conflict if we do not discuss them and make a plan that works for both people.

## Resolving Disagreements

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There will always be some disagreements, but we need to learn to resolve them in a healthy way. We cannot let conflict build up. We need to try to quickly resolve any conflict before it has time to grow.

### SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION (SG)

Look up the following verses. What can we learn from each verse about resolving conflict?

- Ephesians 4:32 – *We need to be kind and compassionate and willing to forgive, remembering that we are also not perfect.*
- 1 Peter 3:9 & Matthew 5:23-24 – *We need to be ready to apologise. Even if the other person started the problems, we need to be ready to make things right.*
- Philippians 2:3-4 – *We need to think of each other as more important than ourselves.*

- Ephesians 4:26 – *We should not let the sun go down on our anger. This is a good reminder to be careful to resolve differences quickly and not allow days to pass. This is very important in our marriages, but also in all our relationships.*
- Matthew 7:3-5 – *Make sure you recognise your faults first—do not be quick to point out the faults of others.*
- Matthew 18:15 – *Discuss the issues in private, not in front of others, especially children.*
- Proverbs 15:1 – *Discuss disagreements calmly. Choose a time when you both are calm. If you are angry, postpone the discussion.*
- Colossians 4:6 – *State your points kindly without attacking each other.*

#### **PERSONAL REFLECTION**

- Which of these principles is easiest for you to do during a disagreement?
- Which of these principles is hardest for you to do during a disagreement?
- What one or two principles would you like to start to apply to your life?

#### **SMALL GROUP ACTIVITY**

Create a role-play. Choose a common disagreement in marriages and show how to resolve a disagreement using all these principles.

**Facilitator Instructions:** *Ask each of the small groups to do their role-play for the rest of the group.*

#### **LARGE GROUP REVIEW**

In this lesson, we have learned to recognise the differences in our relationships, to make a plan to deal with our differences, and to resolve our disagreements in a biblical way.

- Which important principle of resolving conflict do you often forget during a disagreement?
- What are some ideas of ways to remember this truth next time you have a disagreement?

Remember, these principles are not just for people who are married to use only with their spouses. We can use these principles in all our relationships whenever we have a conflict.

**Facilitator Instructions:** *End by praying that God would help each of them to disagree in a healthy, godly way and to ensure that their differences do not become arguments and fights.*

# Lesson 3: Dealing with Hurts

## Main Ideas

1. We need to recognise and deal with how we hurt each other because unresolved hurt can destroy marriages.
2. Genuine apologies to those we hurt will help to restore our relationships.
3. We forgive others out of gratitude to God who has forgiven us.
4. Forgiveness is a process we must go through continuously to clean up the hurts in our relationships.

## Materials

1. Visual Aid: Picture of a family (one copy per group – torn apart)
2. Tape (enough for each group to use to put the family picture together)
3. Optional Student Guide (SG)
  - a. Identifying Hurts
  - b. Steps for Apologising
  - c. Steps to Forgiveness

## Review & Introduction

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### LARGE GROUP DISCUSSION

**Facilitator Instructions:** Ask the group if they remember anything from the previous lessons. Review the verses to remind the group of the main points.

- What were some of the principles that you learned for how we can discuss and resolve our differences?

Even in the best marriages there are times when the husband or wife or both hurt one another. Sometimes the hurt was intentional; sometimes it was unintentional.

### LARGE GROUP ACTIVITY

**Facilitator Instructions:** Give each group a copy torn apart of the **VISUAL AID** – Family picture (at least in 4-6 pieces) and some tape. Ask them to tape the picture back together. (The picture is found in the back of the Teacher's Guide)



Without the tape, it would have been impossible to put this picture back together. Forgiveness is the 'tape' in relationships, especially marriage. It holds the pieces together even when there has been hurt and broken relationships.

Hurt destroys marriages. It makes people less close, and they no longer support one another.

In this lesson, we will look at how to restore a marriage damaged by hurt.

## First – Identify the Hurt

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### LARGE GROUP DISCUSSION

Read Matthew 5:23-24.

- According to this verse, how important do you think it is to reconcile hurt or conflict?
- What does this verse mean by 'have something against you'?
- What are we to do if there is hurt in our marriages?

The Bible makes it clear that we are to reconcile relationships. God thinks that it is so important that He tells us to leave the worship service to go and do so. The quicker that we reconcile relationships the less hurt can grow. After a few months, what started as a small hurt may easily grow into a big problem.

This verse reminds us that, if we make someone angry with us, we need to go and ask for forgiveness. In the next verse, we see that if someone makes us angry, we still have the responsibility to be the one who goes.

### **PERSONAL REFLECTION (SG)**

We are going to take a few minutes to quietly ask God to show us if there are any ways that we have hurt our spouses. If you are not married, think about a close friend or family member instead. Think about the following areas and write down your thoughts:

**Facilitator:** *Slowly read these questions, giving about 20 seconds in between each one, and then several minutes for people to pray and write.*

- Is there anything that you have failed to do that you should be doing?
- Is there anything that you have done (or are doing) that you should not do?
- Have you failed to do something you know your spouse wants you to do?
- Have you said anything that has been hurtful?
- Have you failed to show love and encouragement?

### **LARGE GROUP DISCUSSION**

Read Matthew 18:15.

Not only do we need to recognise ways that we have caused our partners pain and hurt our marriages, but we also need to be prepared to tell our partners when we have been hurt. Sometimes our partners do not mean to hurt us, but we still get hurt. They may not realise what they have done. If you do not tell them then that hurt can make a tear in your marriage. Your partner will never know what is wrong and therefore cannot repair the tear.

### **PERSONAL REFLECTION (SG)**

Now take a moment and think about ways that you have been hurt. It may or may not be something that your partner realises is hurting you.

- Are there ways that you have been hurt by your spouse?
- Pray and commit to start discussing these things with your spouse this week.

None of us are perfect. We have all hurt others, and we have all been hurt. In the rest of this lesson we will learn more about how to reconcile our relationship from these hurts. This week you need to remember the things that you thought of now and discuss them with your partner—apologising and forgiving when appropriate.

Read Luke 15:11-22.

- What obstacles did the youngest son face?
- What did the youngest son have to do to restore his relationship with his father?
- What can we learn from this story about apologising?
- What was the response of the father? (*He forgave.*)
- What can we learn from this story about forgiving?

The next two steps to restoring relationships are apologizing and forgiving.



## Second – Apologise When You Hurt Others

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### LARGE GROUP DISCUSSION

What are some obstacles that we face to apologising and asking others to forgive us?

- *Pride*
- *Embarrassment*
- *Finding time*
- *Fear*

There are 6 Steps for Apologising to restore relationships when you have hurt others:

**Facilitator Instructions:** Write these steps on a whiteboard as you read them.

### Steps for Apologising (SG)

1. **Confess to God** – When we hurt our partners, we also disobey God. We need to go to God and ask for His forgiveness for what we have done wrong. Accepting God's forgiveness will give us a humble heart to confess and apologise to the other person.

2. **Confess to the other person without giving excuses** – Often when we confess, we want to explain why we did what we did. However, this can make it hard for the other person to forgive us.

#### Example 1:

*Blaming:* I know I criticised you in front of your friends yesterday, but I would not have done it if you had not made us one hour late.

*Proper:* I hurt you by criticising you in front of your friends yesterday; it was unkind of me.

#### Example 2:

*Blaming:* I know I was grumpy and rude towards you last night, but you should have remembered that your mother had been criticising me a lot lately and I am tired from all the work.

*Proper:* It was selfish and insensitive of me to be rude and grumpy towards you last night. I am sorry I hurt you.

Compare each of the examples above. Which way would you be more likely to forgive?

3. **Apologise** – Make sure that you are specific about what you are sorry for and express your sorrow sincerely. Say something like, 'I am extremely sorry for what I did' or 'I feel really bad about the way that I treated you.'
4. **Ask for forgiveness** – We need to realise that we need forgiveness. It may be that your partner is not ready to forgive us immediately, so we may need to be patient. Pray that God would help your partner to forgive you. You should not force them to say they forgive you against their will.
5. **Change your behaviour** – It is not enough to confess and apologise if we do not plan on changing and if we intend to keep making the same mistake. Part of restoring the relationship is making sure that you are willing and intent on changing your behaviour. To the best of your ability you should try not to do it again.
6. **Accept the consequences** – The person may need time to forgive you. You need to be patient and ask God to help them to forgive you. Some hurts might destroy trust in a relationship. You need to realise that your spouse may not trust you as easily as they did before. This is a consequence of your action. Apologising does not automatically make everything new. Sometimes you have to live with the consequences of what you have done. It takes time for the hurt that you have caused to go away.

## PARTNER ACTIVITY

Think of a common situation in which someone would need to ask forgiveness from their spouse or another close family member. Take turns to role-play how you would apologise and ask forgiveness.

**Facilitator Instructions:** You can invite those who would like to do their role-play in front of the group to do so.

## Application

### PERSONAL REFLECTION

Ask God to show you if there is anything in your marriage that you need to apologise for.

1. Create a plan of when you will talk with your spouse. When you talk with your spouse, apologise for the hurts you have caused. Try going through these steps. If you are not married then you can use these same steps to resolve hurt in any relationship that you may have—for example with parents, siblings, relatives, or friends.
2. Pick a good time for both people to talk. Find a time that will not be interrupted and both people are not too tired.
3. Pray and ask God to give you a humble heart and to give you the right words to say. Pray that God will prepare your spouse to hear you and be willing to forgive you.
4. Commit to the Lord to do this. Is there anyone that can pray for you and hold you accountable to do this?

