

LESSON 12

PROVIDING GUIDANCE FOR FAMILY LIVING

Introduction

The need for more education in family relations has been alluded to numerous times in the previous lessons. Far too little effort has been put forth in preparing for happy and successful family living and in helping families to understand and solve their problems. Since Christian principles are vital to healthy family life, the Church must take a leadership role in providing family-life education. The following areas should be given attention:

1. Helping youth understand themselves and how to get along with parents.
2. Training young people for marriage before pre-marital counselling.
3. Providing pre-marital counselling for young people who are approaching marriage.
4. Making conferences available for young married couples to learn how to enrich their relationships and make adjustments.
5. Educating parents concerning the stages of child development and how to understand, discipline, and relate to their children at each stage.
6. Assisting adults in adjustments when children leave home and physical changes occur.
7. Providing a church family for young singles, widows, and divorcees.
8. Offering counselling services for families with special problems.
9. Supporting and counselling families which experience crisis during death and sickness.

Family-Life Education

From the pulpit

Traditional family values are being maligned today by some women's liberation groups, non-Christianisms, and modern libertines. Biblical traditions concerning family living should be expounded forcefully and

*Read the nine areas that should receive attention in a church program which provides family-life education.*

*Now write as many of these areas as you can remember.*

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_
8. \_\_\_\_\_
9. \_\_\_\_\_

*(Compare your list with the text, and write any you have omitted.)*

*Three sources of attack on traditional Christian family values are:*

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

urgently since the family is in danger of collapsing under the pressure of its critics.

From time to time, the pastor should preach a series of sermons on the home. Some denominations have adopted a special day each year to emphasize the Christian home. Since the mother is the key to the strength of the home, a Christian home emphasis may be related to the national day honouring mothers in those countries where such a day has been designated. Appropriate sermon subjects include:

- The Importance of the Home
- The Basic Nature of the Home
- The Christian Ideal for the Home
- The Relation of Husband and Wife
- The Demand for Marital Integrity
- The Relation of Parents and Children
- Applying Christianity in the Home
- The Home's Need of Agape Love
- The Influence of Parents on Children
- The Importance of Consistent Discipline
- The Parents' Responsibility for the Spiritual Education of their Children
- Winning Children to Christ
- How Teenagers Can Honour Parents

The pastor's preaching is not effective unless his own family demonstrates Christian values and strength. He and his wife can set an example for the young people who are planning marriage. Some pastors invite engaged couples to have dinner with them in order to get better acquainted and to further emphasize the value of a Christian home.

The structure of a family-life programme

A pastor may lead his church in selecting a committee on family life. The pastor and committee should survey the church membership to determine what the more serious problems confronting the family are. The committee should develop a programme which will adequately meet the problems.

In general, various age groups have different needs in family living at various levels. Children become curious about their physical differences and how babies are born. They do not need full biological and sexual orientation but do need their questions answered frankly by their parents. Perhaps parents need instruction in how to teach their children the elemental facts of sex.

Young people during puberty need to be given information about their new feelings as they develop sexually towards maturity. Boys and girls become

*Mothers' Day is a good time to have a Christian home emphasis because the mother is the key to the strength of the \_\_\_\_\_.*

*(home)*

*As you read the list of appropriate sermon subjects, list the ones which interest you most and which you would like to prepare sermons for your church sometime.*

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interested in one another but are shy and do not know how to get acquainted and relate to persons of the opposite sex. They need to be given guidance and opportunities for Christian social activities. Girls need to understand the menstrual cycle and tips on cleanliness and care of their bodies. Boys need to be informed about nocturnal emissions and to be given simple rules of common etiquette. As the sexual organs mature, young people are ready for the developing of Christian attitudes towards sex. They may appear silly and flippant when the subject is discussed, but their outward emotional responses do not indicate lack of interest and need. These emotional responses come from insecurity caused by new feelings they are experiencing as maturing adults. They are in a stage of self-consciousness, since their bodies are developing adult characteristics. Along with their emotional and physical development, they need to develop spiritual values relating to sex. The internal changes of younger adolescents usually lead to conflict with parents and sometimes friends. They need to understand themselves in order to avoid as many conflicts as possible. In addition, parents need orientation on the changing moods of their teenagers.

Older young people are approaching the time when they will complete grammar or high school and will be leaving the family for work or further education. Also, they are looking forward to marriage and need some additional guidance concerning qualities of a suitable life's companion and preparation for marriage.

