

LIVING IN A CHRISTIAN HOME



BIBLE STUDIES FOR AFRICAN YOUTH

LIVING IN A CHRISTIAN HOME

Written by Florence G. Chacha, Paul G. Karani
and Robert Mutta

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Africa Coordinated Curriculum
for Bible Study

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CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
1. God Planned the Perfect Home.	5
2. Man Chose to Change God's Plan.	8
3. Jesus Reminds Man of God's Plan.	13
4. Christian Living at Home.	16
5. God's Commands to the Husband.	20
6. God's Commands to the Wife.	24
7. Husband and Wife Working Together.	28
8. Parents' Goals For Their Children.	33
9. Who Should Discipline Children?	37
10. The Family at Worship.	42
11. God's Commands to the Child.	46
12. Whom Should I Marry?	50
13. Who Should Choose My Partner?	54

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CHAPTER ONE

GOD PLANNED THE PERFECT HOME

AIM: I will learn that God planned for one man and one woman only to be married to each other.

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURES: Genesis 2:18-24

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON: Genesis 2:18-24

MEMORY VERSE: "Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh" (Genesis 2:24).

A STUDY OF THE LESSON

INTRODUCTION

The cold season had just started when James found he did not have a jacket to keep him warm. His father had bought him several other types of clothes. He had also bought him all the school equipment he would need and a bicycle to help him travel to and from school. James became unhappy although his father had bought him many things to help him.

His father went to a shop and bought him a jacket. When James saw the jacket he was very happy. He thought it would keep him through the season without being cold.

Similarly God had given Adam many things in the garden of Eden, but he was not happy. Adam was dissatisfied because he did not have a helper. Let's study about him now.

INTERPRETATION

The Lord God formed man out of the dust of the ground. He also made the beasts of the earth, cattle and everything that creeps upon the ground. All these were brought to the man so

he could name them. The man, Adam, gave names to these creations that God had made, but still none would be a companion to him. The animals would give help to man in his work, but they could not give him the company he needed.

So the Lord God said, "...It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him" (Genesis 2:18). Although much had been done for Adam, God had not finished the work. Adam still needed someone who would satisfy the yearnings of his heart which had not yet been fulfilled. The helper and Adam would share love, trust and devotion in the circle of family life.

In verse 21 we are told that Adam had a deep sleep. In this deep sleep God worked out a miracle that brought a new individual of a different sex. God took one of Adam's ribs and then closed up the flesh in its own place. With that rib he made another creation which Adam called woman.

When God had finished with the new creation he gave her to Adam. God had established a plan that was perfect between one man and one woman. These people were responsible to love, care for, trust and help each other in all their lifetime. After God made the woman, Adam was happy and satisfied. He said, "...This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh..." (verse 23). Adam felt that the woman was part of his own body, and he should love her as he loved himself.

In verse 24 we find that the two people would live together as one flesh. They would establish a home, and they would be God's vessels to build that home to please him. This union would be forever. It would never be dissolved as long as they both lived.

APPLICATION TO MY LIFE

After God created the world and everything in it, he created Adam. He said all the other things were for the man's use, but Adam was not satisfied. Then God made him a helper and brought her to him. God is the one who planned a perfect home. One man and one woman would live together all the days of their lives.

When we are in need of a person who would comfort us and share love with us, we must pray for the will of God to be done in us. Christians must wait for the Lord to give them their mates. He knows we need them, and we cannot find them for ourselves. The Bible teaches in Proverbs 19:14, "House and wealth are inherited from fathers, but a prudent wife is from the Lord."

God established a home with two people. He made one man and one woman who became Adam's wife. Christians are not supposed to marry more than one wife. When they marry each other they become a family of its own. The Bible tells us, "...A man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh" (Genesis 2:24). When the man and woman leave their parents they establish a home. They can manage their home and decide what they will do to serve the Lord. They should help their parents when they have a need, but they become a new family.

God placed Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. That would be their home. He did not make every decision for them. They had work to do to tend the garden, and that was their responsibility. So it is the plan of God that every married couple should stand on its own.

When Adam was brought a helper he was very happy. Read Genesis 2:23. When two people are joined as husband and

wife, they also become happy. In their joy they must be God's vessels and serve him for his glory. The union they have is supposed to last forever. Jesus said, "...What therefore God has joined together, let not man put asunder" (Matthew 19:6b). That union is to be dissolved only when death occurs.

