

TRUTH
CENTERED
TRANSFORMATION

MODULE



MARRIAGE & FAMILY SERMON MATERIALS

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Lesson 1a: The Role of the Husband

Main Idea: Men have two roles in marriage - to be the leader of the family and to love their wives. Both roles are important.

Introduction

Leah's Story

Leah was cleaning vegetables for dinner. Her baby was asleep, and her mother-in-law lay on a mat resting. Leah had only been married two years. Already her life was very different than she expected. She felt old and tired. She missed her friends. She wished she could visit her mother and father. Instead she had to care for the baby and keep house for her husband's family.

When she and Timeus were first married, he sometimes came home from work early. They would go for a walk or take a drive on the motorbike. Now he stayed out late with his friends. He came home smelling like alcohol and cigarettes. He 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 thought he would be a good husband and a good father. Timeus was not cruel. He did not hit Leah. She knew he didn't go out with other women. But on Sunday afternoons when he was home, he wanted to be alone. 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 wished she had never gotten married.

Timeus' Story

That same evening Timeus sat drinking coffee with his friends. He thought of Leah and shivered. He knew she would be angry with him when he got home. She was never happy. She complained about Timeus' mother and about the work she had to do. Timeus knew his mother was difficult to please, but he wished Leah could be more patient. His mother had worked hard all her life. She deserved to rest now that she was older. Leah should understand that.

Timeus had started finding excuses to be away from home. He did not want to listen to the arguments between Leah and his mother. He was tired of Leah's complaints. She always seemed so angry. She did not seem to understand how hard he worked all day. He needed quiet and rest in the evening.

He even avoided going to church with Leah. When they went to Sunday morning services, Leah dressed up the baby and ironed Timeus' best shirt. She wanted everyone to believe they were prosperous and happy. The truth was that they struggled to make enough money. They were never really happy at home. Timeus wondered if anyone was really happy, or if they all pretended. He felt so discouraged that he did not 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.

Both people in this marriage are unhappy. This happens in many families in our community. But marriage doesn't have to be like this. For a marriage to succeed, a husband and wife must relate to each other the way Christ intended. In this lesson we will look at a husband's role. In the next lesson we will look at a wife's role.

Key Ideas

Husbands have two roles in marriage

Ephesians 5:23, 25, 28-29 - For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Saviour... Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her... In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no one ever hated their own body, but they feed and care for their body, just as Christ does the church.

- God has given husbands two primary roles in marriage
 - 1) TO LEAD: Husbands are to be the head of the wife and leader of the family.
 - 2) TO LOVE: Husbands must love their wives as they love themselves, just as Christ does for the Church.

Husbands Are To LEAD

- The husband is to lead the family in the same way Christ leads the Church. Jesus shows us how the husband should act as leader.
 - Christ is our example - He shows us how to live. He always does what is right. The husband leads by setting a good example in all things.
 - Jesus laid down His life and His rights as God to be our Saviour. The husband must make sacrifices to take care of, protect, and provide for his wife and children. He should not just do what is best for himself.
 - Jesus never forces the Church to submit. When making decisions, a husband should discuss them with his wife. He should not force his wife to submit but love her unconditionally.

Husbands Are To LOVE

- The husband is to love his wife in the same way he cares for himself and the way that Christ loves His Church. Let's talk about Christ's love for the Church.

1 Corinthians 13:4-8a - Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonour others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails.

Philippians 2:3-8 - *Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others. In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!*

- This is how Christ loves the Church:
 - He keeps no record of wrongs - a husband must forgive his wife when they have a disagreement.
 - Christ looks to the interests of others - a husband must listen to his wife's ideas when making decisions, and consider his wife's needs before his own.
 - Christ takes the nature of a servant - a husband can help look after the baby, collect water for his wife, or look after the children so his wife has time to visit others.
 - Christ does not delight in evil, but rejoices with the truth - a husband must be a good example – bring the family to church every week, pray for his wife, be faithful to his wife.
- Jesus gave up His rights as God. He modelled the attitude of a servant. He washed His disciples' feet and gave up His life as a sacrifice for our salvation. Jesus was caring and kind.
- If a husband treated his wife the way the Bible teaches, the wife would feel loved, protected, valued and cared for. The marriage would become stronger.

Both Roles Are Important

The two roles of a husband are to LEAD and to LOVE.

- A husband who leads but doesn't love makes decisions for the family but does not consider his wife's needs and protect her.
 - In Genesis 12:11-16, Abraham acted as leader by taking his family to Egypt to avoid a famine. But he cared about his own safety more than his wife's. He told Pharaoh that his wife was his sister. God had to intervene and save Sarah from being taken as Pharaoh's wife.
- A husband who loves but doesn't lead will try to make his wife feel happy, but will not make decisions that ensure the family is following God.
 - In Genesis 16:1-4, Abraham did what Sarah asked, even though it was wrong. She wanted him to sleep with her maid. Abraham did not remind her that sex is only for married couples. Later, Sarah became jealous and God had to intervene to protect the maid and her child.

If a man is to be a good husband, he must both be the leader AND love his wife the way Jesus loves the Church. One without the other will harm a marriage.

Conclusion and Application

Let's go back to the story of Timeus and Leah.

- Timeus could show love to his wife by coming home from work to spend time with her. He could try to help Leah, even when he is tired. He could try to understand her needs.
- As leader of the family, Timeus could take his family to church. He could remind Leah to be patient with his mother and to work hard. He could also remind his mother to help Leah when she can.
- Men, how can you show love to your wife? How can you act as head of the family? Ask God what steps He would have you take.
- Women, pray for the men in your family and in your church. Ask God to help them understand the importance of each role. Ask Him to give them a desire to live as God wants them to.

Lesson 1b: The Role of the Wife

Main Idea: Women have two roles in marriage - to respect and submit to their husbands and to be a godly helper.

Review of Lesson 1

- Men have two roles in marriage - to be the leader of the family and to love their wives as Christ loves the Church. Both roles are important.

Introduction

Pastor: Describe the typical role of a wife in your area. What do they usually do? What are the expectations? Let's look at what the Bible says about the role of a wife.

Key Ideas

Wives Are To Be Helpers

Genesis 2:18, 20-22 - *The Lord God said, 'It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him'... The man gave names to all the livestock, the birds in the sky and all the wild animals. But for Adam no suitable helper was found. So the Lord God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and then closed up the place with flesh. The Lord God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man.*

- God creates the woman as a helper to Adam.
- We might think a helper is someone with lower status who does work for the leader, maybe a slave or servant. But this isn't true in this verse.

Let's look at two more verses in the Bible that use this same word 'helper'.

Deuteronomy 33:29 - *Blessed are you, Israel! Who is like you, a people saved by the Lord? He is your shield and helper and your glorious sword. Your enemies will cower before you, and you will tread on their heights.*

Psalms 118:6-7 - *The Lord is with me; I will not be afraid. What can mere mortals do to me? The Lord is with me; he is my helper. I look in triumph on my enemies.*

- When God made the woman to be a helper, He used the same word that He uses to describe Himself. This word is used 16 times in the Bible to talk about God. He is not lower status. He is our strength, our rescuer, our protector - our helper!
- The definition of 'helper' in the original language (Hebrew) means 'a strong person that comes to support a person in need'.