Young married adults need further orientation on building a Christian home. Many will be interested in information on how to enrich their marriage and how to raise their children. They need guidance in how to help their children develop mentally, physically, and spiritually. They should be led to understand the changing moods of children and what kind of discipline is appropriate at different stages of the child's life.

Middle-aged couples are faced with changes within the home as the children become adults and depart. At about forty-five, women undergo the menopause which can cause anxiety, uncertainty, and depression. Lack of understanding of the underlying physical causes of emotional variations of the woman can place greater stress upon a couple's relationship. Many couples divorce during this stage of life, and perhaps many of these marriages could be saved if the church provided instruction and counselling for couples of this age group.

Older adults begin to face the transition from productivity to retirement. This is a critical time for many. The adjustment can be made more easily if they are given guidance and are enlisted in activities which can help them experience fulfilment. Also during this age many adults experience long periods of illness. As they grow older, they are reminded frequently of approaching death as news comes to them of the death of friends who are their own age. They need spiritual

*Six family-life educational needs of young people are:*

1. Information about their new feelings as they develop s \_\_\_\_\_;
2. How to relate to persons of the o \_\_\_\_\_ sex;
3. Understand their p \_\_\_\_\_ changes;
4. How to care for their b \_\_\_\_\_;
5. Development of s \_\_\_\_\_ values related to sex;
6. Understanding of themselves in order to avoid c \_\_\_\_\_.

*(1. sexually, 2. opposite, 3. physical, 4. bodies, 5. spiritual, 6. conflicts)*

*The basic family-life educational need of young married adults is orientation in building a \_\_\_\_\_.*

*(Compare your answer with the text.)*

*The basic family-life educational need of middle-aged adults is to understand and face changes—*

1. \_\_\_\_\_ leaving home and
2. \_\_\_\_\_ variations of women of this age.

*(1. children, 2. emotional)*

*The basic family-life educational need of older adults is to face the transition from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_.*

*(productivity, retirement)*

undergirding as they go through these adjustments and face problems at this stage of life.

If a church does not provide family education at every age, many will go through life without knowing what to expect as they move from one stage to the next; therefore, they may experience undue anxiety and missed opportunities and happiness. Since Christian values are as significant as information on physical and social changes, a church has an obligation to provide a family-life educational program.

The sessions for instruction can be conducted at the church, perhaps an hour before morning or evening worship service. Some pastors find an advantage in organizing home discussion groups which meet once each week over a period of one to three months. Persons with similar interests can be invited to meet to discuss topics of particular concern to them.

Resources for discussion groups might include books, tapes, and teachers or professional people who have expertise in the areas of anticipated discussion. Since experts will not be available for most groups, it will be necessary to rely on specially prepared materials, such as the cassette tapes and guide prepared by Jack R. Taylor to complement his book One Home Under God (Broadman Press.) Much material is now being made available on tapes for group study, such as God's Order for Husbands and God's Order for Wives by Larry Christenson. A group could take notes as they listen to the tape, examine the Scriptures which are mentioned, and share and discuss their reactions.

In churches where the formal education of the people is limited, a school teacher, the pastor, or some other person with some advanced education would need to give leadership to the sessions. For greatest effectiveness, he should lead the group in participation learning rather than conducting a lecture. The purpose of the leader of a study group is to keep the discussion on the subject and to plan and to give guidance to the activities. The success of a study group will depend on the leader's ability to challenge interest, motivate preparation, and involve each person in the activities.

In a sex education programme, most marriage manuals deal with anatomy, physiology, pathology, and techniques. These are important but are incomplete in themselves. Christian attitudes and values must provide the atmosphere in which techniques and biological facts are discussed: sexual information and the relationship of man and woman need to be presented from a Christian perspective.

#### Special emphases

In order to magnify the home, the pastor could lead the church in planning a week of special emphasis on the Christian home. He could deliver a series of messages on the home during the week, or he could

*Family-life education can make it possible to know what to expect as adults move from one \_\_\_\_\_ to the next.*

*(stage)*

*List three resources for discussion groups.*

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

*(Compare your answers with the text.)*

*The leader of a discussion is responsible for—*

1. *challenging* \_\_\_\_\_
2. *motivating* \_\_\_\_\_
3. *involving* \_\_\_\_\_

*(1. interest, 2. preparation, 3. everyone)*

invite a guest speaker who has received special training in Christian family life.