## Forgive People Who Hurt You

### LARGE GROUP DISCUSSION

Read the following verses and summarise what the Bible says about forgiveness.

- Luke 23:34 – *Jesus forgave, and recognised others did not know what they were doing.*
- Matthew 18:21-22 – *Jesus told Peter to forgive 77 times (every time).*
- Colossians 3:13 – *Forgive each other the way the Lord has forgiven us.*

God has forgiven us for much. He commands us to forgive one another. Sometimes it is difficult to forgive others when they hurt us.

- From your experience, what are some of the consequences of unforgiveness in a marriage?
  - *Bitterness – building up of hurts*
  - *Broken trust in each other*
  - *Dissatisfaction with marriage and possible unfaithfulness*
  - *Family tensions – even children feel unsafe and afraid*

Forgiveness is essential to ensure that a marriage grows strong. In the Bible, we are commanded many times to forgive. But first we need to understand clearly what forgiveness is and is not.

**Facilitator Instructions:** Draw two columns on the board and write “Forgiveness is NOT” and “Forgiveness IS” in each column. Write each point as you explain it.

Forgiveness is NOT	Forgiveness IS
1. A feeling	1. A choice we make
2. Accepting injustice or tolerating hurtful or abusive behaviour	2. We face the wrong that was done, but choose not to hold a hurt against our spouse
3. Demanding a person change before we forgive them	3. Trusting God to deal with the other person and forgiving even before they change
4. Forgetting	4. Releasing our spouse into God’s hands when we feel anger or hurt; not seeking revenge
5. Pretending that it does not matter	5. Accepting Jesus’ death as payment for all sins

Forgiveness is NOT:

- **A feeling.** Forgiveness is a choice that we make. We do not need to wait until we feel forgiveness but instead, we decide that we will forgive someone. We do not ask ourselves, 'Do I feel like forgiving?' but rather we simply decide to forgive and let go of our self-pity and desire for revenge.
- **Demanding a person change before we forgive them.** We cannot force someone to change. We forgive because Christ has forgiven us and commands us to forgive others, not because of what we demand from the person.
- **Accepting injustice.** When we forgive someone, we do not have to believe that what they did was right. We can recognise that what they did was wrong, but we will forgive them anyway. Just because we forgive someone does not mean that we allow them to keep hurting us. Forgiveness does NOT mean we tolerate hurtful or abusive behaviour.
- **Forgetting.** Sometimes as we forgive, we cannot immediately forget the pain that was caused to us. We need to keep forgiving the person as often as we start to feel angry.
- **Pretending that it does not matter.** When we forgive someone, we are not saying that what they did was okay or that it did not impact us. We are saying that, despite the way they have wounded us, we will still forgive them. We trust God to deal with the other person.

Forgiveness IS:

- **A choice we make.** It is a response to God's forgiveness of us and is in obedience to Him.
- **Facing the wrong that was done.** We need to recognise that someone did something wrong towards us and that their behaviour has hurt us, but we choose not to hold on to the hurt.
- **Trusting God to deal with others.** We let God bring conviction, and we forgive even before someone changes.
- **Releasing him/her into God's hands.** As we forgive, we give up our right for revenge or to demand change. Instead, we allow God to discipline or change the person as He wants.
- **Accepting Jesus' death as payment for all sins.** After we have forgiven the person, we cannot keep reminding the person of what they have done and using it to get them to do things for us.

Forgiveness can be difficult, especially if the person has really hurt us. The Bible reminds us that we forgive out of gratitude for what God has done for us, not because the person necessarily 'deserves' forgiveness. When we forgive, we do not say that what they did was okay, but we say that we are willing to let God be the judge and decide how He wants to respond to their actions.

#### PERSONAL REFLECTION

- What new idea did you learn about forgiveness?
- How can you apply what you have learned in your marriage this next week?

## The Steps of Forgiveness (SG)

Here are the steps of forgiveness. If the hurt you experienced was small, then it might be easy to move through these steps. If the hurt was more significant, then this process may take more time.

1. Acknowledge that what was done to you was unjust.
2. Admit any anger and desire to hurt the person.
3. Ask God to help you forgive the other person.
4. Choose to take no revenge.
5. Let go of the desire to hurt the person.
6. Give the responsibility for judgement to God.
7. Ask God to remove any bitterness and resentment.
8. Ask God to heal your pain and all the consequences of the injustice in your life.

### WITH A PARTNER (Not your spouse)

- Which steps to forgiveness are the most difficult for you?
- What could help you in making this step easier?
- What is one thing you need to forgive your spouse for?

If you cannot think of anything with your spouse, then think of anyone else that may have treated you unjustly. If you still cannot think of anything, then just pray quietly for those who are going through the process.

### REVIEW

**Facilitator Instructions:** Read each step aloud as participants close their eyes. Pause for a minute after each step is read so participants have time to reflect. When you have finished reading all 8 steps, pray for the group, that God would take away the pain that has come from the injustices that they have just forgiven.

Close your eyes and listen and think about forgiving your spouse as each step is read.

## Start Again Together

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### LARGE GROUP DISCUSSION

Read each verse and identify the main idea in each verse:

- I Corinthians 13:4-5 – *Love is unconditional and does not keep a record of wrongs done.*
- James 5:16 – *Confess our sins, pray for each other, and give grace to each other.*
- Philippians 3:13 – *Forget what is past and focus on the future.*

Once we have worked through the process of identifying hurts, apologising, and forgiving, then we need to be willing to start again. It is difficult to go through this process, so we need to comfort and pray for one another. Then, instead of remembering what happened in the past, we need to focus on the future.

- How often do you need to clean up around your house?

Just like housecleaning, we need to clean up the hurts in our marriages and other relationships regularly. If we do not regularly clean up the hurts, then they build up and can make quite a mess of our relationships! Help your marriage to stay strong by making sure that you go through this process regularly.

## Conclusion

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**Facilitator Instructions:** Review what forgiveness IS and is NOT and the steps of forgiveness. Review the 4 Steps of Restoring Damaged Relationships. Ask for any additional questions.

In the last 2 lessons, we talked about four ways to restore damaged relationships. Do you remember what they are?

- 1 – Identify the Hurt
- 2 – Apologise When You Hurt Others
- 3 – Forgive People Who Hurt You
- 4 – Start Again Together

After we do these things, we need to look forward and not focus on the past. We also need to make sure that we go through the process every time we hurt one another. We need to rely on God to help us in this process.

### SMALL GROUP OR SPOUSES PRAYER (This can be done with spouses)

In groups or with your spouse, pray for each other. Ask God to help you to forgive others the way He has forgiven you. Ask God to heal your relationships through practicing forgiveness.

# Lesson 4: Strengthening Your Marriage

## Main Ideas

1. To show love to our spouses, we need to know what makes them feel loved.
2. When a couple prays together, they put God in the centre of their marriage.
3. We need to prioritise our spouses before others, because in marriage two people become one.

## Materials

1. Visual Aid
  - a. Korean Word
  - b. Marriage Triangle
2. Optional Student Guide (SG)
  - a. Five Love Languages

## Introduction

### LARGE GROUP DISCUSSION

Marriage is a wonderful gift from God, and when husbands and wives are strongly united in marriage, they can do incredible things to serve and glorify God. However, for this to happen, our marriages need to be strong and healthy. Making a marriage strong and keeping it strong for a whole lifetime takes hard work. In this lesson, we will look at different ways that you can strengthen your marriage.

### 3 Ways to Strengthen Your Marriage

1. Show your love
2. Pray together
3. Put your spouse before others

**Facilitator Instructions:** Write the 3 Ways to Strengthen Your Marriage on the board or create a poster.

## Show Your Love

### LARGE GROUP DISCUSSION

Everyone wants to feel loved. If you learn to express your love to your spouse, it will strengthen your marriage.

**Facilitator Instructions:** Write the following signs on the board (or show **VISUAL AID**: Korean Word)

사랑해

- Who knows what this says?

We cannot read this because it is written in Korean. We do not know Korean, so it means nothing to us. It says, 'I love you.' The way we show love can be the same. There are different ways to show love and different ways that people feel loved. If we use the wrong language, then people do not understand us. It is as confusing as these words on the board.

### Five Different Love Languages (SG)

In Gary Chapman's book called *The Five Love Languages*, he explains 5 common ways that people feel loved. People are different and have different ways that they receive love. If we show love in a way that is different from how our spouse most feels loved, then it is like we are speaking a different language to them and they may not feel loved. We might be speaking, but they do not understand. If we want to speak to our spouse, then we need to speak their language. It is the same with love—we need to learn the other person's love language

so that we can express love to them in a way that they can best understand. The secret to keep your love alive in your marriage is to learn to show your love in a way that your spouse will feel loved.

There are 5 different love languages.

1. **Serving Each Other** – Some people feel loved when we do things for them. These may be simple things like tidying the house, washing the dishes, or pulling the weeds.
2. **Words of Affirmation** – Some people feel loved when we say positive things to them. They may be compliments like, 'You cook so well' or 'You have beautiful hair' or 'You are a great mother.' They may be words of gratitude or appreciation: 'Thank you for cooking dinner.' or 'Thank you for working so hard to provide for the family.'
3. **Gifts** – Some people feel loved when they receive a gift. Gifts do not need to be expensive or even cost money. It may be as simple as a flower that you picked on the way home or a poem that you wrote.
4. **Physical Touch** – Some people feel loved through physical touch. This includes everything from holding hands, hugs, or stroking the other person's hair.
5. **Spending Focused Time Together** – Some people feel loved when we spend special time with them. This does not mean that we are in the same room but doing different things. It means that we give each other focused attention. In our busy homes, it may mean that we take a walk together and share about our days.