A wife is NOT to be a servant or slave. Instead, a wife is meant to provide valuable strength.

- A wife can be a helper by:
 - Cheerfully preparing meals and keeping a clean house
 - Encouraging her husband and appreciating his work

- Making an effort to not complain but creating a happy home
- Sharing her ideas and thoughts with her husband

Wives Are To Respect Their Husbands And Submit To Them

Read Ephesians 5:22,24, 33 - *Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord... Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything ... However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.*

- A wife should submit to her husband as to the Lord.
- A wife should treat her husband with respect.
- To show godly submission and respect to her husband, a wife could:
 - Pray for her husband and ask him to pray for her
 - Trust that he is working hard and trying to do what is right
 - Trust his decisions and submit to them
 - Cheerfully do what her husband asks
 - Speak well of her husband to other people
- If a wife treated her husband this way, the husband would feel respected and valued. He would want to care for his wife. The marriage would become stronger.

We are commanded to show love and respect

Ephesians 5:33 (again) - *However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.*

- We are given two simple commands, one for the husband and one for the wife.
- These commands are different because God knows exactly what we need. Men like to be loved, but they want respect more than love. Women want to be respected, but even more, they want to be loved.
- What often happens is that a woman does not feel loved, so she stops showing respect. Then, when a man does not feel respected, he does not show love. It can start with either the husband or the wife. Once started it just keeps getting worse—a cycle of disrespect and lack of love.

Story Illustration

It had been a hard week in the fields. As Matthew drove up the road, he hoped that Mary would be just as excited to see him as he was to see her.

Mary was tired after caring for the children alone. They were hungry and not behaving. It was so hard to take young children anywhere, and she did not have anything to feed them. She had called Matthew earlier that day to remind him to bring home some rice. She was happy he would be back soon.

‘I’m home’, called Matthew.

‘Finally!’ said Mary. ‘Where’s the rice?’

'Oh', replied Matthew, 'I forgot. I was doing other things today'.
'How could you forget?' Mary felt panic. '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 for coffee with them'.
'Fine, I'll get some!' Matthew shouted. He went out, slamming the door.
Their happiness about seeing each other was gone, replaced by anger and hurt.

- This argument is NOT about rice.
 - Mary feels unloved because Matthew forgot the one thing she asked for.
 - Matthew feels disrespected because Mary did not appreciate his work. Instead she nagged at him.
- This story could have been different.
 - Mary could have said, 'You work hard to provide for the family. I appreciate you and I'm so glad you are home. However, we do need some rice for dinner. Could you do one more thing and get some?'
 - Matthew could have said, 'I was so busy thinking about how happy I would be to see you that I forgot you asked me to get rice. Let me go and get some now. It will just take a minute'.
- When there is conflict, someone must stop the cycle and either show love or respect. We are commanded to do this, no matter what the other person does.

Conclusion and Application

Husbands are to be leaders and to love their wives. Wives are to be helpers and show respect to their husbands.

- Husbands: Tell your wife you are thankful for her and for what she does to care for your family. Ask what you can do to make her life less difficult. She wants to know you love her.
- Wives: Tell your husband you are thankful for him and that you appreciate his hard work. Ask him what you can do to make his life less difficult. 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 what you can do to make their lives less difficult.
- Each day, we should all try to do at least one thing to show your husband or wife (or parents) that you love her or respect him.

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: Everyone is Different

Main Idea: Even spouses and close family members can be very different from each other. There are healthy, biblical ways to address these differences and resolve conflicts.

Review of Lesson 1 a&b

- Men have two roles in marriage - LEAD and LOVE. They must be the leader of the family and love their wives like Jesus loves the Church.
- Women have two roles in marriage - RESPECT and HELP. They must help their husbands and respect and submit to them.

Introduction

Some conflict is always going to happen, even in healthy relationships. For example, couples might disagree about how to spend their money or how to raise their children. They might even disagree about what to do when they disagree!

Key Ideas

God has made each person unique

1 Corinthians 15:41 - *The sun has one kind of splendour, the moon another and the stars another; and star differs from star in splendour.*

1 Corinthians 12:4-5 - *There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord.*

- We are each as God made us. God did not make us all the same. He made us unique. We have different talents, skills, and strengths.
- This does NOT make one person better than the other. It's a reflection of the way that God made us different from each other.

Activity - We are different from each other

- Let's explore some ways that we are different from each other. For example, some people prefer to relax by going out, and some prefer to relax at home. Those of you who are married, try to guess what your spouse prefers as we do this exercise.
- If you prefer to relax by going out, stand up. (*Wait for people to stand. Thank them and have them sit.*) If you prefer to relax at home, stand up. (*Wait for people to stand. Thank them and have them sit.*)
- Continue the same activity with the following categories:
 - Spending vs. saving money
 - Spending time with lots of people vs. being alone
 - Enthusiastic about sports vs. uninterested in sports
 - Dressing formally vs. casually
 - Keeping your things very tidy vs. messy
- Were there any areas where everyone preferred the same thing?

- Were you surprised by anything?
- Those who are married, did you always have the same preference as your spouse?
- In which areas are you the most different?

When we recognise differences, we can make a plan

- Being different doesn't mean that one person is right and one is wrong. It just means that God made us all differently.
- Areas where we are different can easily cause disagreements in marriage and other relationships.
- Think of 1 or 2 areas where you are very different. Discuss these areas with your spouse later. Make a plan to deal with these areas.

Example – 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 one or two nights a week your spouse will go out while you stay home.

The Bible gives us principles for resolving conflict

- When differences cause conflict, it can begin to get in the way of a healthy relationship. But the Bible helps us know how to deal with conflict in a godly way.
- These principles are not only for people who are married to use with their spouses. We can use them in all our relationships when we have a disagreement or a conflict.

1) Resolve disagreements quickly.

Ephesians 4:26 – *In your anger do not sin: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry* (see also Matthew 5:23-24)

2) Discuss issues in private, not in front of others (especially children).

Matthew 18:15 - *If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over.*

3) Discuss issues when you are calm. If you are angry, postpone the discussion.

Proverbs 15:1 - *A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.*

4) Be ready to recognise and admit your own faults BEFORE you point out the faults of others. Be ready to apologise and ask for forgiveness.

Matthew 7:3-5 - *Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye', when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye*

5) Don't just think about what you want. Think of the other person as more important than you.

Philippians 2:3-4 - *Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.*

- 6) Be kind and compassionate as you discuss the conflict. Be ready to forgive. Ephesians 4:32 - *Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.* (see also Colossians 4:6)

Conclusion and Application

- God has made each of us different from each other. This is good! Because we are different, we need to learn how to deal with disagreements in a godly way.
 - What are areas where you are very different from your spouse? When can you make plans for how you will work together in that area, so that your differences don't cause conflict?
 - Are there any conflicts you need to talk about with someone? With a spouse or other family member?
 - Which principle of resolving conflict are you likely to forget when you are discussing this thing? Which principle do you need to work on?
 - How can you remember this principle as you make a plan for areas where you are different, or next time you have a disagreement? Maybe you want to memorise one of the verses we read. Maybe you need to pray with someone about this.