THINGS TO DO

1. Thank God in prayer for creating man and woman.
2. Ask God to help you wait for his perfect will for your life.
3. Pray that God will give you the wife or husband he has chosen for you as he did Adam.

CHAPTER TWO

MAN CHOSE TO CHANGE GOD'S PLAN

AIM: I will learn that much suffering comes when men disobey God.

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURES: 2 Samuel 11:2-27

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON: 2 Samuel 11:2-5, 14, 26-27

MEMORY VERSE: "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done that which is evil in thy sight..." (Psalms 51:4a).

A STUDY OF THE LESSON

INTRODUCTION

A man had a son named Joseph whom he loved very much. The man knew the needs of his son and provided him all the things he would need. However, the son was greedy and jealous, and he wanted to possess everything he saw. One day he saw another man's bag and picked it up, not remembering that he had several of them in his house. The bag belonged to

a man whose work was to trade in snakes. When Joseph opened it, he did not know what to do as there was a big snake which came out quickly and bit him.

Joseph's father was very unhappy because he had provided his son with as many bags as he needed. Because of greediness and jealousy and also because he did not follow the plans of his father, he had serious trouble.

In the Old Testament, we find that there are some people who did not follow the plan of God and so they had trouble. Let's look at some of them.

INTERPRETATION

David was the king of Israel for forty years. During his reign there were many wars, and he made sure all the enemies of Israel were conquered and he became a powerful ruler. At the height of his power, he committed adultery with Bathsheba, the wife of one of his officers.

David had sent Joab and his servants and all Israel to destroy Ammon and besiege Rabbah while he remained in Jerusalem. One evening when he walked on the roof of his house, he saw a woman bathing, and he found her very beautiful. David wanted to know who she was. Someone said she was Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah the Hittite. So he sent people to bring her to him. David lay with her. In this act, David committed sin. Bathsheba also seems not to have objected as she came in at the king's request and did not show any resistance.

After they lay together, the woman went back to her house. In verse 5 we see that the woman conceived and sent a message to David that she would have a child. David knew that he would be disgraced when Uriah learned what had happened.

David also loved the woman very much although he already had many wives.

David ordered Uriah to come to Jerusalem. He wanted him to stay with his wife so he would think the child was his. But Uriah slept in the servant's quarters instead of going home. He said his friends were fighting, so he would not let himself enjoy the pleasures of home at that time. David even tried to get him drunk so he would go home to his wife, but the plot did not succeed.

David then sent a letter to Joab through Uriah's hands. The letter instructed Joab to place Uriah at the front line where there were valiant warriors. When the fight began Uriah died, and other servants of David also fell. David wanted Uriah killed in the war so he would not be held responsible for his death.

In verses 26-27, we find that the message reached Uriah's wife, and she mourned for her husband. After the mourning period was over, David took Bathsheba for a wife. In time she gave birth to a male child. In 2 Samuel 12:15-18, we see that God did not grant the child life. The child died because of the sin David had committed before the Lord. The sin made David see that he was away from God. Although he pleaded, fasted and wept, the result of sin had to be seen.

God forbade having another man's wife. Bathsheba was someone else's wife, and David should never have had anything to do with her. Unfortunately David decided to change God's plan by marrying Bathsheba. Let us see what God tells us today.

APPLICATION TO MY LIFE

Man has always despised the commandments of God and changed what God has planned for him. This is because of his sinful desires which come from his heart and body.

David had taken many wives as recorded in 2 Samuel 12:8, but they did not satisfy him. He went on and took Bathsheba, Uriah's wife, to be his own. David went ahead of the plan of God, and as a result trouble came to him.

The same thing applied to Abraham and Sarah when they chose to have a child by Hagar. Read Genesis 16 and Genesis 21:9-21. God had promised Abraham that Sarah would bear a child. She did not believe this as they were very old. Sarah told Abraham that he should take Hagar for a wife. "And he went in to Hagar, and she conceived; and when she saw that she had conceived, she looked with contempt on her mistress" (Genesis 16:4). After this act of disobeying God, the situation got much worse between Sarah and Hagar. When a son was born to Sarah some time later, "...she said to Abraham, 'Cast out this slave woman with her son; for the son of this slave woman shall not be heir with my son Isaac'" (Genesis 16:4; 21:10).