You might find that your spouse responds more favourably to one love language than others. Each person has their own preference. Try to discover which way of showing love means the most to your spouse and do more of that kind.

### SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

What are 2–4 ways that you could demonstrate each of these different ways of expressing love?

### REPORT BACK

**Facilitator Instructions:** Ask each group to share some practical ideas how to show love in each of the 5 love languages.

If we want happy marriages, we want to make sure that our spouses feel loved. Even if our spouses are making no effort, when we start to show love to them in ways they like, they will appreciate it. They will also naturally grow more loving and forgiving towards us. If they do not feel loved they will be difficult to live with and more easily irritated at us.

### PERSONAL REFLECTION

- Think about your spouse – what do they seem to like or appreciate?
- What are some new ways you could show love to your spouse right away?
- What are 5 things that you appreciate about your spouse? Try to be very specific. Each day try to express something you appreciate about your spouse.
- Think about yourselves. Which of the ways to show love do you prefer? What are the things that your spouse does that make you feel most loved?

If it is difficult to know what your spouse likes, you can try an experiment. For one month choose one of the love languages and practice showing love that way. What is the response? If there is no change then try a different language. Keep trying month by month until you see a response from your spouse.

## Pray Together

### LARGE GROUP DISCUSSION

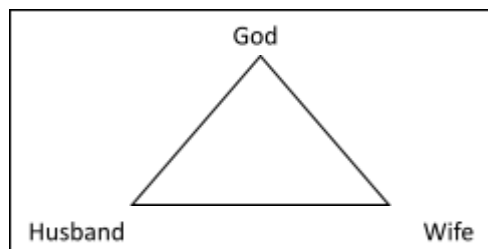
Read Ecclesiastes 4:12: 'A cord of three strands is not easily broken.'

Another important skill in building a strong marriage is praying together. When we pray together, we put God in the centre of our marriages. God never intended that our husbands or wives would meet all our needs. When we expect our husbands or wives to understand us completely and meet all our needs, then we fail and hurt one another. We were created to be in relationship with God—only He is able to meet all our needs.

**Facilitator Instructions:** Draw this image on a board or poster, or show **VISUAL AID:** Marriage Triangle.

A marriage should look like this image:

- The husband is directly connected to God.
- The wife is directly connected to God.
- The husband and wife are connected to each other.



One important way for God to be at the centre of the marriage is to take time to talk with Him together as well as individually.

Praying together will help a husband and wife to strengthen their marriage. It will help ensure that a happy marriage lasts for a lifetime. As we pray, we can seek God's will for the challenges that we face and decisions that we need to make. Praying also helps us both to put our focus and dependence on God.

Here is some practical advice for praying together:

- Choose one time to pray together and keep to it. For example, when you first wake up or go to bed or when the children have just gone to school.
- Pray daily. It is better to try to pray just 5 minutes a day rather than half an hour once a month.
- Start with thanking God for each other, your marriage, family, etc.
- Use this time to pray for each other's needs, not the needs of the rest of the world.
- Listen to each other while you pray.
- Make sure you are praying to God. Do not use your prayer to try and change the other person.

## Put Your Spouse Before Others

### LARGE GROUP DISCUSSION

**Facilitator Instructions:** Read or tell this story.

Tamar was so frustrated with Caleb. She could not believe he had done it again. He had just arrived home to announce that he was going away for 4 days to help his mother.

She had explained that the 4-month old baby was sick and could not sleep. So she needed Caleb to help her at home with the other children and getting the fields ready to plant. But he said that he had talked to his friends about the situation and they all agreed that he should visit his mother.

So, he was going to leave in the morning. While Tamar sat awake feeding their baby, she had to admit that she admired that he cared so much for his mother. But she felt a little jealous—why didn't he see that she needed him to care for her in the same way? Who was going to help her?

- What happened in this story?
- Does this ever happen in this community?

- What was the problem?
- Who do you think was wrong? Why?

Before a man and woman are married, each person belongs to their parents' family. When a couple marries, they start a new family.

In Mark 10:6-9 Jesus refers to the verse in Genesis, that says a man should leave his father and mother, and that the two become one flesh; Jesus also says, 'Therefore, what God has joined together, let no one separate.' This teaches us the importance of this new marriage unit. The man changes his priorities from his old family to his new family. He is responsible to first care for his wife and his children.

This does not mean that we stop honouring our parents or caring for our extended family.

Read 1 Timothy 5:8.

- What does it say in this verse?

Because in marriage two people become one, we need to put our spouses before others. But we should not neglect either the husband or the wife's extended family. The husband and wife relationship is the most important responsibility that God has given to us. Therefore, this means that we need to learn to prioritise our spouses first, but not neglect the husband's and wife's extended family.

- In the story, what were some ways that Caleb put others before his wife?
  - *He visited his mother instead of staying with his wife.*
  - *He allowed his friends to make the decision about whether he should go or not rather than making a decision based on his wife's requests.*
  - *He went out with his friends rather than staying home and helping with the baby.*
- What are other examples of ways that we make others more important than our spouses?
- How could Caleb have prioritised his wife and still shown his care for his mother?

There are several areas in which we need to put our spouse first in our lives. Today we will look at just two areas.

1. **Time** – This does not mean that we just spend more time with them but that, if they need our help, we put them before other people.
  2. **Decisions** – When a person is married, they need to make their decisions either with their spouse or thinking about what their spouse has already said. Decisions relating to a husband and wife should not be made by others. The wife should have more input into a decision than any other person and the husband should honour his wife in all his decisions. This is a practical way to 'submit to one another out of reverence for Christ,' as Ephesians 5:21 says. The best decision is made after good communication, careful reflection, and prayer by both the husband and wife.
- How would this understanding change the way a husband and wife could put their spouse before others?
    - *They would create a new family that they would prioritise and honour first.*
    - *Then they would take care of and listen to the advice of both families.*

#### **ROLE-PLAY (If time available)**

Do a role-play that demonstrates what typically happens in families and what it would look like if we prioritised our spouses.



## **PERSONAL REFLECTION**

Take time to think of one example in your life from each area in which you could do a better job putting your spouse before others. Then, for each example, ask God and later your spouse to forgive you. Ask God to help you change and remember that the first responsibility He gave you is to your spouse.

- Time – Are there times when you have made your friends or others more important than your spouse?
- Decisions – Are there decisions you made without considering the thoughts or feelings of your spouse?

## **Conclusion**

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### **LARGE GROUP DISCUSSION**

Today we looked at 3 ways we can strengthen our marriage:

1. Showing your love
2. Praying together
3. Putting your spouse first

Try to practise doing these things right away so that your marriage will also grow strong.

# Lesson 5: Women Are Valuable

## Main Ideas

1. Both men and women have equal value because they are made in the image of God and redeemed in Christ.
2. We need to value and treat women the way Jesus did, even if it may be very different from our culture.

## Materials

1. Green and Yellow cards
2. Water and snacks to be served in Large Group Activity
3. Visual Aid: Women and Our Community
4. Optional Student Guide (SG)
  - a. The Culture and Ways in the Time of Jesus
  - b. Our Community

## Introduction

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### LARGE GROUP ACTIVITY

**Facilitator Instructions:** Place a stack of yellow and green cards on a table. Ask everyone to take one.

Today we are going to do things a bit differently. Each person has a yellow or green card. All those with green cards will go to the back of the room. Please sit quietly and do not disturb the rest of us. We are doing an important lesson and we just want the opinions of a few key people. Please be quiet, do not interrupt, and do not disturb the rest of us.

**Facilitator Instructions:** Give everyone in the yellow group a piece of candy. Check if there is anything else that they would like. Ask them if they feel comfortable and ready to start the lesson. Treat them as if they are honoured guests. If anyone from the green group moves or speaks, look up and remind them of the instructions.

For each of these statements do you think people in the areas where you live would generally agree or disagree with it and why.

1. 'Girls are a burden to their family.'
  2. 'Women should not own land or receive an inheritance.'
  3. 'It is ok to beat a wife who is not being obedient.'
  4. 'Women should be seen and not heard.'
- Are there other statements that are common in your area about women? What are some examples?

### DEBRIEF OF ACTIVITY

**Facilitator Instructions:** Ask the green group to come back to join the yellow group. Debrief by asking questions to each group and then draw out conclusions from the group based on this experience.

For the last 10 minutes, the green group was excluded from the discussion.

- **Green group:**
  - What did it feel like to not be included in the discussions and to not be allowed to talk?
  - Did you want to participate and share your ideas?
  - How did you feel when you saw the yellow group receiving snacks and you did not receive any?

- Do you think this ever happens in society? Who are excluded?
- **Yellow group:**
  - What did it feel like to not include part of the group in the small groups and discussions?
  - Did you notice that the other group did not get any water or snacks? What do you think about that?
  - Did you feel uncomfortable? Why or why not?
- **Everyone:**
  - What did not seem right about this?
  - What opportunities were lost by not including the green group in the activity?

This activity was about discrimination—the fact that often in society we do not value women and girls as much as men and boys. This time we did not discriminate by gender but by the colour of the card that you picked. However, in many areas this is not too dissimilar to the type of discrimination that girls and women face.

- Are the opinions of women sought on key community or church matters? Why or why not?
- Are there special privileges given to men but not to women? What do you think that feels like?

In this lesson, we are going to talk about how we think about women and girls. We will also look at some of the ways we treat them that do not reflect that we value them.

### **LARGE GROUP DISCUSSION**

Read Genesis 1:27-28.

These verses show us that both males and females are created in God's image. While some people argue that only man was made in the image of God because some translations say 'man' and 'him'. In the Hebrew God uses the word 'Adam', which can refer to either a man or all of mankind. But in the Bible whenever God is referring to just man, not woman, it uses the word 'Ish'. In the next sentence He continues to clarify that it is male and female that He is referring to.