Pastor: *Pray 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 3a: Dealing with Hurts - Steps 1 and 2

Main Idea: Forgiveness is a process we must go through continuously to clean up the hurts in our relationships.

Materials: Draw a picture of a family on a piece of paper.

(After ripping it up, you should keep the pieces for the next lesson)

Review of Lessons 1a, 1b, and 2

- Men have two roles in marriage - Lead and Love.
- Women have two roles in marriage - Respect and Help.
- Each person is unique, and this causes natural disagreements. The Bible gives us principles for resolving conflict in a healthy way.

Introduction

Pastor: Show the picture you drew of a family. As you speak, rip the picture into four pieces.

Even in the most loving families there are times when people hurt one another. Sometimes the



hurt is intentional. Sometimes it is unintentional. This hurt can destroy relationships. It can destroy marriages. It makes people less close. They no longer support or trust one another.

We have all hurt others, and we have all been hurt. Today we will learn how to reconcile our relationships.

Key Ideas

STEP ONE: Identify the hurt we've caused and the hurt we feel

Matthew 5:23-24 - *If you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift.*

- Remembering that someone 'has something against you' means that you realise you have hurt them.
- If we have hurt someone, we should try to reconcile it right away, even before we bring offerings to God. Then there is less time for hurt to grow into a big problem.
- We are going to ask God to show us any ways that we have hurt people. If you are married, think about your spouse. If not, think about a close friend or family member instead. I will give you time to pray and think as I slowly read these questions.

Pastor: *Slowly read these questions, giving 20 - 30 seconds in between each one.*

- 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 said anything that has been hurtful?
 - Have you failed to show love and encouragement?
- Sometimes people do not mean to hurt us, but we still get hurt. They may not realise what they have done. We need to tell people when we have been hurt.
Matthew 18:15 - *If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over.*
 - If you do not tell them, that hurt can make a tear in your relationship. The person will never know what is wrong and therefore cannot repair the tear.
 - Are there ways that you have been hurt by your spouse, or by someone else? (It may or may not be something that the person realises is hurting you.)
 - We have all been hurt, and we have all hurt others. Step 2 in healing broken relationships is to be ready to apologise.

STEP TWO: Apologise when you hurt others

Jesus told a story about a son who took his inheritance from his father and wasted all the money. He became desperate and finally realised how wrong he had been.

Luke 15:17-22 - *When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants.' So he got up and went to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him. The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son'. But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet'.*

- The son realised that he had hurt his father. He probably felt shame and maybe fear about going home. (**Pastor:** talk about this more - what would the son be worried about? How would he feel?)
- To restore his relationship, he had to conquer his pride and be humble enough to apologise. And his father forgave him!
- Steps for Apologising
 - Confess to God – When we hurt people, we also disobey God. We need to ask God for forgiveness. This also helps give us a humble heart so we can confess and apologise to the other person.
 - Confess to the other person without giving excuses – Often when we confess, we want to explain why we did what we did. This can make it hard for the other person to forgive us.

- Which of these two confessions would you be more likely to forgive?

Blaming: I criticised you in front of your friends yesterday, but it's because you made us late.

Proper: I criticised you in front of your friends yesterday; it was unkind of me.

Apologise – Make sure that you are clear about what you are sorry for. Express your sorrow sincerely. Say something like, 'I am very sorry for what I did' or 'I feel really bad about the way that I treated you.'

Ask for forgiveness – The person may not be ready to forgive immediately. You may need to be patient. Pray that God would help the person to forgive you. Do not force them to say they forgive you against their will.

Change your behaviour – Apologising doesn't mean anything if we do not plan to change. Part of restoring a relationship is trying hard not to do the same thing again.

Accept the consequences – Apologising does not automatically make everything perfect. Some hurts destroy trust in a relationship. This is a consequence of our actions. Be patient and loving. It will take time for the hurt you caused to go away.

- The son in the story Jesus told did these things (v.17-20). He confessed that he sinned against God and his father. He did not defend himself or make excuses. He was ready to accept the consequences of his sin by being treated as a servant instead of a son.

Conclusion and Application

- Everyone has been hurt, and we have all hurt others. In order to heal relationships damaged by hurt, we must be willing to apologise.
- Ask God to show you if there is anything you need to apologise for. This can be in your marriage or in another relationship with parents, siblings, relatives, or friends.
- Let me walk you through a time of preparing to apologise. (**Pastor:** read through these directions slowly, giving people time to pray and think.)
 - Decide when you will talk with the person you have hurt. Pick a good time for both people to talk. Find a time that will not be interrupted and both people are not too tired.
 - Pray right now. Ask God for forgiveness. Ask Him to give you a humble heart and the right words to say. Pray that God will prepare the person you hurt to hear you and be willing to forgive you.
 - Think about what you will say to apologise, using the steps we talked about.
 - Commit to the Lord to do this. Is there anyone that can pray for you and hold you accountable to do this?

Lesson 3b: Dealing with Hurts - Steps 3 and 4

Main Idea: Forgiveness is a process we must go through over and over. This will help heal the hurts in our relationships.

Materials: ripped picture of family, tape

Review of Lesson 2

- Each person is different. The Bible gives us principles for resolving conflict.

Introduction

Pastor: Show the 4 ripped pieces of the picture of the family.

Even in the best relationships, people sometimes hurt each other. This can ruin a relationship unless it is dealt with. The first two steps to dealing with hurt are:

STEP ONE: Identify the hurt that has happened.

STEP TWO: Apologise for the hurt that you have caused.

Often in a conflict, both people will need to apologise!

In this lesson, we will look at the next two steps of healing.

Pastor: Ask someone to come up and help you tape the picture back together.

The 'tape' in relationships, especially in marriage, is forgiveness.

Key Ideas

STEP THREE: Forgive people who hurt you

Colossians 3:13 – *Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.*

- We are to forgive each other the way the Lord has forgiven us.

Matthew 18:21-22 – *Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, 'Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?' Jesus answered, 'I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times'.*

- Jesus told Peter to forgive 77 times (every time).
- Jesus forgives us every time we sin.

Luke 23:34 – *Jesus said, 'Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing'.*

- Jesus even forgave those who were crucifying Him.
- Refusing to forgive has terrible consequences:
 - broken trust and built up bitterness
 - tension in the whole family so that even children feel unsafe and afraid
 - unhappy marriages and possibly temptation to unfaithfulness

- Forgiveness is essential to ensure that a marriage grows strong. But first we need to understand what forgiveness is and is not.

What Forgiveness is NOT:

A feeling. We do not ask, 'Do I feel like forgiving?' Instead, we decide to forgive. We let go of our self-pity and desire for revenge. We trust God for justice and healing.

Demanding a person change before we forgive them. We cannot force someone to change. We forgive because Christ has forgiven us, not because they earn forgiveness by changing.