Many other people in the Old Testament rejected the commandment of God by having more than one wife. This should not cause us to follow their example. God created one man and one woman to be the first family. He wanted his people to live like that at all times. Whenever men disobeyed God, trouble came. When Christians change the plan of God today and marry many wives, they will be in trouble as well. God does not change. "For I the Lord do not change..." (Malachi 3:6a).

In the garden of Eden God made one man and one woman to live together as husband and wife. God wanted them to live together in love and peace. Jesus said, "...and the two shall become one flesh" (Matthew 19:5b). He did not say the three or the four, but the two.

Christians should not live by the things which others before them have done. When we know the Christian way of life and the plan of God for us, we should live according to it. The Bible teaches, "But he who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer that forgets but a doer that acts, he shall be blessed in his doing" (James 1:25).

God's will does not change, and he reveals his will in his eternal Word.

THINGS TO DO

1. Pray that when God's time is right he will help you to be a committed spouse.
2. Make a commitment to God that you will have only one wife or husband.

CHAPTER THREE

JESUS REMINDS MAN OF GOD'S PLAN

AIM: I will learn that Jesus reminded man of God's plan for marriage.

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURES: Matthew 19:4-6; Mark 10:2-12; Ephesians 5:31

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON: Matthew 19:4-6; Mark 10:2-12; Ephesians 5:31

MEMORY VERSE: "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh" (Ephesians 5:31).

A STUDY OF THE LESSON

INTRODUCTION

Joshua left home to assist the church program in another district. After a week he was on his way home. He was happy thinking of getting back to his family. But his happiness ended when he arrived home and discovered that his wife had been unfaithful to him while he was away.

Joshua was very angry. He said he could not forgive his wife for this. He decided quickly that his solution was to divorce her.

Many married couples have used divorce as a solution to their disputes. Let us learn what God wants us to do in such cases.

INTERPRETATION

Jesus was busy teaching when the Pharisees came to the region of Judea beyond Jordan to test him. They had learned

in their schools that a man could divorce his wife for any reason. They did not know that the plan of God was for man and woman to stay together for life.

Man had changed God's plan by marrying many wives. Examples of David, Abraham, Solomon and many others in the Old Testament showed that problems resulted. Many men and women failed to stay with only one spouse; and, as a result, adultery and fornication were often practised. The solution to all the problems which came into the homes was thought to be divorce. Moses had permitted them to divorce because of the hardness of their hearts. Read Deuteronomy 24:1-4. Moses did this for the benefit of the woman. He wanted to save her from prolonged ill-treatment since divorce had not been permitted before that. The divorce that was permitted was not to be done at will.

When the Pharisees came to Jesus to entrap him, he ignored the disputes of the schools where they had learned. He went beyond the law of Moses to the purpose of the Law of God. God still demanded Israel's total devotion, and they were to serve him with all their hearts. This could not be a reason for them to become wicked. Therefore Jesus said, "What therefore God has joined together, let not man put asunder" (Mark 10:9). He wanted the Pharisees to understand that it was the will of God for man to stay together as recorded in Genesis 2:24. He also told them that divorce was sin. "...Whoever divorces his wife and marries another, commits adultery against her; and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery" (Mark 10:11-12). The Bible continues telling that when the disciples heard what Jesus said about pure, ideal marriage, they were astonished because they had learned the Mosaic law. God wanted the people to understand that he had intended for the man and

woman to stay together for life. Their union could only be dissolved when death occurs.

APPLICATION TO MY LIFE

God's plan for man is always the best, but man has always wanted to live without God. This brings problems and guilt. God created one man and one woman to live together for all of their lives as recorded in Genesis 1:27. But, as we can see, man changed God's plan by marrying more than one wife.

God also planned that the husband and wife should love, honour and respect each other. Instead of doing this, some people quarrel and insist on having their own way. Then they divorce because the love which God initiated does not abide in them. We learn from the Bible that it is not wise to divorce. In 1 Corinthians 7:2-3 every man is told to have his own wife. Although Moses gave permission to divorce, that was not God's ideal. Moses gave it because of the unsatisfactory spiritual condition of man. Christian husbands and wives are supposed to stay together. Christians should be willing to forgive at all times. Read Matthew 18:21-35. When we forgive, we might win that person, and also we will have treasure in heaven.