As you remember in lesson 1, Eve was created as a helper to Adam. Why do you think that no other helper could be found? The earth was filled with wonderful animals, but none were good enough. The answer is simple, because no animal was created in the image of God, so no animal could multiply the earth like Adam and Eve could. To continue to fulfil the work that God had given, both had to be made in the image of God.

In Module 1, we learned that God made both men and women in His image. Unfortunately, our cultural rules and expectations do not match the value that God gave women being made in His own image.

- What happens if a woman does not follow the cultural rules and expectations?
- How would her different family members react (husband, parents, in-laws)?

## **The Truth About Women**

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### **LARGE GROUP DISCUSSION**

God created both men and women in His image with worth and value. Both represent aspects of God to the world. God told both of them to fill the earth and rule over it together as partners.

Read Genesis 3:6.

Adam and Eve sinned by disobeying God and they suffered the consequences of their sin. Their perfect relationship was broken.

- What changed in Adam and Eve's relationship after they sinned by disobeying God?
  - *They blamed each other.*
  - *The wife would want to rule over man, but the man would rule over the wife.*
  - *God's plan for unity and oneness was destroyed.*

- How has sin and brokenness in our world influenced the way people see women in our culture?

Read Galatians 3:26-29.

- Who are considered children of God through Christ Jesus? (*All who have faith.*)
- This verse says there is no more Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male or female. What does this mean? (*We all have an equal opportunity to be children of God.*)

Through Christ both males and females can become children of God, heirs of eternal life, and both are fully restored into relationship with God.

Read Acts 2:17-18, 21 and 1 Peter 4:10-11.

- What does this verse say will happen when God's Spirit is poured out on all people?
- Does it surprise you that daughters and women are included in receiving the gifts of prophecy to be used in the church?
- When everyone uses the gifts God gives them, what is the result?
- What would happen if women and daughters did not use the gifts God gives them?

God gives gifts to both men and women to be used to build the Kingdom of God and bring honour and glory to God.

- How can you help your wife use all the gifts God has given her?
- How can you help your daughter develop and use the gifts God has given her?
- How can you encourage women in your church and your community to use the gifts God has given them?

## The Culture in the Time of Jesus and How He Treated Women

### LARGE GROUP DISCUSSION (SG)

Today we are going to look at the way women were viewed during Jesus' time and the way Jesus treated women.

### The Culture in the Time of Jesus

The Jewish and Roman laws and traditions gave little value to women. Women were seen as inferior (lower and less important) to men.

- **Women were treated like possessions.** They were not independent. They either belonged to their father's house or to their husband's house. Jewish men were even forbidden to speak with any women on the street. Their presence was not recorded or recognised in important events.
- **Women were restricted in their worship of God.** Religious leaders had added new laws that meant that women were only allowed to go to the 'women's court' in the temple. (The women's court was never in the original design of the temple). They could not read the Word of God or participate in worship inside the temple.
- **Women were generally excluded from being educated.** Since education was given in the synagogue schools, girls were discouraged from participating.
- **Women had no legal rights.** They could not own land, receive an inheritance unless there were no men left in the family line, or divorce their husbands. Women were not allowed to testify in a court of law unless a man could confirm their story.

In general, in the culture of Jesus' time, women were seen as less trustworthy, less intelligent, and less spiritual than men.

## Jesus' Ways

Jesus' attitude toward women was radically different from the culture of that time. He treated men and women with equal respect and dignity. Women at that time had never known a man like Jesus.

- **Jesus treated women with incredible respect and dignity.** He talked to women publicly. Jesus talked with the Samaritan woman who was both a foreigner and 'sinful' (John 4:7). He spoke with grace, truth, and kindness to the woman caught in adultery (John 8:1-11).
- **Jesus ministered to women and treated each one as a person.** Jesus reached out to women as persons who were equally worthy as men to be both healed and saved. He ignored the laws given to Moses that said you cannot touch a woman who is bleeding (Mark 5:25-34). He healed a woman crippled for eighteen years by a demonic spirit and called her 'daughter of Abraham' (Luke 13:10-17). He healed the daughter of a Canaanite woman (Matthew 15:22-28).
- **He taught women.** He took their questions and arguments seriously. Jesus entrusted important spiritual truths to both women and men. Jesus taught Mary, the sister of Martha (Luke 10:38-42). Women were the first to see the risen Lord and were told to take the great news to the disciples (John 20:1-18). Many women travelled with Jesus and supported His ministry (Luke 8:1-3) as He taught His disciples and the crowds.

### SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION (SG)

**Facilitator:** Read the following questions slowly, giving groups time to discuss before moving on the next question.

1. How would you describe the way women were treated during the time that Jesus lived on earth?
2. Are there any similarities between how your culture treats women and how the culture in Jesus' time treated women?
3. What are some differences between how Jesus treated women and how the culture at that time treated women?
4. How do you think women felt when Jesus treated them this way?
5. Are our churches acting more like our culture or like Jesus? What are some examples?

**REPORT BACK - Facilitator Instructions:** Go over the questions above and ask each group to share their answers.

As Christians, we need to follow Jesus' example before our culture. Jesus is our example.

## We Can Make a Difference

### LARGE GROUP DISCUSSION

Jesus made a difference in His culture, and we can make a difference in our culture.

Read this true story (the names have been changed):

Sojib had never thought about men and women being created with equal value by God. He never really thought about his wife at all. They had very little income and could never buy quite enough food. So, every night at dinner the same thing happened. Sojib would sit down at the table alone and eat all the rice and curry he wanted. When he was done and got up, his wife would then eat whatever was left. One day Sojib attended a training on biblical values and marriage. He came home and decided to do something to show that he valued his wife. At dinner time, he asked his wife to sit down with him at the table. He took the rice she had cooked and split it into two equal sections, giving one section to himself and the other to her. He then did the same with the curry. His wife was surprised! Each night Sojib continued to do the same thing. He sat down with his wife and shared everything equally. As this went on, he found that his relationship

with his wife improved. They became more united, and others in the community started to follow their good example of a healthy marriage.

- What daily practice did Sojib decide to change to show he valued his wife?
- What was his wife's reaction to this change?
- How did this change impact others (his wife, others in the community)?

Many cultures today do not view women and girls the way God has intended. Our cultural traditions are strong, and many people think that they are acceptable. However, the mistreatment of any person who is created in God's image is not right. It grieves God, and we should ask God to help us change our ways.

We need to look at our traditions and practices and learn what is not right from God's perspective.


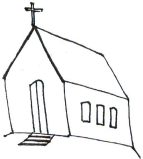
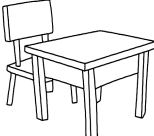

**Facilitator Instructions:** Hand out a copy of **VISUAL AID: Women and Our Community** to each small group. Before starting the small group discussion, explain the four contexts on the chart to help them think of local examples. Ask the questions and give the general examples below for each context.

- **Family** – What ways are women and girls treated differently than men and boys in the home? In what ways are they mistreated?
  - Example – When a trainer asked a group of 20 Christian doctors if they had ever beaten their wives, 18 raised their hands to indicate that they had. The trainer then asked, how many of you believe it would be okay to beat your wife if she did something that brought great shame on the family—all raised their hands.
- **Church** – What ways are women and girls treated differently than men and boys in church? What limitations do they have only because they are female?
  - Example – Two thirds of Christians are women—what happens if they are not allowed and encouraged to use their gifts?
- **School** – What ways are girls treated differently than boys in school? What opportunities do they not have that boys might have?
  - Example – Some schools do not allow girls to take certain classes or pursue certain careers like becoming a doctor or a pilot or builder.
- **Community** – What ways are women and girls treated differently than men and boys in our community? What ways are women and girls mistreated in our community?
  - Example – In one war-torn African country almost half of all women have been raped, even though the country is considered mostly Christian. In another Asian country, every 8 minutes a girl goes missing and is sold into slavery.

Both men and women are very important. God wants us to treat both with honour and value. We want to see both men and women thrive.

#### **SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION (SG)**

Talk together about each area and fill in this chart. Consider the problems you see in your community with how women and girls are treated and think of 1-2 ideas for each area of what you can do to treat women and girls with dignity, respect, and value.

Area	Mistreatment & Inequalities in Our Community	What we Can Do (1-2 ideas for each area)
 Family	<i>Give an example specific to your community (e.g., special gifts are given when boys are born; boys get to eat first and are encouraged to go to school).</i>	<i>Celebrate when both boys and girls are born. Encourage equal treatment of boys and girls – eating, education, inheritance, etc.</i>
 Church		
 School		
 Community		

- What are two things you could do differently in your home to honour your wife? Your daughters?
- What are two things you could do differently in your community to honour women and girls?

Share with each other what you are committing to do. Pray for each other and ask God to help you to do these things.

#### REPORT BACK

**Facilitator Instructions:** Check the groups to make sure they can think of local examples of issues and some ways to treat women and girls well. Give the groups plenty of time to work on this chart. Once most groups are finished, ask for volunteers to share one idea for each area – family, church, school, and community. Make sure they can think of a few different ways to honour the women and girls. Encourage them to ask God for His ideas and wisdom.

We are all made in the image of God—men and women. God loves us so much that He sent His son to die for us so that both men and women could be His children. There are no high people and low people in God's Kingdom. He has created each of us according to how He wants us, and He has a special purpose for both men and women.

We can make a difference by modelling to others the way to treat women and girls like Jesus. This will honour God and will help others see that women are valuable. We can start with small things to help people see that women are valuable. We want both women and men to live the way God intends.