Accepting injustice. When we forgive someone, we do not have to believe that what they did was right. We can recognise it was wrong, but forgive them anyway.

Forgiving someone does not mean that we let them keep hurting us. We should not allow hurtful or abusive behaviour. If this is happening, ask someone for help.

Forgetting. We cannot always immediately forget the pain we feel. We have to keep forgiving the person as often as we start to feel angry and hurt again. This may need to happen over and over again.

Pretending that it does not matter. When we forgive someone, we are not saying that their action did not impact us. We are saying that, despite the way they have wounded us, we will not take revenge.

What Forgiveness IS:

A choice we make. It is a response to God's forgiveness of us and is in obedience to His command.

Facing the wrong that was done. We recognise that someone did something wrong towards us. 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. We forgive even before someone changes. We trust God for justice and healing.

Releasing him/her into God's hands. We give up our right for revenge. We give up our right to demand change. Instead, we allow God to discipline or change the person.

Accepting Jesus' death as payment for all sins. After we have forgiven the person, we do not keep reminding the person of what they have done. We do not use it to get them to do things for us.

- Summary: The Bible reminds us that we forgive out of gratitude for what God has done for us. We do not forgive because the person 'deserves' forgiveness. When we forgive, we do not say that what they did was okay. We say that we are willing to let God be the judge. He will decide how He wants to respond to their actions.

Application - Go through the process of forgiveness

- Think about the hurt that you have experienced. This may be from your spouse or from someone else. We are going to pray through a process of forgiveness.
- If the hurt you experienced was small, it might be easy to move through this process. If the hurt was larger, this will take more time. You should just do what you can and ask God for help with the rest.
- If you cannot think of any hurt, pray quietly for those who are going through the process.

Pastor: *Read each step aloud as participants close their eyes. Pause for a while after each step is read so participants have time to reflect.*

1. Acknowledge that what was done to you was unjust and wrong.
2. Admit any anger and desire to hurt the person.
3. Ask God to help you forgive the 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 consequences of the injustice in your life.

When you have finished reading all 8 steps, pray for the group. Ask God to take away the pain that has come from the injustices that they have just forgiven.

- Continue to do this process regularly. If one or more of the steps were very difficult, ask God for help. Also find a trusted friend who can pray with you about this.
- Help your marriage stay strong by regularly going through the process every time you hurt one another. If we do not, then hurt builds up and can make a mess of our relationships!
- I know it is difficult. We need to rely on God to help us in this process. And we need to comfort and pray for one another.

STEP FOUR: Start Again Together

- When you have forgiven each other, do not keep reminding the person of the wrong they did. Instead, put it behind you and move forward together.

Conclusion

(Pastor: Hold up the taped together picture.)

- We have talked about four steps to restoring damaged relationships.

1 – Identify the Hurt

2 – Apologise When You Hurt Others

Pastor: *Review the steps for apologising (these are found in lesson 3a.)*

3 – Forgive People Who Hurt You

4 – Start Again Together

Lesson 4: Strengthening Your Marriage

Main Idea: We can strengthen our marriage by praying with our spouse, by showing love in a way that they can receive it, and by prioritising our spouse before others.

Materials: Marriage Triangle

Review of Lesson 3

- When there is hurt in relationships, you should identify the hurt, apologise when you hurt others, forgive those who hurt you, and start again together.

Introduction

Making a marriage strong and keeping it strong for a whole lifetime takes hard work. In this lesson, we will look at 3 ways you can strengthen your marriage.

- Pray with your spouse
- Show love to your spouse
- Prioritise your spouse above others

Key Ideas

Pray together - this keeps God in the centre of your marriage

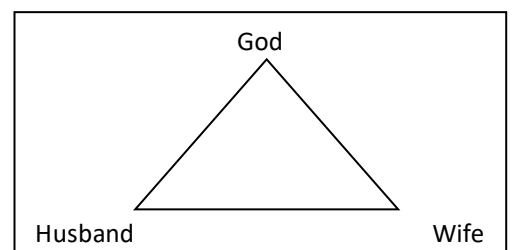
Ecclesiastes 4:12 - *A cord of three strands is not easily broken.*

- A husband or wife cannot meet all the needs of their spouse. We were created to be in relationship with God. Only God is able to meet all of our needs.
- We must not expect our husbands or wives to understand us completely and meet all our needs. If we do, we will always feel hurt and disappointed.

Pastor: Show the Marriage Triangle

A marriage should look like this triangle:

- The husband is directly connected to God.
- The wife is directly connected to God.
- The husband and wife are connected to each other.
- God is the centre. As the husband and wife get closer to God, they also get closer to each other.
- One important way to keep God at the centre is to take time to pray together:
 - Choose a time to pray together - maybe when you wake up or go to bed.
 - Pray daily. It is better to pray 5 minutes a day than half an hour once a month.
 - Thank God for each other, your marriage, and your family.



- Pray for each other's needs, challenges, and decisions.
- 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.
- Praying together helps us focus on God and depend on Him. It will help a husband and wife to strengthen their marriage.

Show love in a way that your spouse understands

1 Peter 4:8 - *Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins.*

- If we want happy marriages, we should make sure that our spouses feel loved.
- Each person has their own way of showing and receiving love. The things that make you feel most loved might not be the things that mean the most to your spouse.
- Here are 5 different ways to show love:*
- 1. Serving Each Other – These may be simple: tidying the house, washing dishes, or pulling weeds.
- 2. Words of Affirmation – These may be compliments or words of appreciation.
- 3. Gifts – Gifts do not need to cost money. It may be a flower you picked or a poem you made.
- 4. Physical Touch – This includes everything from holding hands, hugs, or stroking the other person's hair.
- 5. Spending Focused Time Together – This does not just mean being in the same room doing different things. It means special time giving each other focused attention. Maybe we take a walk together and talk about our days.
- Ask your spouse which of these are most important to them. Then you can show love in ways that they can receive.

Put your spouse before others

Mark 10:6-9 - *'At the beginning of creation God made them male and female. For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh'. So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.*

- Before a man and woman are married, each person belongs to their parents' family. When a couple marries, they start a new family.
- In marriage, two people become one. This means that the husband and wife relationship is the most important responsibility that God has given us.
- A married man changes his priorities from his old family to his new family. He is responsible to first care for his wife and his children.
- We do not stop honouring our parents or neglect caring for our extended families. But we need to prioritise our spouses first.
- Here are two areas in which we need to put our spouse first.

1. **Time** – If our spouse needs our help, we put them before other people.
2. **Decisions** – Make decisions either with your spouse or thinking about what your spouse has said. Decisions relating to a husband and wife should not be made by others.

Ephesians 5:21 - *Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.*

- The wife should have more input into a decision than any other person, and the husband should honour his wife in all his decisions.
- The best decision is made after good communication, careful reflection, and prayer by both the husband and wife.

Story Illustration

Tamar was frustrated. Caleb had just announced that he was going away for four days to help his mother. She explained that their baby was sick. She was exhausted and needed Caleb to help her. They had other children and they had to get the fields ready to plant. But Caleb said that he had talked to his friends about the situation. They all agreed that he should visit his mother. Tamar admired that Caleb cared so much for his mother. But she felt envious. Why didn't he see that she needed him to care for her in the same way? Who was going to help her?