Dr. T.B. Maston has suggested most of the following study outlines for messages on the home.<sup>1</sup>

#### GOD'S FIRST INSTITUTION

1. First in time. God instituted the home before government or the Church. He wrote the home into man's nature.
2. First in importance. As the home goes, so goes the nation and the Church. Education in the home is even more important than that gained in public or private schools. Religious training in the home is more basic than religious education in the Church. Christian homes build churches, and decaying homes contribute to the death of churches.
3. First in priority of parents. The home should be first in the lives of parents, especially mothers. Working mothers who supplement the income of the home may be robbing their families if their jobs prevent their being good mothers. The most important area of success for men is not in business or at work but as good husbands and fathers. Men may provide adequate income for their families while their neglect of children may contribute to delinquency and heartbreak. Since the future of human life is at stake, parents must not neglect the home for other things.
4. Placing God first in the home. God cannot be first in the home unless He is first in the life of each family member. Many boys do not accept Christ because their fathers are not Christians. Often teenagers drop out of church because their parents are not regular in attendance. Church attendance without application of Christian principles in daily family living is recognized as hypocrisy by growing children.

#### DIVINE PURPOSES OF THE HOME

1. To propagate the race (Gen. 1:28). The deliberate prevention of having any children is a violation of a fundamental law of God. On the other hand, to bring so many children into the home that parents cannot provide and care for them is irresponsibility and sin against the children.
2. To provide intimate fellowship and mutual love (Gen. 2:18, 24). Man was lonely, and his deeper needs were beyond the material realm and could not be met by animals. God created woman and designed her nature for intimate companionship with man.
3. To save from sexual passion (1 Cor. 7:2, 9). Although this may not be the highest purpose, it is a purpose stated in the Bible. God planned for man and woman

As you read each of the following outlines for messages or studies on the home, list some ideas you have as to how they could be used in your church.

#### GOD'S FIRST INSTITUTION

#### DIVINE PURPOSES OF THE HOME

Be sure to read the scripture references and study them as they relate to the topic and various points in this outline.

<sup>1</sup>Most of these outlines were shared with a seminary class enrolled in a course entitled "The Church and Problems in Family Living" in 1956. Some of the material appears in Maston's book The Church and Problems in Family Living (Fort Worth, Tex: Potter's Book Store, 1948), pp. 1ff.

to marry; therefore, he placed in their natures sexual desire. This desire must be satisfied within marriage; for a man to lust after a woman is sin.

4. To promote the Kingdom of God (by implication). Parents are responsible for expanding the Kingdom by instructing their children in the ways of the Lord. God's plan for Abraham to be the father of a mighty nation and a blessing to all the nations of the world required that he "command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him" (Gen. 18:19).

#### THE NATURE OF THE HOME

1. It is an exclusive union (Gen. 2:24). A husband is enjoined to leave his mother and father and to cleave to his wife and become one flesh. The first responsibility of companions is to one another. No other person, regardless of his relation, should be allowed to interfere.
2. It is a monogamous union (Gen. 2:24). The design for the two to become one flesh rules out either partner having intimate relations with another as long as his or her companion is alive. Polygamy, adultery, and divorce and remarriage are prohibited.
3. It is a physical union (Matt. 19:5-6). The physical union makes them one flesh in the sight of God. Also, it expresses the commitment and unity of the inner being of each.
4. It should be a Christian union ("In the Lord," 1 Cor. 7:39). Christians should follow God's will in marriage. The Bible instructs Christians to marry only Christians. Many have experienced great sorrow and problems by ignoring this important requirement.

#### CHRISTIAN RELATIONS OF COMPANIONS

1. Relation of wives to husbands
  - (1) Wives are to submit to husbands (Eph. 5:22-24; Col. 3:18; 1 Pet. 3:1-2). Husbands are to be heads of their homes. This does not mean they are to be bosses or demanding tyrants, but they are responsible for providing for and protecting the home. Most wives do not object to being submissive to husbands who fulfil their responsibility of love to them.
  - (2) Wives are to respect their husbands (Eph. 5:33).
  - (3) Wives are to love their husbands (Titus. 2:4).
2. The relation of husbands to wives
  - (1) The husband is to love his wife (Eph. 5:25-29). Agape love is illustrated by Christ's giving His life for the Church. This love requires sacrifice in meeting the needs of the one loved. Since the two become one flesh, the husband's love for his wife is described as loving his own body.
  - (2) The husband is to honour his wife (1 Pet. 3:7). He should recognize her more limited physical

Continue listing your own ideas of how these outlines could be used in your church. Be sure to study each Scripture and note how it relates to these subjects.