**PERSONAL REFLECTION or WITH A PARTNER**

God is honoured when we act on what we learn. What can you commit to doing with what we have learned?

- What are two things you will do in your home to honour your wife and daughters?
- What are two things you will do in your community to honour women and girls?

Share with each other what you are committing to do. Pray for each other and ask God to help you to do these things.



# Lesson 6: The Role of a Parent

## Main Ideas:

1. Children are a blessing, a valuable gift from God.
2. Our children belong to God. A parent's role is to help their children grow into adults who glorify God in all areas of their lives.

**Materials:** none

## Introduction (10 min)

### LARGE GROUP DISCUSSION

- What advice have you heard about parenting (good advice and bad advice)?
- How would you describe the role of a parent?

It is difficult to be a parent. There is no detailed instruction book to help us know what to do. But the bible tells us many things about the goal of parenting, and how to parent well. The next five lessons will look at these things.

## The Role of a Parent

### LARGE GROUP DISCUSSION

Read Psalm 139:13-16.

- Are children born by accident, or by God's design and in God's plan? (*God designs each child*)

Read Psalm 127:3-5.

- What do we learn about children from these verses? (*Children are a blessing from God*)

Read Psalm 24:1.

- Who do our children belong to? (*They belong to God*)

God specifically formed each child that is born. He loves them and has plans for each child. Our children are given to us as a blessing, but they belong to Him.

- If our children belong to God, and He cares about them, how should we treat them? (Can we use them for whatever we want? Can we treat them however we want?)
  - *We must treat them as valuable people, as blessings*

Read Ephesians 6:4.

- What should be our goal in raising our children? (*bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord*)

### KEY LEARNING

Children are a blessing, a valuable gift from God. Our children belong to God. A parent's role is to help their children grow into adults who glorify God in all areas of their lives.

- Who can remember the 4 ways that Jesus grew from Luke 2:52?
  - Wisdom (mentally)
  - Stature (physically)
  - Favour with God (spiritually)
  - Favour with man (socially)

## Helping Children Grow Mentally

### LARGE GROUP DISCUSSION

Read Proverbs 18:15

- What do wise and discerning people seek? (*knowledge*)

We want our children to be wise, and to understand how the world works. We want them to know what is right and true and good.

There are two main ways that we can help children grow mentally:

1. Teach young children at home.

#### Jessie's Journey

When Jessie was only 2 and 3 years old, he wanted to know all about the plants on their farm and in the surrounding area. Why did some of them grow so big, and some stay small? Why were some good to eat and some not? Why did some have thorns and some have flowers? His parents laughed at some of his questions, but tried to answer them. His mother helped Jessie make a collection of plants and showed him how to write their names. When Jessie grew up, he became a botanist (a plant scientist) and helped farmers in his country learn to do farming in better ways.

- How did Jessie's parents help him learn even before he went to school?
- What are some things children can learn while they are young?

It isn't hard to teach children at home. Try these things:

- Answer their questions as best you can when they are curious. If you don't know, just tell them 'I don't know.'
- Read out loud to them whenever possible. Show them how to write their name.
- Show them how to count and add and subtract numbers less than 10 (for example, show them with stones that  $7-2 = 5$ ).

Children learn best when they are very young. Taking time to answer questions, counting and reading with children helps their brains prepare to think well, and helps them do better in school later.

2. Send school-age children to school.

**Facilitator:** *If people already send their children (boys AND girls) to school, skip the story and questions and move to the small group discussion.*

Read this true story.

#### Sending Children to School

In one TCT area, most children dropped out of school because there was no school past 6th grade near their community. The church in one village drew a school on their community map, and prayed about what to do. They could not build a school, but they decided to help their community understand that education was important. People from the church, including the pastor, went to all the houses in their village and nearby villages. They encouraged people to send their children to school, even though it was so difficult. Parents had to send their children to the main city if they wanted to continue their education. This cost a lot of money. But many parents in the area decided to do this, even though they didn't feel like they had the money. God honoured the sacrifice of these families. Government leaders saw how many children were coming from that district to the school in the main city. They decided to build an intermediate school through 9th grade in that district. The school was built right where it was drawn on the map! Some students from the area attended this

school, went to university, and later became teachers at the school. Other students became agriculturalists, nurses, or doctors and have come back to help their community.

- What sacrifice did parents have to make so that their children could be educated?
- How did this affect their community?

Sometimes we need to make sacrifices to send our children to school, but this is an important part of being a parent. We do not know the plans that God has for our children, but we need to make sure they have the opportunity to explore their options. God may choose your child to bring great change to your area. Your sacrifices now may allow your child to even be able to go to university and help your family in the future.

#### **SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION (8 min)**

- How well are you doing at teaching your young children at home, and sending your children to school?
- What are some of the challenges that we face trying to do these things?
- How can we overcome these challenges?
- What are other ideas for how you can help children grow in wisdom?

#### **REPORT BACK**

## **Helping Children Grow Physically**

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#### **LARGE GROUP DISCUSSION**

- What physical needs do children have in order to grow?
  - *Nutritious food, clean water, shelter, clothing, exercise, sleep*

**Facilitator:** *If the church has studied the health unit, ask what they learned from it. If they have not, let them know that they will study about health in a coming module.*

- What common health practices can you teach children?
  - *Wash hands, use latrine, clean living area, use mosquito nets, don't drink alcohol, exercise*
- How important are these things to protecting the health of children?

## **Helping Children Grow Spiritually**

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#### **LARGE GROUP DISCUSSION**

In Deuteronomy chapter 5, Moses reminded God's people of how God gave them the 10 commandments, and all the laws of how to live in every area of life. Read Deuteronomy 6:4-7.

- Who are these verses talking to - just the priests and spiritual leaders, or to all of God's people? (*all*)
- According to these verses, who is supposed to teach children about God's laws? (*the child's parents - both fathers and mothers*)
- Should parents leave the spiritual growth of their children up to the church, or should parents be involved? (*parent should be involved*)
- When are we supposed to teach our children about God's plans for us? (*all the time! - at home, when out, when lying down - night, when getting up - day*)

Read 2 Timothy 1:5, 3:14-15

- Who taught Timothy about the Lord? (*His mother, Eunice, and his grandmother, Lois*)
- When did they start teaching him? (*when he was an infant*)

You can teach your child about God at any time. For example, while working in the garden, you could talk to them about how the earth belongs to God. You can explain how we have been given the responsibility to look after it, how we are supposed to work hard and cheerfully, and how God makes things grow and gives us everything we need.

- What are some other times you could teach your children about God? (*While working together, during family devotions, while going to market, etc.*)
- Do you pray with your children? When? What are things you can pray with them about?
- Do you have regular family devotions? What do you do? What has been meaningful?

This will take TIME. Fathers, as well as mothers, must spend time training their children. It is never too late to begin doing this. It makes a difference! Let's read a true story.

**Facilitator:** Choose one story to read.

#### **STORY 1: A Son Has A Change Of Heart**

A boy in Togo used to disobey his parents regularly. Whenever they asked him to do something, he refused. When they sent him to school, he would often stop along the way, spend the day doing whatever pleased him, and return home when school ended.

His father passed away, leaving the widowed mother to support the family on her own. She had to walk a long way to their field and work all day. Still, the son refused to help her. When she asked him to go to church with her, he would instead pass the time with his friends. One day, his mother shared with him what she had learned about Luke 2:52 - that we are to grow as Jesus did; 'in wisdom, in stature, and in favour with God and man'. The boy's attitude changed. He realised that to grow in wisdom, he needed to be serious about his education. He began to attend school faithfully. He also began to consider his relationship with God and willingly attended church with his mother.

#### **STORY 2: A Daughter Has A Change Of Heart**

A family went to a special Christmas service at church. After the service, the church offered sweets. The father told his children they could choose one sweet. He suspected that his 6-year-old daughter took a second sweet, however. While walking home, the father talked to his children about how important it was that he could trust them to obey. He told them that God wants us to always tell the truth, and be a trustworthy person. As they continued to walk, his daughter began to cry. She said, "You can't trust me! I ate two sweets! And I'm so sad!" The father comforted his daughter, and told her that God was happy she was telling the truth, and that as she had confessed her lie, the father would continue to trust her.

- How did the people in these stories try to help their children grow spiritually?
- What changes occurred as they applied these ideas?
- Do you think it would be possible to do similar things in your family? Why or why not?

## **Helping Children Grow Socially**

### **LARGE GROUP DISCUSSION**

- What are some examples of relationships that children have with other people?
  - Siblings
  - Friends (neighbours, church, school)
  - Adults (relatives, neighbours, teachers, community leaders)
  - Parents

- Why do you think healthy relationships are important in bringing glory to God, and in building His kingdom? *(Our relationships with others reflect our relationship with God and show how we value people. How we treat others affects how they think about our God.)*

The best way to teach children how to grow socially is to model good relationships. The family is the place where children learn to interact with others. And a child's most important relationship is with their parents. In our next lesson we will talk about key ways to model godly relationships with our children.

## Conclusion and Application

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- What did you learn today about the role of a parent?

*Children are a gift from God. Our role as parents is to raise our children to be godly adults who help build God's kingdom. We do this by helping them grow in all four areas.*

### PERSONAL REFLECTION

- Ask God if there is any area you need to focus on in helping your child grow (mental, physical, spiritual, social). Decide on what steps you can take to help your child grow. Ask God for his help in carrying these out.

If there is time:

- Pray together that God will give us wisdom in parenting. Share specific needs or challenges you have as a parent and pray for each other. If you are not a parent yourself, share about the needs that your own parents have.