- Caleb planned to visit his mother instead of staying with his wife. His wife's needs should have been his priority.
- Caleb allowed his friends to make the decision about whether he should go or not. He should have talked to his wife about his mother's needs. They should have prayed together. They should have decided together how much time Caleb would spend with his mother, and how much time he should be home.

Conclusion and Application

Three ways we can strengthen our marriages:

1. Pray together - start today
2. Show your love in a way that your spouse appreciates.
 - Try to discover which way of showing love means the most to your spouse.
3. Put your spouse first in:

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?

- 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.

When you begin to do these 3 things, you will find that your marriage is much stronger. You will have more joy in each other.

*These are based on Gary Chapman's book *The Five Love Languages*.

Lesson 5: Women Are Valuable

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

Introduction

Have you ever been excluded from something or felt left out? Maybe you were a child and adults assumed you were not capable. Maybe you could not participate in an activity because of money. Maybe people thought you were less important than others because of your ethnicity.

James 2:1 - *As believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ, don't show favoritism.*

Being left out is not a good feeling. When we treat people differently than others, this is showing favoritism. It shows that we do not value everyone the same. God wants us to treat everyone as though they are important. Today we are going to look at a specific group of people in our society that faces this. Let's see what the Bible says about women and girls.

Key Ideas

Women are created in the image of God and are equally as valuable as men.

Genesis 1:27- *So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.*

- The second part of verse 27 emphasises that males AND females are created in God's image. God created both men and women in His image with equal worth and value.

Genesis 3:16 - *To the woman he said,... 'Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you.'*

- When Adam and Eve disobeyed God, it destroyed their relationship with each other. God's plan for unity and oneness was broken.
- God said that one result of their sin is that the wife would want a relationship with her husband, but he would rule over her instead.
- Sin has influenced the way people see women in our culture. Our cultural rules and expectations do not match the value that God gave women when He created them.

Pastor: *Describe some ways that your society does not value women.*

Galatians 3:26-28 - *So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith... There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.*

- Through Christ both males and females can become children of God. Both are fully restored into relationship with God.

- There are no high people and low people in God's Kingdom. He has created each of us. He has a special purpose for both men and women.

Jesus treated women differently than the culture around Him.

- Jesus valued women. He treated them with respect and dignity.
 - During Jesus' time, women were seen as less important than men. They belonged to their father's or husband's house. They could not own land, divorce their husbands, or receive an inheritance. Jewish men were forbidden to speak with women on the street.
 - Jesus talked to a Samaritan woman (John 4:7). He spoke with kindness to the woman caught in adultery (John 8:1-11). Jesus spoke to and healed a woman who was bleeding (Mark 5:25-34).
- Jesus trusted women. He treated them as intelligent, spiritual people.
 - During Jesus' time, women could not testify in a court of law unless a man confirmed their story. Their presence was not recorded or recognised in important events. Girls were not educated as well as boys. They could not read the Word of God or participate in worship inside the temple.
 - Jesus entrusted important spiritual truths to women. Women were the first to see the risen Lord. They were told to take the great news to the disciples (John 20:1-18). Jesus took women's questions and arguments seriously. Jesus taught Mary, the sister of Martha (Luke 10:38-42). Women travelled with Jesus. They supported His ministry (Luke 8:1-3).

We can make a difference in our culture, just as Jesus did.

- There are similarities between how our culture treats women and how the culture in Jesus' time treated women. (**Pastor:** list several specific ways they are similar)
- Jesus treated women as important, trustworthy, intelligent, spiritual people.
- As Christians, we need to follow Jesus' example. Jesus made a difference in His culture, and we can make a difference in our culture.
- Cultural traditions are hard to change. Many people think that they are acceptable. They think it's just how things are done. But the mistreatment of anyone created in God's image is not right. It grieves God. We should ask God to help us change any practices like this! Let's talk about four areas in our culture.

Family

- Our culture approves of beating our wives or daughters if we are angry. This is not right. We should value women and girls as much as men and boys. We must treat them with love. We should celebrate the birth of girls just as much as the birth of boys. We should give our girls equal portions of food and inheritance.

Church

Acts 2:17-18 - *In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will*

dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy.

○ Daughters and women are included in receiving the gifts from the Holy Spirit. 1 Peter 4:10-11 - *Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms... so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ.*

- When everyone uses the gifts God gives them, God is praised.
- Two thirds of Christians are women. Our church must encourage women and girls to use the gifts God gives them. Then God will receive more praise.

School

- Girls should be educated as well as boys. Schools should allow girls to pursue the same careers as boys, like becoming a doctor or a pilot or builder.

Community

- In one African country almost half of all women have been raped. In another Asian country, a girl goes missing and is sold into slavery every 8 minutes. This is not right. We must protect women and girls in our communities.

Story Illustration

Here is a story about how one man made a difference.

Every night at dinner, Levi would sit down at the table alone and eat all the rice and curry he wanted. When he was done, his wife would eat whatever was left. One day Levi attended a training on biblical marriage. He decided to do something to show that he valued his wife. At dinner time, he asked his wife to sit with him at the table. He took the rice she had cooked and split it into two equal parts. He gave one to himself and the other to her. He did the same with the curry. His wife was surprised! Each night Levi continued to do this. 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. Others in the community started to follow their good example.

- Levi showed he valued his wife. He gave her the same amount of food as he received and ate with her.
- This improved their relationship. It became a model for the community.

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

Conclusion and Application

God is honoured when we act on what we learn.

- What are two things you can do in your home to honour your wife and daughters?
- What can we do in our community, church, and schools to honour women and girls?

Share with someone else two things that you personally are committing to do. Pray together.

Lesson 6a: The Role of a Parent

Main Idea: Children are a blessing, a valuable gift from God. Our children belong to God. A parent's role is to help our children grow into adults who obey God in all areas of life.

Review of Lessons 1-5

- Husbands are to love their wives and lead the family. Wives are to respect and help their husbands.
- We are all created differently. Our differences can cause conflict. God gives us principles for dealing with conflict.
- When there is hurt in a relationship, we must identify the hurt, apologise for the hurt we've caused, forgive those who have hurt us, and start again together.
- We can strengthen our marriage by praying together, showing love in a way our spouse understands, and putting our spouse first.
- God created women with equal value to men. We must treat women as Jesus did, even if it is different from our culture.

Introduction

Pastor: *Tell a story about a time when you realised that parenting was difficult.*

It is difficult to be a parent. We don't always know what to do. But the Bible tells us many things about the goal of parenting, and how to parent well.

Key Ideas

Our children are valuable blessings from God

Psalm 139:13-16 - For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made... My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place... Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.

- God carefully designs each child before it is born. Children are never an accident.
- God loves each child and has plans for them.

Psalm 127:3-5 - Children are a heritage from the Lord, offspring a reward from him. Like arrows in the hands of a warrior are children born in one's youth. Blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them. They will not be put to shame when they contend with their opponents in court.