When a couple divorces, the one who remarries commits adultery. This shows that neither the man nor the woman is greater than the other. They are equal in the eyes of God. Man is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church. (Ephesians 5:21-23) She is not the husband's slave or an object of property. She stands by the side of her husband, being equal in Christ with trust and respect to him. The Bible teaches, "...there is neither male nor female; for you are one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28).

God's plan is the same yesterday, today and forever.

THINGS TO DO

1. What problems do divorced people face? Write them on a piece of paper.
2. How should Christians act toward people who have been divorced? What could your church do for them?
3. Pray for your future marriage. Ask God to help you decide that divorce is not a choice you will have when troubles come into your marriage. Commit yourself to working out the problems with his guidance.

CHAPTER FOUR

CHRISTIAN LIVING AT HOME

AIM: I will learn that I must be a Christian first at home.

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: James 1:19-20; Colossians 3:8, 12-13, 19-20; Psalms 19:14; John 13:34; Ephesians 4:15

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON: James 1:19-20; Colossians 3:8, 12-13, 19-20; Psalms 19:14; John 13:34; Ephesians 4:15

MEMORY VERSE: "Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer" (Psalms 19:14).

A STUDY OF THE LESSON

INTRODUCTION

After choir practice John was walking home from church. He was very dependable in his choir and everyone in the group respected him. But he was miserable even after that wonderful experience in the choir. To him it would be better if he could remain at the church where everyone admired his ability and worth.

He remembered what had happened before he came to church. His mother told him to collect firewood before he left home. Harshly he told his mother, "I am not going to do that!" His mother told John she was going to report that unacceptable behaviour to his father.

John knew that his father was going to punish him for his behaviour. In his heart he was not planning to repent either. He was thinking of how he was going to resist his father. He even thought of beating his younger brothers and sisters after the punishment. That is why he was not happy to go home.

INTERPRETATION

One of John's problems was anger. He was angry at his parents as well as at himself. When we are angry we cannot listen or communicate properly. The book of James teaches the following very important steps to help us. (James 1:19-20)

Be quick to hear. God has given us ears to help us in our relationships. By hearing we can know friendly or dangerous sounds and words. We have to be quick hearers. Hearing both good and bad things is our responsibility to detect what is good or bad.

Be slow to speak. The normal tendency is to speak immediately after hearing. The Bible warns us not to speak on everything we hear. We must think carefully on what we have heard so we can be sure when we speak about it, because through speaking we make others angry.

Be slow to anger. Some of what we hear makes us angry. When we are angry we cannot control ourselves easily. We can decide to get revenge while the Bible tells us we should not. We can decide to fight while we are told to be humble. James 1:20 says, "...the anger of man does not work the righteousness of God."

If John, in our Introduction, had taken the biblical warning, he would not have had bad relationships with his parents.

When we become Christians we are expected to live a new life. The Christian life style is known even by non-Christians. They desire it, but they cannot have it without Jesus Christ in their lives.

There are some things that a person should put away when he becomes a Christian. Read Colossians 3:8. What is expected of the Christian tongue according to this verse? Anger, wrath, malice, slander and foul talk should not be heard from a Christian tongue. Instead the Christian is to set a standard of life as explained in the same book, Colossians 3:12-13.

A Christian should know he is a chosen one, holy and beloved. Read verse 12. This will help him to live every day because he will have this assurance wherever he is. Then the results will be compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness and patience as this verse teaches us.

A Christian should also know that people are different. Living with others requires two main characteristics:

1. Forebearance: This must be the Christian's attitude to other people who do things differently or who oppose what they do and say. As Christians we should bear with other people, even our enemies.
2. Forgiveness. It is important for Christians to forgive those who have done or said something against them. This does not end here. We should also forget that it happened and be ready to accept the person as if nothing had happened. If God has forgiven you, then you should do the same to others. (verse 13)

The problem John had was that he tried to be good outside his home and rebellious in his own home. The apostle Paul encouraged mutual understanding in the home. If every family member does his part as a Christian it will be easy to submit, to love and not to provoke each other in the home. (verse 18-20)

Love and unity are the main signs of Christian fellowship. Jesus Christ reduced all commandments to one: "...Love one another..." (John 13:34). This love should start at home. You cannot love outsiders if you do not love your family members. If you have a family which is not following this example, pray for them. God can change them. God can perform a miracle.