#### THE NATURE OF THE HOME

#### CHRISTIAN RELATIONS OF COMPANIONS

strength as a woman and should give her corresponding consideration and protection. He honours her by being a worthy and faithful companion.

- (3) Husbands are to respect wives as equal heirs of God's grace (1 Pet. 3:7). Men are not spiritually superior to women, but more often faithful wives lead unbelieving husbands to Christ. Since they are spiritually equal in the sight of God, they should become companions in prayer.
- (4) Husbands are to cleave to their wives (Matt. 19:5). The Christian husband is not to be unfaithful to his wife nor to desert her.

#### THE RELATION OF PARENTS AND CHILDREN

1. The relation of children to parents
  - (1) Children are to fear and reverence parents (Lev. 19:3).
  - (2) Children are to honour parents (Exod. 20:12; Mark 7:10; Eph. 6:2). Jesus interpreted honouring of parents to include provision for them in old age.
  - (3) Children are to obey parents (Prov. 1:8; Eph. 6:1).
2. The relation of parents to children
  - (1) Parents are not to provoke their children to wrath or irritate them (Eph. 6:4).
  - (2) They are to provide for their children's material needs (1 Tim. 5:8).
  - (3) They are to love their children (Titus 2:4).
  - (4) They are to teach and train their children (Deut. 6:6-7; Prov. 22:6).
  - (5) They are to rear them in the chastening and admonition of the Lord (Eph. 6:4).

#### Resources for Family Education

In addition to the material in this study guide, the bibliography lists other books where helpful information may be obtained for various areas of family life. Numerous new titles on the subject continue to appear each year.

#### Organizations providing information

1. The American Institute of Family Relations, 5287 Sunset Boulevard, Los Angeles, California 90027. This organization publishes Family Life and makes a publications list available on family educational, counselling, and research materials.
2. American Social Health Association, 1790 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10019. This organization makes available several pamphlets and bibliographies on children and family life.

Continue listing ways you can use these outlines in your church.

#### THE RELATION OF PARENTS AND CHILDREN

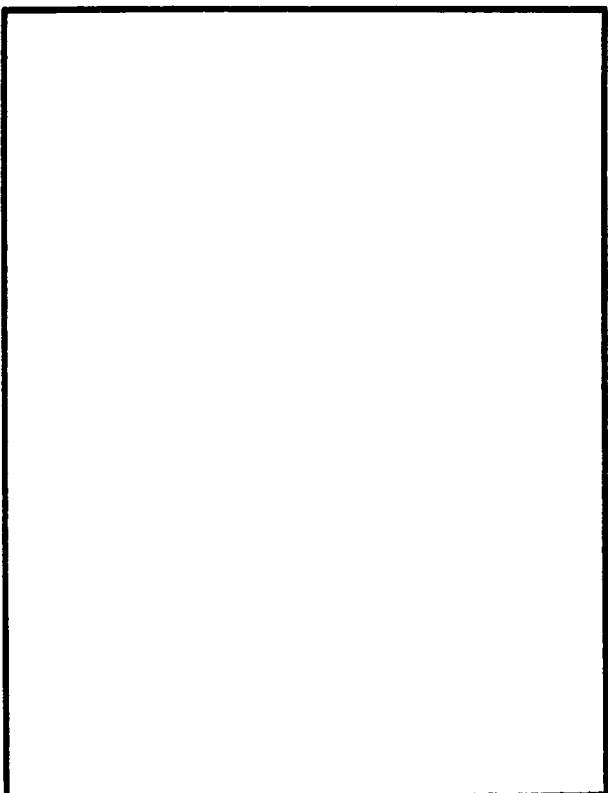
3. Child Study Association of America, 9 E. 89th Street, New York, N. Y. 10028. Its publications include material dealing with children and parent-child relations.
4. Marriage and Family Life, Educational Development Department, National Council of Churches, 475 Riverside Drive, New York, N. Y. 10027. This organization makes available lists of suggested materials, tracts, and pamphlets.
5. Public Affairs Pamphlets, 381 Park Avenue, S., New York, N. Y. 10016. This organization has available a large number of excellent booklets at moderate prices on many phases of family life.