- Children are a blessing from God. They are not a burden.

Psalm 24:1 - The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it; the world and all who live in it...

- Our children belong to God, not to us.
- We cannot just treat them however we want. We must treat them as valuable people and as blessings.

Parents must help children grow into adults who obey God in all areas of life

Proverbs 22:6 - *Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old they will not turn from it.*

- Children only young for a short time. We must use that time well. We must teach our children so that when they are adults, they choose to do what is right and good.

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

- Our goal in raising our children should be to bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord. We want our children to glorify God in all they do.
- A parent's role is to help their children grow into adults who obey God in all areas of their lives.
- We can help our children grow in the same four areas that Jesus did (Luke 2:52).
 - Wisdom (mentally)
 - Stature (physically)
 - Favour with God (spiritually)
 - Favour with man (socially)
- If parents send their children to school but never teach them about God, they may have knowledge and skills but will not try to use these to glorify God. For example, they may try to cheat people.
- If parents make sure their children are healthy and strong but never teach them how to interact well with others, the children may get into arguments and hurt people.
- We'll look at **spiritual and social growth** in the next few lessons.

Helping children grow physically

- To help children grow **physically**, parents should teach them healthy practices. We will talk about this in the TCT health module. **Pastor:** *If you have done the health module, you can remind the congregation of the main points you learnt.*

Helping children grow mentally

Proverbs 18:15 - *The heart of the discerning acquires knowledge, the ears of the wise seek it out.*

- Wise and discerning people seek knowledge. We want our children to be wise.
- We want them to know what is right and true and good. We don't want them to be deceived by lies.

Here are two ways to help children grow **mentally**:

1. Teach young children at home. - Children learn best when they are very young. Teaching them at home helps them do better in school later.

2. Send school-age children to school. - Sending children to school is important. God may choose for our children to bring great change through this.

Conclusion and Application

Our children are a blessing from God. They belong to Him. A parent's role is to help children grow to obey God in all areas of their lives.

- Do you treat your children as though they are valuable blessings from God? Is there anything God would have you do differently?
- What can you do to help your child grow mentally? Think of one thing you can do this week.

Lesson 6b: Helping Children Grow Spiritually

Main Ideas: Fathers, mothers, and grandparents must all train their children how to glorify God and teach them His ways.

Review of Lesson 6a

- Children are a blessing, a valuable gift from God. Our children belong to God. A parent's role is to help children grow into adults who obey God in all areas of life.
- Parents should teach their young children at home and send school-age children to school, even if this takes sacrifice.

Introduction

We all have ideas about who is responsible for different things. Maybe a father is responsible for earning money for the family. The mother is the one who feeds the baby at night. But who is responsible for teaching a child about God? That is what we will talk about today.

Key Ideas

Fathers, mothers, and grandparents must help children grow spiritually

- In Deuteronomy chapters 4-6, Moses reminded God's people of how God gave them the Ten Commandments, and all the laws of how to live in every area of life.
Deuteronomy 4:9 - Only be careful, and watch yourselves closely so that you do not forget the things your eyes have seen or let them fade from your heart as long as you live. Teach them to your children and to their children after them.
- Moses was talking to all of God's people, not just the priests and spiritual leaders.
- Both fathers and mothers are supposed to teach their children about God's laws. Grandparents are also called to do this.
- Parents and grandparents must not leave the spiritual growth of children up to the Church.

In 2 Timothy 1:5, 3:14-15, Paul writes to Timothy. - I am reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also... But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

- Timothy's mother and grandmother taught Timothy about the Lord. They did this even when he was an infant!

How we can help children grow spiritually

Deuteronomy 6:6-7 - *These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.*

- We should teach our children about God's plans for us all the time ('when you lie down and when you get up') and everywhere we go ('at home and when you walk').
 - EXAMPLES: While working in the garden, talk to them about how the earth belongs to God. Explain how we have been given the responsibility to look after it. Explain that we are supposed to work hard and cheerfully. Explain how God makes things grow and gives us everything we need.
 - **Pastor:** Give some other examples of how you can teach your children during other times - maybe while eating, going to market, or after school.
- We should pray with our children.
 - EXAMPLES: Pray about their relationships, attitudes, health, and needs. Thank God together. Help them confess their sins to God when needed.
- We should have regular family devotions.
 - EXAMPLES: Read a psalm. Talk about our day and how God has helped us. Memorise a verse together. Sing a hymn.
- It takes TIME to help children grow spiritually. Fathers, as well as mothers and grandparents, must spend time training their children. It is never too late to begin doing this.

Story Illustrations

STORY 1: A Son Has A Change Of Heart

A boy in Togo refused to obey his parents. He would often stop on the way to school. He would spend the day doing whatever pleased him and return home when school ended. His father passed away. The widowed mother was left to support the family on her own. Still, the son refused to help her. 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. He 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. He told her that God was happy she was telling the truth. He also told her that as she had confessed her lie, he would continue to trust her.

- These people tried to help their children grow spiritually by lovingly explaining to them what God wanted from them, and why it was important.
- As they did this, God changed the hearts of the children to want to obey.
- We can do this in our families. We have to ask God for help. We have to look for opportunities to talk to our children about God. We must talk to them about how to obey Him in everything.

Conclusion and Application

- Children are a valuable gift from God. Our role as parents is to raise our children to obey God in every area.
- Fathers, mothers, and grandparents must train their children how to glorify God and teach them His ways.
- Ask God how you can help your child grow spiritually. Think of one or two things you can do to begin. Ask God for his help to do these things.

Lesson 7: Helping Children Grow Socially - Listening to Children

Main Ideas: God, our good Father, listens to us. We should also listen to our children.

Review of Lessons 6a and 6b

- The role of a parent is to help their children grow into adults who obey God in every area of their lives.
- Fathers, mothers, and grandparents must all train their children how to glorify God and teach them His ways.

Introduction

Children learn how to tend a garden or do household tasks from their parents. The children watch over and over as their parents do it. This is called modelling. Modelling is the best way to teach children how to grow socially. We should model the kind of relationships God wants us to have. We should model godly relationships in our marriages and when we interact with our children. This will help our children learn how to have better relationships with others, even people outside the family. Today we are going to talk about listening.

Key Ideas

We should listen to our children

James 1:19 - My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry.

- This beginning of this verse tells us we must be quick to listen.
- It is easy to feel like children should listen to parents, and not the other way around.
- This verse is not just for when we interact with adults. It also applies to interacting with children.

Luke 18:15-16 - People were also bringing babies to Jesus for him to place his hands on them. When the disciples saw this, they rebuked them. But Jesus called the children to him and said, 'Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these'.

- This happened in the middle of Jesus' ministry. He was teaching His disciples. He was preaching about God's kingdom, travelling, and healing people.
- Jesus allowed children to interrupt Him, even though He was very busy and His work was important. We are always to follow Jesus' example.

Exodus 2:23-25 - During that long period, the king of Egypt died. The Israelites groaned in their slavery and cried out, and their cry for help because of their slavery

went up to God. God heard their groaning and he remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac and with Jacob. So God looked on the Israelites and was concerned about them.