# Lesson 7: Listening to Children

## Main Ideas:

1. We should listen to our children because God, our good Father, listens to us.
2. To listen well, we should give full attention, and ask lots of questions - NOT try to fix the problem or fix our child.

## Materials:

1. Visual Aid Script: A Father Listens Well. Make 2 copies. BEFORE CLASS, ask two volunteers to practise the role play several times. Let them know that the point of the role play is to show the father listening well.

## Introduction

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### LARGE GROUP DISCUSSION

- In your area, do parents normally listen to their children?
- How do children and parents (or grandparents) in your area usually interact with each other?

Our goal as parents is to help our children grow in all areas so that they become adults who obey God in all areas of life. The best way to teach children how to grow socially is to model the kind of relationships God wants us to have. The next two lessons look at how the Bible says we should communicate with our children.

Read James 1:19-20.

- What does this verse tell us to do? (*be quick to listen*)
- What does this verse tell us NOT to do? (*don't get angry or speak quickly*)
- Does this verse apply only when we are interacting with adults? (*no, it also applies when we are interacting with children*)

This verse summarises our key point for this lesson:

- We should listen to our children.

## We Should Listen To Our Children

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### LARGE GROUP DISCUSSION

It is easy to feel like children should listen to parents, and not the other way around.

Read Luke 18:15-16.

(This story happened in the middle of Jesus' ministry. He was teaching His disciples, preaching about God's kingdom, travelling, and healing people.)

- During this busy, tiring time, whom did Jesus allow to interrupt his work? (*people bringing children*)
- Did Jesus allow this interruption because the children deserved his attention, or was it just because He loved them? (*because he loved them*)
- Did Jesus treat children as unimportant, or as valuable? How do you know? (*valuable - he made time for them*)

Jesus allowed children to interrupt Him, even though He was busy and His work was important. We are always to follow Jesus' example.

Read Exodus 2:23-25.

- Was God listening because the people were sinless and worthy of His attention? How do you know? *(no, they sinned again and again)*
- Why did God listen to them? *(He remembered His promise to their ancestors. He was concerned about them; He recognized their suffering)*

Read Isaiah 65:24.

- When does God listen to us? *(all the time - even before we call on Him)*
- Does God listen because we are perfect people who deserve His attention? How do you know? *(no, we all sin, we don't deserve His attention)*
- Why does God listen to us? *(because we are His children - He loves us)*

Even though He deserves all honour and respect, God listens to us. God is a perfect, loving Father.

- How does it make you feel, knowing that God is always ready to listen to you?

Remember, our goal as parents is to help our children grow in all areas so that they become adults who obey God in all areas of life. We want our children to know that God cares about them, and that God wants us to care for others in the same way. We must listen to our children, showing them the same love that our Heavenly Father shows us. When we do this, we are showing our children what God is like, and how God wants us to treat others.

#### **SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION** (10 min)

In small groups, discuss the following questions.

- What makes it hard to listen to children?
- How do you think it would impact your relationship with your child if you took time to listen to them?
- Do you think this is something we should try to do more often? If so, how can we grow in this?

#### **REPORT BACK**

**Facilitator:** *If people express fear that children won't respect them or will take advantage of them if they listen, bring up that:*

- *Showing true love and value for our children will usually have a positive response.*
- *If it feels awkward or doesn't get the response we hope for, we still have to trust God, be consistent at doing what is right, and wait on Him to work in our children's hearts.*

#### **KEY LEARNING**

We should be quick to listen to our children, imitating how God, our good Father, listens to us.

## **How To Listen Well**

#### **LARGE GROUP DISCUSSION**

- Can you tell when someone is not really listening to you? How do you know?
- How does it make you feel?

Let's watch a role play.

**Visual Aid Script: A Father Listens Well**

***A Father is doing something he enjoys (example: watching TV or having a soda after work). Son comes up behind him and angrily kicks something.***

**Son (SHOUTING):** I'll never play with Micah again! I hate him!

**Father** (STOPS WHAT HE IS DOING, TURNS AROUND): I can see you're very angry.  
**Son**: He doesn't deserve to have any friends!  
**Father**: Oh? What happened?  
**Son**: We were playing football. At the very end when the score was even, I missed a goal.  
**Father**: Mmmm.  
**Son**: Afterwards, Micah said in front of everyone that it was my fault we didn't win. So, I yelled at him and marched off.  
**Father**: That must have been very embarrassing for you.  
**Son**: It was horrible. (PAUSES, THEN MORE CALMLY) But I wish I hadn't gotten angry with Micah. He's my best friend.  
**Father**: I can understand that. What do you think you should do?  
**Son**: I think I'll go back and see if Micah's still there. I guess he really wanted us to win.  
**Father**: Good idea.

- What would be the normal reaction of a parent who was interrupted in this way?
- What did the father do instead? (*He was patient. He listened.*)

Here are two things we can do to really listen well.

- 1) Give your full attention.
  - In the role play, how do you know that the father gave his full attention to his son? (*he put down what he was doing and turned around*)
- 2) Ask lots of questions instead of trying to fix the problem right away.
  - Did the father speak out right away, telling his son how to fix the problem? (*no*)
  - What did he do instead? (*he asked what the son thought, affirmed how his son felt*)

#### SMALL GROUP ACTIVITY (6-8 people) (20 min)

1. In small groups, think of a situation that might happen in your community when a child might be very upset.
2. Have half your group develop a short role-play showing how a parent would normally respond in your community. What would people say and do?
3. Have the other half of the group develop a short role-play using the same situation. In this role-play, show a parent listening to their child by giving full attention, and asking lots of questions.

#### REPORT BACK

**Facilitator Instructions:** Give the groups 10 minutes to prepare their role-plays and then ask if groups are willing to demonstrate their role-plays in front of the group. After each role-play using the listening skills, ask the rest of the group if the parent gave full attention and asked questions instead of trying to fix the problem.

#### KEY LEARNING

To listen well, we should give full attention, and ask lots of questions instead of trying to fix the problem.

## Conclusion and Application

- What did you learn today about listening to children?



**PERSONAL REFLECTION**

- Next time your child expresses frustration or another strong feeling, what can you say or do to show your child that you are listening to them? Talk to God about this.

# Lesson 8: The Power of Words

## Main Ideas:

1. Words have the power to hurt our children or help them grow. We should use words that encourage and build up our children's faith.
2. When we feel angry, we should wait until we have calmed down before speaking and acting.
3. If we use reckless, hurtful words, we should apologise. Apologies are healing.

## Materials:

1. Visual Aid: Cycle of Anger

## Introduction (5 min)

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### LARGE GROUP DISCUSSION

#### Review:

- What is our goal as parents? *(to help our children grow into adults who glorify God in all areas)*

The best way to teach children how to grow socially is to model with our children the kind of relationships God wants us to have. Last lesson we talked about how listening to our children shows them what God is like. It shows them how God wants us to relate to others. Today we are going to talk about the kind of words we should use when we talk to children.

- Is there a difference between how you talk to children, and how you were raised? If so, what is different?

## Reckless Words

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### LARGE GROUP DISCUSSION

Read Proverbs 12:18.

- What does it mean to be reckless? *(not careful)*
- What does this proverb mean? How have you seen this happen?

Let's see if you have heard these kinds of reckless words spoken in your area:

- 1) When children do something we do not like, we sometimes say something about the child instead of the behaviour ('You are a failure' or 'You are stupid').
  - Have you heard someone label their child this way?
- 2) Sometimes we compare a child with his brothers and sisters ('I wish you were more like your brother' or 'He's not as clever as his sister').
  - Have you heard someone make a comparison this way?
- 3) We sometimes tell children what will happen in the future ('You will never get a job' or 'You are going to be just like your lazy uncle').
  - Have you heard someone make a prediction like this?
- 4) Sometimes we talk negatively about our children to others when they can hear us ('My son failed his exam again. He does not try hard enough.' or 'This is my daughter. She is so naughty!').
  - Have you heard someone talk about their child to others in this way?

- 5) We speak out of anger or frustration, and then say things we do not mean ( 'I wish you had never been born!').
  - Have you heard someone speak to a child in anger?

Using hurtful words can happen even when we don't mean to hurt our child - just because we are not careful.

- Do you remember anything hurtful that was said to you as a child? It may be from your parents, siblings, a teacher, etc.
- What impact did it have on your life? If you are comfortable doing so, share with the group.  
(**Facilitator:** *If possible, be ready to share an example from your life of a difficult story.*)

**Facilitator Instructions:** Give plenty of time for these questions. We want people to see that they still remember some of the things that were said to them as a child. The words had an impact and still have an impact today. Pray briefly for those who remember negative things that were said to them - that they can forgive, and remember what God says about them.

## We Should Choose Healing, Encouraging Words

Parents' words can hurt or heal a child's spirit, thoughts, and relationships. Let's talk about the kinds of words we SHOULD use.

Read 1 Thessalonians 5:11

- According to this verse, what should we do for each other? (*encourage and build each other up*)
- Are we to only do this for adults, or does this verse apply to interactions with our children? (*includes everyone*)
- What kinds of words are encouraging? (*examples: You are very talented; I like the way you treat your sister with kindness*)
- What does it mean to build up someone's faith? (*help them believe that God is good; help them trust and obey God*)
- Do you have an experience of someone saying something that encouraged you and built up your faith? (**Facilitator:** *be ready to share a story to start the conversation. Let 1-2 other people share*)

### KEY LEARNING

If we are wise, we will use words that encourage our children and build up their faith.

### PERSONAL REFLECTION

- Think of something specific you can say to your child to encourage them or build up their faith.

## Angry, Harsh Words Harm Children

### LARGE GROUP DISCUSSION

Let's talk about one specific kind of hurtful words: those that we say when we are angry.