Journals

1. Family Service Highlights, Family Service Association of America, 44 E. 23rd Street, New York, N. Y. 10010. This publication contains articles on family life, particularly on resolving problem situations.
2. Journal of Marriage and the Family, National Council of Family Relations, 1219 University Avenue, S. E., Minneapolis, Minnesota 55414. This journal contains articles of original theory, research, interpretation, and critical discussions of materials that have to do with marriage and family.

Pamphlets and booklets

1. What Makes a Marriage Happy by David Mace (see address above under Public Affairs Pamphlets). This is an excellent booklet on married life as a whole.
2. Christian Answers to Family Problems. This is a series of fifteen pamphlets on family life dealing with divorce, planned parenthood, maturity for marriage, working wives, relation to relatives, conflicts in marriage, parent-teenager relations, teen-age marriage, discipline, finances, marital adjustments, religion, recreation, the aged, and inter-faith marriage. They are available from the Christian Life Commission, Southern Baptist Convention, 460 James Robertson Parkway, Nashville, Tennessee 37219.
3. A Handbook for Husbands and Wives, How to Keep Romance in Your Marriage, Husbands and Pregnancies, and How to Retire and Like It. These are inexpensive materials available from Family Life Library, Association Press, 291 Broadway, New York, N. Y. 10007.



*Make a list of the journals, pamphlets, and books which you would especially like to have for marriage and family counselling in your church.*

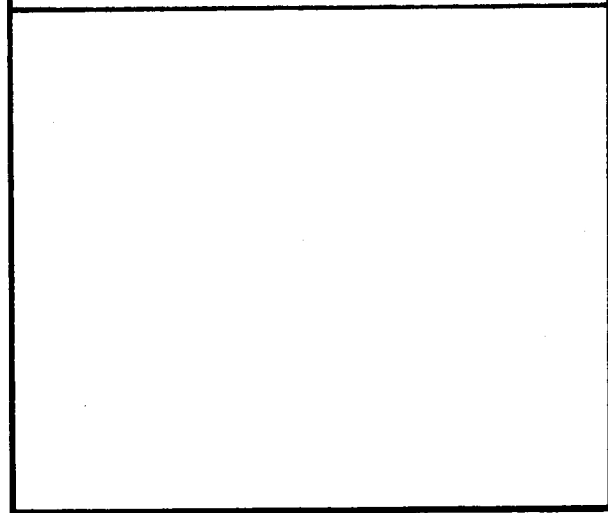
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Home Study Exercise

Basic activity (Levels 1, 2, and 3). Do the following exercise.

1. List eight areas that should be given attention by the church in providing family-life education.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Name three sources of attack on traditional Christian family values. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Why do some churches relate Christian home emphases to the national day honouring mothers?  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. List five family-life educational needs of young people. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. Name the basic family-life educational needs of young, middle-aged, and older couples. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. Name three types of resources available for Christian life emphases. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. What are the leader's main responsibilities in participation learning groups? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. Name five sermon subjects or subjects for special study that might be used during training on Christian family life. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. Name four groups from which special material on the family may be obtained. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Supplementary activity (Levels 2 and 3).

Read pages 187-191, 207-210, 401-407, and 416-420 in The Marriage Affair, edited by J. Allan Petersen, and do the following activities.

1. After reading the articles "Worship, Family Style" and "Christian Training, When?" suggest emphases for a church programme on family worship and Christian education in the home.
2. Why do many couples divorce after twenty years of marriage, and what ministry by the church is needed at this stage of life?
3. How can the church help those who are facing retirement?

Advanced activity (Level 3).

Read pages 202-206, 408-411, and 412-415 in The Marriage Affair, and do the following activities.

1. According to John R. Rice, what should be the goals of parents and the church in training children?
2. What instructions do husbands need in preparing their wives for widowhood?
3. Write out a sermon for a Christian home emphasis in your church, or outline a church programme for meeting the needs of marriage and family life.

Seminar Discussion

1. From your study of previous lessons, what do you conclude to be the areas of least understanding in marriage and family life?
2. In which areas should the church attempt to give educational guidance to family members?
3. Outline a year's programme for a church to use in strengthening family life.