- God was listening to his people and was concerned about their suffering. He did this even though they sinned again and again.
- He listened to them because of His promises, not because they deserved it.

Isaiah 65:24 - Before they call I will answer; while they are still speaking I will hear.

- God listens to us all the time. He is listening even before we call on Him.
- He doesn't do this because we are perfect people. We all sin. We don't deserve His attention.
- Though He deserves all honour and respect, God listens to us because we are His children. God is a perfect, loving Father.
- We must imitate God (Ephesians 5:1).
 - It may be hard to listen to children. We may be afraid that our children won't respect us, or that they will take advantage of us.
 - Children usually respond quickly and positively when parents show value and love for them by listening.
 - If our children don't respond the way we hope, we still have to listen. Then, we must wait for God to work in our children's hearts.

We should be quick to listen to our children. This imitates how God, our Father, listens to us. It shows our children God cares about them. It shows how God wants us to care for others.

How to listen well

- Here are two ways we can listen well.
 - 1) Give full attention.
 - Stop what you are doing and face the child. Don't look at your phone.
 - 2) Ask lots of questions.
 - Ask what happened. Try to understand why the child is feeling upset. Ask your child what they think they should do. Ask if you can help.

Conclusion and Application

As James 1:19 says, we should be quick to listen to our children. This is how we imitate God, our good and loving Father. To listen well, we should give full attention and ask lots of questions.

Pastor: *Invite people to pray about what they should say or do the next time their child expresses frustration or another strong feeling. Allow time for silent prayer, and then ask God to help parents to raise their children in a godly way.*

Lesson 8: Helping Children Grow Socially - The Power of Words

Main Ideas: 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. When we feel angry, we should wait until we have calmed down before speaking and acting. If we use reckless, hurtful words, we should apologise. Apologies are healing.

Materials: Visual Aid: Cycle of Anger

Review of Lesson 6-7

- Parents should help their children grow into adults who obey God in every area of their lives - physically, spiritually, mentally, and socially. Fathers, mothers, and grandparents must all teach their children God's ways.

Introduction

We have said that the best way to teach children how to grow socially is to model the kind of relationships God wants us to have. Listening to our children is a great way to begin this. Today we are going to talk about the kind of words we should use when we talk to children.

Key Ideas

Beware of using reckless words

Proverbs 12:18 - *The words of the reckless pierce like swords, but the tongue of the wise brings healing.*

- If we are wise, our words will bring healing.
- If we are reckless - that is, not careful - our words will harm children.
- Let's see if you have heard these kinds of reckless words:
 - Criticising the child instead of bad behaviour - 'You are a failure' or 'You are stupid'
 - Comparing a child to another - 'I wish you were more like your brother' or 'He's not as clever as his sister'
 - Predicting a bad future - 'You will never get a job' or 'You are going to be just like your lazy uncle'
 - Talking negatively about our child while they can hear us - 'My son failed his exam again. He does not try hard enough' or 'My daughter is so naughty!'
 - Speaking out of anger or frustration and saying things we do not mean - 'I wish you had never been born!'

- Reckless words like these can cause hurt. This can happen even when we don't mean to hurt our child. Most of us can still remember hurtful things said to us as a child.

Our words should encourage and build up a child's faith

1 Thessalonians 5:11 - *Therefore encourage one another and build each other up...*

- This verse applies to ALL of our words, including the words we use with children.
- Instead of hurting, our words should encourage and build our children up.
- Encouraging words might be saying - 'You are very good at that' or 'I like the way you treat your sister with kindness'
- To build up someone's faith means we help them believe that God is good. We help them trust and obey God.
- **Pastor:** *Share a story of how someone else's words have built up your faith, maybe when you were going through a hard time. We want this for our children.*

Angry, harsh words harm children

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

- Paul warns parents not to exasperate their children, not to make their children angry.

Proverbs 15:1 - A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.

- Putting these two verses together, we find that parents should not use harsh words with their children.

Ephesians 4:26 - *'In your anger do not sin'. Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry.*

- Be careful. When we are feeling angry, it's easy to recklessly speak in anger!
- This makes the child afraid or angry. It pushes us apart.

(Pastor: Show the Cycle of Anger and read the labels.)

- Here is what to do instead:
 - Don't speak or react right away. Wait until you have calmed down.
 - Take several deep breaths. Walk away if you need to.
 - Ask God to give you gentle, healing words.



Words of apology are healing

There will be times when we hurt our children with our words. Here is what to do.

James 5:16 - *Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed.*

- When we sin against someone, God wants us to apologise.
- Apologies are always difficult. It is especially hard to tell a child that you are sorry.
- God does not ask us to do this to shame us. Instead, it is because apologies help heal relationships.

- We must choose God's ways even when they are different from our culture.

Timo's Father Apologises

Timo's father often scolded him for not being brave, strong, or hard-working enough. Timo loved and admired his father, but often felt angry and discouraged. When he left school, Timo joined the military. He got married and had children of his own. He struggled with anger towards his own children. One day, Timo's father told him, 'I listened to a sermon today. I realised that I did not follow God's commands when I was raising you. I exasperated you. I'm sorry. I ask for your forgiveness'. Timo was shocked—he never thought a father would humble himself before his son. God helped Timo forgive his father. Timo's relationship with his father is healed. Timo now tries to obey God's commands not to react in anger toward his children. When he does, he follows his father's example and apologises.

- Timo's father showed that he trusted God and wanted to obey Him.
- The apology helped heal the relationship. Apologies are beneficial in many ways.
 - Shows value for the child and the relationship.
 - Helps the child respect and trust the parent.
 - Gives a model for truth and humility and shows the child how to apologise.
- If you have used hurtful words, apologise as soon as possible.
 - Ask God for help to be humble, sincere, and calm.
 - Tell the child you are sorry for what you said.
 - Don't defend yourself. Ask the child's forgiveness.
- It is never too late to do this. We must model God's ways to our children and grandchildren.

Conclusion and Application

Words have power. Your words can hurt or heal your children.

(Pastor: Go through these points slowly, giving people time to think.)

- Carefully choose words that encourage and build up your child's faith.
 - What is something you can say to your child to encourage them or build up their faith? Share this with your child today.
- When you feel angry, wait until you have calmed down before speaking and acting.
 - Think about something your child does that causes you to get angry. Ask God to help you to calm down and NOT speak harsh words next time it happens.
- If you have used hurtful words, apologise as soon as possible. Apologies are healing.
- At home today, discuss what you are doing well and not doing well in how you talk to your children (or other children you interact with).
- If there are words you have used that may have hurt them, ask God for the humility and courage to apologise.

Lesson 9: Biblical Discipline

Main Ideas: 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.

Review of Lessons 6-8

- The role of a parent and grandparents is to help children grow into adults who obey God in every area of their lives - mental, physical, spiritual, and social.
- We must listen to our children, imitating how God listens to us.
- We must use words that encourage and build up children's faith. We must be careful not to use harsh, angry words. If we use hurtful words, we must apologise.