Read Ephesians 6:4 and Proverbs 15:1.

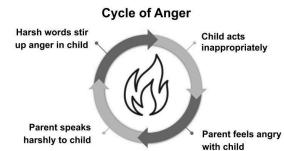
- What are parents specifically warned against in Ephesians 6:4? (*provoking anger*)
- According to Proverbs 15:1, what happens when we use gentle words? (*turns away wrath*)
- What does using harsh words do to children? (*stirs up anger*)

Read Ephesians 4:26-27.

- What do we have to be careful about when we are feeling angry? (*sinning*)
- How do you think acting or speaking in anger affects our relationship with a child?  
(*Speaking or acting in anger makes us act harshly, not thinking about the best thing for the child. It makes the child afraid or angry with us. It pushes us apart.*)

**Facilitator:** Show **Visual Aid: Cycle of Anger**.

It becomes a cycle of anger. If we use harsh words because we are angry, it stirs up anger in our children. (Read the labels on the visual aid.)



#### SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION (10 min)

- What things do your children do that make you feel angry?
- What actions can you take to help you NOT speak harsh words when you are angry?

#### REPORT BACK

**Facilitator:** write answers on the board or a large piece of paper. If the following things do not come up, ask if anyone has tried them.

- Don't speak or react right away. Wait until you have calmed down so that you can act in love.
- Take several deep breaths. Walk away if you need to.
- Ask God to give you gentle, healing words.

#### KEY LEARNING

When we feel angry with a child, we should wait until we have calmed down before speaking and acting.

#### PERSONAL REFLECTION

- Is there something your child does that causes you to get angry? Make a plan of how you can respond next time that behaviour occurs.

### Words Of Apology Are Healing

We know that reckless words can pierce like a sword. What if we DO use harsh or angry words with your child? What if we say something—even accidentally—that hurts them? Let's talk about one specific kind of healing word.

Read James 5:16a.

- What does God want us to do when we sin against someone? (*confess our sin to them - apologise*)
- Why are we supposed to do this? What is the result of apologising when we hurt someone? (*healing*)
- Do you have any experience of a relationship being healed when someone apologised? (*allow for one person to share*)

Apologies are difficult. It is especially hard to tell a child that you are sorry. In many cultures, this never happens. But we must choose God's ways even when they are different from our culture. Parents should apologise if they say hurtful words. Apologies help heal relationships. This is appropriate for even adult children.

#### Timo's Father Apologises

Timo's father was strong, handsome, funny, and well-liked. When Timo was young, though, his father often scolded him for not being brave enough, or strong enough, or working hard enough. Timo loved his father, but often felt like he wasn't good enough. He felt angry and discouraged. When he left school, Timo joined the

military, got married, and had children of his own. He struggled with anger towards his children also. One day, Timo's father told him, 'I just listened to a sermon today. I realised that I did not follow God's commands when I was raising you. I know that especially during your preteen years, I exasperated you. I'm sorry, and I ask your forgiveness'. By God's grace, Timo was able to forgive his father, and assure him of his love. Timo's relationship with his father is healed, and he continues to work on raising his own children in a way that pleases God.

- When Timo's father apologised, what did this show about the father's relationship with God?
- Why do you think that apologising is healing? How is it beneficial to the child?

**Facilitator:** *If the following things are not mentioned, bring them up.*

- *Shows value for the child and the relationship.*
- *Helps the children respect and trust the parent as they tell the truth and show humility*
- *Gives a model (shows children how to apologise).*

If you have used hurtful words, apologise as soon as possible.

- Ask God for help to be sincere and calm.
- Tell the child you are sorry for what you said.
- Don't defend yourself. Ask the child's forgiveness.

#### **SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION - (12 min)**

- Is this common practice in your area?
- If not, what do you think would happen if a parent or another adult apologised to a child or youth?
- What makes this difficult for parents (or other adults)? How can we overcome these difficulties?

#### **REPORT BACK**

#### **KEY LEARNING**

If we have used hurtful words, we should apologise as soon as possible. Apologies are healing. We need God's help in this!

#### **WITH A PARTNER (with spouse if possible) (5 min)**

Discuss what you are doing well and not doing well in how you talk to your children (or other children you interact with). Are there words you have used that may have hurt your children? Together, ask God for the humility and courage to apologise when you need to.

## **Conclusion and Application**

- What have you learned today about the words we should use with our children?
  - *Words have power. We can use our words to hurt or heal our children.*
  - *Choose healing, gentle words with your children.*
  - *When you feel angry, wait until you have calmed down before speaking and acting.*
  - *If you have used hurtful words, apologise as soon as possible. Apologies are healing.*

#### **PARTNER PRAYER**

Spend time praying with another person (not your spouse) about their relationship with their own children or other children they know..

# Lesson 9: Biblical Discipline

**Main Idea:** Biblical discipline is carefully training, teaching, and correcting children to help them grow in godliness. Physical punishment may not be the best way to discipline in every situation.

## Materials:

1. Visual Aid: Alternatives to physical punishment - 3 situations. Print and cut out each situation.

## Introduction (5 min only)

### LARGE GROUP DISCUSSION

- What are the typical ways that people discipline their children?
- What is the purpose of discipline?

Let's see what the Bible says about discipline.

## Biblical Discipline Is For Training

### LARGE GROUP DISCUSSION

Read Hebrews 12:5-6. The word for 'discipline' used here does not only mean punishment.

- It also means 'training' (like an athlete does).
  - Why do athletes train? (*to get stronger or faster or better at something*)

A disciplined football team goes through teaching, training, practising skills over and over again... Punishments are a part of their training—if they come late they have to run extra, or do extra push ups—but only a small part. And punishments are used to strengthen and grow the player. You want a strong, intelligent, confident, capable team...not afraid, weak, and beaten down.

- The word 'discipline' used in Hebrews 12 also means 'instruction' (like a teacher gives to a student).
  - Why do teachers instruct students? (*to help them learn something*)

Jesus taught, trained, and often corrected his followers. But His goal was to grow them into mature men and women of God, not to beat them into submission. We want the same for our children!

Discipline includes all we do to teach our children and train them in godliness. This is more than just trying to change their behaviour through punishment.

Read 1 Timothy 4:8.

- Why do we want our children to grow in godliness and not just change their behaviour? (*godliness results in willing behaviour change, pleasing to God, long-term*)

### KEY LEARNING

Discipline is training, teaching and correcting to help children grow in godliness. It is more than just trying to change a child's behaviour. Punishment for wrong behaviour is only a small part of discipline.

Let's read a story.

Dinah loved to draw. She would draw on paper, or in the dirt with a stick, or with the tip of a burnt stick. Dinah did not love to do her chores. Her mother had to remind Dinah each day to do her chores.

Often Dinah still forgot. Dinah's mother was frustrated.

- What does Dinah need to learn about living in a godly way? (*to obey, be responsible, work cheerfully*)
- Would it be OK for Dinah's mother to allow Dinah to keep ignoring her chores? Why or why not? (*Not OK - discipline is needed to teach Dinah godliness*)
- How will Dinah's life be different if she is trained to work hard and cheerfully?

## We Must Use Our Authority Carefully

### LARGE GROUP DISCUSSION

Read Proverbs 13:24.

- This verse says that a loving parent is 'careful to discipline'. Some translations use the word 'diligent' instead of 'careful'. What does it mean to be diligent or careful? (*think about it, be intentional, be consistent in doing it - don't forget or be lazy*)
- The word 'rod' in this verse is the same word that is used for a king's sceptre.
  - What does a king's sceptre represent? (*authority, sovereignty, power*)

Proverbs 13:24 does NOT command us to beat children. It instructs parents to use our authority (our rod) to CAREFULLY guide our children in the right way to live. This means we must be loving as we discipline our children, never acting in anger.

Read James 1:19-20.

- What is the result of acting in anger? Does it help anyone to become more godly?

Read Colossians 3:21. This verse is addressed to fathers, but is useful for everyone.

- What does it mean to embitter or exasperate someone? (*make them frustrated, angry*)
- What does it mean to become discouraged? (*giving up, not trying any more*)
- What sorts of behaviour and actions cause children to be bitter and discouraged? (*inconsistent punishment, punishment without explanation, hurtful words, beating in anger*) (**Facilitator:** make sure that beating in anger is brought up - it is not careful. It is dependent on the parent's mood, and very often too harsh.)
- What is our discipline supposed to do, instead of causing bitterness and frustration? (hint: remember Ephesians 6:4 and Proverbs 13:24) (*carefully guide and train them to grow in godliness*)

### Steps to Train with Careful Physical Punishment:

- 1) Wait until you feel calm. NEVER hit in anger.
  - What kinds of things can we do to control ourselves when we become angry? (*walk away, take a deep breath, count to ten, pray for help*)
- 2) Take the child into a separate place. Do not embarrass them by spanking in public.
- 3) Ask them to explain what they have done wrong and how they should have acted. Help them understand if they don't know.
- 4) Explain that you must spank them because you want them to remember the right way to behave.
  - Tell them how many times you will hit them. Make it a fitting punishment, not harsh.
  - Then spank them. (notice: the spanking is only a small part of the discipline)Affirm that you love them.

### KEY LEARNING

The Bible does not command parents to beat children, but to carefully use their authority to train and correct the child. Discipline must be consistent and loving. Physical punishment must be used
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especially carefully, and NEVER in anger.

## Alternatives to Physical Punishment

### LARGE GROUP DISCUSSION

Physical punishment is not always the most effective way to discipline a child. Other ways may be more effective at times. Remember, discipline is more than just correcting behaviour by punishing a child. Discipline is training, teaching and correcting to help children grow in godliness. Here are some options that can be helpful.