Introduction

When we talk about discipline, most people think of punishment. We may fear discipline. But let's see what the Bible says about discipline.

Key Ideas

Biblical discipline is for training

Hebrews 12:5-6 - *Have you completely forgotten this word of encouragement that addresses you as a father addresses his son? It says, 'My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, because the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and he chastens everyone he accepts as his son'.*

- The word for 'discipline' used here does not only mean punishment.
- It also means 'training', like athletes do.
 - A disciplined football team trains by practising skills. This is not for punishment, but to get stronger and faster. The goal is a strong, intelligent, capable team.
- The word 'discipline' used here also means 'instruction', like a teacher gives to a student - to help them learn something.
 - Jesus instructed His followers, sometimes teaching new things, and sometimes correcting them. His goal was to grow them into mature men and women of God.
- Discipline is more than trying to correct a child's behaviour through punishment. We must also teach what is right and wrong, and help them practice choosing right.

1 Timothy 4:8 - *For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come.*

- Discipline is training in godliness.

- Godliness means long-term changes in a child's heart, pleasing to God.

We must use our authority carefully, never in anger

Proverbs 13:24. *Whoever spares the rod hates their children, but the one who loves their children is careful to discipline them.*

- Being 'careful' means we are diligent. We think about the best way to discipline.
- The word 'rod' in this verse is the same word used for a king's sceptre. A sceptre represents the king's authority, sovereignty, and 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 may be different from what we are used to. We obey the Bible, not our culture.

James 1:19-20 - *My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires.*

- Acting in anger does not help anyone to become more godly.
- Discipline must be done lovingly and carefully, never in anger.
 - Beating a child in anger is not careful or loving. It is dependent on the parent's mood. It is very often too harsh. NEVER discipline when you are angry.

There are alternatives to physical punishment

- Physical punishment is not always the most effective way to discipline a child. Other ways may be more effective at times. Here are some options that can be helpful.
- Option 1 - Disapproval and clear expectations

Imagine that a child is using a stick to poke the baby in the stomach. The mother frowns and sternly says, 'That is not how we care for the baby. A stick will hurt him. Put down the stick, and touch him gently'.

 - Sometimes, a stern look or clear statement of disapproval can be effective.
 - Do not use harsh or negative words about the child.
 - Focus on the behaviour and clearly explain what appropriate behaviour is.
 - If the child obeys, affirm them.
- Option 2 - Time out

Two siblings are fighting about something they both want. Their father says, 'You must not fight with each other. Each of you must sit in a different corner for five minutes. Talk to God about whether you are being selfish. Ask Him how to love your sibling'.

 - Put the child in a chair, room, or corner for some time alone.
 - This allows the child to consider what he did and why it was wrong. If the child is very upset, it also helps them calm down and gain self-control.

- Afterwards, talk with the child to make sure he understands what he did. Make sure he knows why it was wrong, and what he should do next time.
- Option 3 - Natural consequences
 - Imagine that a child jumps around in a shop and accidentally breaks something. The mother calmly says, 'Pick the pieces up and we will tell the shopkeeper. You must apologise, and I'll pay for it. Then, you will do extra chores for me at home.'*
 - It's good to let a child suffer the natural consequences of their behaviour.
 - For example, if a mess is made, ask the child 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 feel better.
 - This teaches the child to solve problems they are responsible for creating.
- Option 4 - Ask God for ideas
 - We should regularly ask the Holy Spirit to guide our words and actions as we discipline our children. We should ask Him to work in our children's hearts.

These ways to carefully discipline are done with the goal of training the child in godliness:

- 1) They help the child understand what is right and wrong.
- 2) They help the child practice doing what is right.

Conclusion and Application

Biblical discipline is training in godliness. It includes teaching children what is right and wrong, and helping them practise doing what is right. It should never be done in anger.

Physical punishment might not be the best way to discipline in every situation.

- 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 share it with someone (your spouse, if possible).

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 understand what is right and wrong and learn to choose what is right.

Review of Lesson 6-9

- The role of parents is to help their children grow into adults who obey God in every area of their lives. Fathers, mothers, and grandparents must all train their children how to glorify God and teach them His ways.
- We must listen to our children, imitating how God listens to us.
- We must use words that encourage and build up children's faith. We must be careful not to use harsh, angry words. If we use hurtful words, we must apologise.
- Biblical discipline is training in godliness. It should never be done in anger. Physical punishment might not be the best way to discipline in every situation.

Introduction

If a friend is inconsistent and unpredictable, you don't know how they will react to things. Maybe they will get angry about something small. Maybe they will laugh at something you think is important. They may not do what they say they will. It is hard for you to trust them.

Being consistent is important for parenting also. In this last lesson on parenting, we are going to talk about being consistent in our discipline.

Key Ideas

God is consistent with us

Numbers 23:19 - *God is not human, that he should lie, not a human being, that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfil?*

Hebrews 13:8 - *Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.*

Hebrews 12:10b - *God disciplines us for our good, in order that we may share in his holiness.*

- God does not change. He is consistent.
 - He tells us what He expects from us.
 - He always does what He says He will. He does not sometimes ignore sin, sometimes punish us, and sometimes forgive us for no reason.
 - God always disciplines us for our good.
- We must be like God.
 - We must always discipline with love and forgiveness to help our children grow in godliness.

Our discipline must be consistent

Seth had six older brothers and sisters. One day his sisters were teasing him. He was so angry that he threw a big water jug at them. The jug hit two of his sisters. They began to cry. His aunt saw what he had done. She 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. Then he told Seth he better not do it 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 again. Everyone laughed. Seth slapped his sister. This time his father just laughed with everyone.

- Situations like this happen frequently in many places. That doesn't make it right.
- This discipline was NOT carefully done with the goal of training children to obey God.
 - Seth's father didn't listen to Seth. He didn't explain what Seth's behaviour should be.
 - Seth's father responded out of anger. He used harsh words and actions.
 - The only focus was punishment, not dealing with the children's hearts.
- Seth's father was also inconsistent.
 - He laughed one time when Seth hurt his sister, but punished him another time. Also, he did not discipline Seth's sisters, only Seth.
- Biblical discipline is consistent.
 - 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.
 - 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. They will learn to obey.

Caregivers must work together

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!

- Judah's father and grandmother did not have the same expectations as the mother.
- If caregivers do not keep consistent expectations, children will not understand why expectations are important.
- They will try to manipulate people to get what they want instead of learning to obey.

2 Timothy 1:5, 3:14-15 - I am reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also... But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced

of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

- Timothy was taught by his mother AND his grandmother. They worked together.
- 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 caretakers.
- Here are ways that caregivers can work to be consistent.
 - Pray for children together. Discuss how to handle things.
 - Never have one person say or do one thing and another person say or do another thing.
 - Parents can ask grandparents for help, prayer, and advice.
 - Grandparents who care for children should also carefully train, teach, and correct the child.

Conclusion and Application

Biblical discipline is consistent in expectations and actions. This will help our children trust us to do the right thing and learn what is right and wrong.

- Pray about what changes God would like you to make in your parenting. In small groups of 3-4 people, share what you will do, and pray for each other.