**Facilitator:** Explain what the child is doing in each situation. Then give the **Visual Aid: Alternatives to Physical Punishment** cut out situation to a volunteer to read the response of the parent.

#### Option 1 - Disapproval and Clear Expectations

**Situation 1 - A child is using a stick to poke the baby in the stomach.**

**Mother:** (frowns and speaks sternly) 'That is not how we care for the baby. A stick will hurt him. Put down the stick, and touch him gently.'

- How did the mother discipline the child?

Sometimes, just a stern look or clear statement of disapproval of their behaviour can be effective. Focus on the behaviour and do not use harsh or negative words about the child. Then, explain clearly what appropriate behaviour is. If the child obeys, affirm them.

#### Option 2 - Time Out

**Situation 2 - A child lies on the ground kicking and screaming when told he cannot have a sweet.**

**Father:** 'You must not throw a fit when we tell you, 'no'. You must learn to obey without complaining. Go sit in the corner for 3 minutes and talk to God about this. Think about what you will do in the future'.

- How did the parent discipline the child?

You can put the child in a chair, room or corner alone where he can consider what he did and why it was wrong. This allows the child to calm down and gain self-control. Afterwards, take a few minutes to talk with the child to make sure he understands what he did, why it was wrong, and other choices he could make in the future.

- Can you think of another situation where a 'time out' might be useful?

#### Option 3 - Natural Consequences

**Situation 3 - A child jumps around in a shop and accidentally breaks something.**

**Mother:** (calmly) 'Pick the pieces up and we will go to the shopkeeper. You must apologise, and I'll pay for it. Then, you will do some extra chores for me at home.'

- How did the parent discipline the child?



You can allow a child to suffer the natural consequences of their behaviour. For example, if a mess is made, the child is asked to fix or clean up the mess. If the child hurts someone (even if it is not on purpose), they must apologise and then try to help the person. This teaches the child to solve problems that they are responsible for creating.

#### Option 4 - Ask God for Ideas

##### A Mother Disciplines In A New Way

One mother was overworked and frustrated. While she worked in the garden all day, her 13-year old son would sleep in late and then spend all day roaming around with his friends. No punishment caused him to change. He still refused to help her.

After learning that parents should discipline children carefully, the mother prayed about this and had an idea. She went to the market and bought a very delicious fish, which she cooked for dinner. When her son came home hungry and smelled the delicious fish, she sat him down and said, 'Today you are not going to eat this fish. The Bible says, 'the one who is unwilling to work shall not eat.' You have refused to help me with garden work. Yet it is from garden work that we get food to eat. Tonight you are only going to have plain food'.

She gave the boy only plain food to eat and sent him to bed. In the morning, she gave him some of the fish to eat, reminding him again that he was expected to help in the garden. That day he went out and weeded the cassava diligently. The mother saw that careful discipline had a good result.

- How did the mother discipline her son?
- Why was this effective? *(It was careful, and she was trying to help her son learn to be godly, not just to work in the garden. She explained clearly what was wrong and what was right. Also, God gave her the idea, and He worked in her son's heart.)*

God knows our children better than we do, and loves them more than we do. We should keep praying for them, and asking the Holy Spirit to guide our words and actions as we discipline our children.

Let's read another story.

Seth had six older brothers and sisters. One day his sisters were teasing him, and he had enough. He was so angry that he threw a big water jug at them. The jug hit two of his sisters and they began to cry. His aunt saw what he had done and called for his father. His father came quickly and began to yell at Seth. Everyone was scared, even the neighbours that watched. He hit Seth 4 or 5 times with a belt and told him that he better never do that again or he would not be able to walk the next day. Seth was afraid and angry.

- Do things like this happen in your community? How frequently?
- Was this discipline carefully done with the goal of training the children? How do you know?  
*Facilitator: Give plenty of time. If the following things aren't mentioned, bring them up by asking about them.*
  - very harsh, done out of anger
  - didn't listen or explain what Seth's behaviour should be
  - didn't discipline sisters
  - only focus was punishment, not dealing with the children's hearts

**SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION** (8-10 min)

- What could Seth's father do to discipline Seth and his sisters with the goal of training them in godliness?
- How can listening and careful use of words help with this goal?

**REPORT BACK****KEY LEARNING**

Physical punishment may not be the best way to discipline in every situation.
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**Conclusion and Application**

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- What did you learn today about Biblical Discipline?
- Do you have any questions about Biblical Discipline?

**PERSONAL REFLECTION**

**Facilitator:** *If you run out of time, be sure to do this activity at the beginning of lesson 10 (after the review).*

- Pray and ask God if there is anything you should change in how you discipline your own children.
- Think about a behaviour you know of that a child needs to change. Ask God to help you come up with a plan of discipline, and write down some ideas.

# Lesson 10: Consistent Discipline

**Main Idea:** Discipline must be consistent. This means that we are predictable in our expectations of a child, and in our actions. This will help a child to understand what is right and wrong, and learn to choose what is right.

**Materials:** none

## Introduction

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Review:

- What is the goal of parenting? *(to help children grow to glorify God in all areas of their lives)*
  - Why is it important to listen to our children? *(it reflects how God listens to us, shows value for them)*
  - What kinds of words should we use when we speak to children? *(encouraging words that heal and build up their faith)*
  - What kinds of words should we NOT use? *(hurtful words, like words spoken in anger)*
  - What is the purpose of discipline? *(to train, teach, correct children to help them grow in godliness)*
  - What are some alternatives to physical punishment that we talked about? *(disapproval and clear expectations, time-out, natural consequences, ask God for other ideas)*
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- What kind of person would you prefer to be friends with? Why?
    1. Someone who does what they say they will, and whom you trust to do what it right
    2. Someone who is unpredictable, so that you don't know how they will react to things
  - How do you think it affects children when parents are unpredictable?

In this lesson we are going to talk about being consistent in our discipline.

## Biblical Discipline is Consistent

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### LARGE GROUP DISCUSSION

Read Numbers 23:19 and Hebrews 13:8

- How do these verses describe God?
- Does God treat us unpredictably, sometimes punishing us and sometimes forgiving us or ignoring us when we do wrong?
- Why is it important that God does not change? How would our lives be different if He was NOT consistent with us?

God is unchanging. He is always the same. We know that He will always do what He says He will do. When someone is consistent, we know how they will react to things. We can trust them and trust what they say. This is very important when we discipline our children.

Remember the story of Seth from the last lesson? Let me read it again and tell you what happened the next day.

Seth had six older brothers and sisters. One day his sisters were teasing him, and he had enough. He was so angry that he threw a big water jug at them. The jug hit two of his sisters and they began to cry. His aunt saw what he had done and called for his father. His father came quickly and began to yell at Seth. Everyone was scared, even the neighbours that watched. He hit Seth 4 or 5 times with a belt and told him that he better never do that again or he would not be able to walk the next day. Seth was afraid and angry.

The next day one of Seth's sisters started to tease him. Everyone laughed. Seth slapped his sister. This time his father just laughed with everyone.

- In what ways was Seth's father inconsistent? *(He laughed one time when Seth hurt his sister, but punished him another time. Also, did not discipline sisters, only Seth)*
- How do you think this would affect Seth?
- How do you think it would affect Seth's sisters?

If we allow children to do something one time and then punish them the next time for the same behaviour, the child will be confused. They may not understand when their behaviour is right or wrong. They may be afraid of displeasing their parents accidentally. They will not trust their parent to do what is right.

#### KEY LEARNING

Biblical discipline is consistent. If we are consistent in our discipline, our children will learn what is right and wrong. They will trust us to do what is right, and learn that they must obey.

- What makes this difficult? How can we learn to be more consistent in our care of children?

## Caregivers Must Work Together

### LARGE GROUP DISCUSSION

Let's talk about one more common way that discipline can be inconsistent.

6-year-old Judah always wanted to eat sweets. One day he asked his mother to buy him a sweet from the store in the village. His mother told him that he needed to eat healthy food, and not have sweets for a few days. Judah waited until his mother was visiting a friend, and then asked his father and grandmother to buy him a sweet. His father sent Judah and his grandmother to the store with enough money to buy two sweets!

- What behaviour is inconsistent in this story?
- If parents (or grandparents) have different expectations of a child from each other, how will this affect the child? *(they won't understand why expectations are important; they will try to manipulate people to get what they want instead of learning to obey)*

Read 2 Timothy 1:5, 3:14-15 again.

- Who taught Timothy about the Lord? (His mother, Eunice, and his grandmother, Lois)

Timothy was taught by his mother AND his grandmother. To help our children grow into adults who glorify God in all areas of their lives, there must be consistent expectations and unity from all those who are caretakers for the child.

### SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

- In your area, who cares for children?
- How can you make sure that all caretakers are working together to raise the child well?

### REPORT BACK

**Facilitator:** If not mentioned, bring up these possible answers as well:

- Pray for children together.

- *Parents must be consistent in discipline - not one person saying or doing one thing and the other person saying or doing another thing.*
- *Parents can ask grandparents for help and prayer and advice.*
- *Grandparents who care for children should also train, teach, and correct the child.*

#### KEY LEARNING

Just as God is consistent with us, we must be consistent in our discipline. All caretakers of the child should work together in this. This will help our children understand what is right and wrong, and help them choose what is right.

## Processing The Lessons

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#### SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION (20-30 min)

- What are the key ideas you have learned about marriage and parenting in the past few days?
- Which of these ideas would you like to implement?
- What would be difficult to implement? How can you overcome these barriers?

#### REPORT BACK

#### PERSONAL REFLECTION

- Take time to pray and ask God to show you a few things you can practise this month.