Learning from the situation in your home now, you can begin to think and plan what kind of home you want to build someday. Do not repeat the same problems you recognize in homes you know today. You must determine to build a good home in the future.

You may think this is very difficult to do, but our Memory Verse is important. Let us ask God to direct what we think, what we do and what we say. This will result in our growth as we speak forth in love. Read Ephesians 4:15. All this should start at home.

APPLICATION TO MY LIFE

In reading about John we may think of ourselves. You may think that John's parents were cruel or that John was wrong to do what he did.

No matter how wrong your parents may be, it is your duty to obey them unless their instruction is different from what the Lord teaches. Pray for them daily and show your love, kindness and respect. You should seek always to forgive them

if they have done you wrong. It will please your parents if you will learn to ask their forgiveness when you are wrong.

As a Christian you should always be a blessing to your own home. By helping your younger brothers and sisters, you will learn to take care of your own family later. Being humble and kind to them may result in bringing them to the Lord if they are not yet believers.

THINGS TO DO

1. Think about John and his behaviour. See the weaknesses and strengths he had.
2. Think about your own family. Write a list of some of the good things you recognize in your home. Make another list of some of the things you would like to have changed. Pray for the weaknesses and thank God for the good things in your home.
3. As you think of the home you hope to have some day, what kind of husband or wife would you like to be? What kind of parent would you like to be? Start to pray about your future family.

CHAPTER FIVE

GOD'S COMMANDS TO THE HUSBAND

AIM: I will learn what God expects of a husband.

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURES: Ephesians 5:25, 28, 33; Colossians 3:19; 1 Corinthians 11:3

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON: Ephesians 5:25, 28, 33; Colossians 3:19; 1 Corinthians 11:3

MEMORY VERSE: "Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself for her" (Ephesians 5:25).

A STUDY OF THE LESSON

INTRODUCTION

After school Mary and her fiance, John, decided to marry. They both had a wonderful time in their new life. In their second year of marriage, she gave birth to a baby girl. That increased the couple's positive relationship. Their love grew day after day as they had new experiences together.

They carried on smoothly, but things changed when they had their sixth born girl. John changed completely. "I am tired of baby girls every year," he said. He began to stay away from home on weekends, and he came in late many nights. Often there was not enough money for food for the family, and it was obvious that he had started drinking. John could have learned a lot by studying God's Word to see what he expects of husbands. Let us look at it now.

INTERPRETATION

God has commanded husbands to love their wives just as Christ loved the church and gave his life for it.

Men ought to love their wives as they love their own bodies. A man who loves his wife loves himself. No one hates his own body. Instead he takes care of it the best he can. When one part of the body hurts, the whole body is affected. So we give our bodies tender care. We prefer eating good food and wearing nice clothes. We want to be where there is good security for life protection. We try to stay in a warm place where we will not get wet when it rains. We feel the need to get enough rest, especially when we have worked hard during the day. Paul said in Colossians 3:19 that husbands should love their wives and not be harsh to them. We therefore need to know and understand that God is not requesting husbands to love but commanding them to love and care for their wives.

The term, love, here means caring for and being concerned with the well-being of someone at whatever cost. Husbands are the heads of their families, and they ought to love them as their own selves. But the term, head, makes more sense when there is good communication in that home. Then everyone understands his/her role and responds positively.

A family is not a real family until the members have agreed on what to do and how to achieve their goals together. In many cases husbands refuse to use their time for family affairs. They will not discuss family problems where their weaknesses and strengths are shown. Husbands and wives should discuss their problems and make changes that will improve their lives and build a better home. As a team, a family has to work hand in hand. The wife should not be seen as property owned by her husband, but as a helper in his life. She should be a friend with whom the husband can discuss his problems in life. Many husbands seem to face their difficulties alone and handle them secretly. That is not the best way to approach the situation. Wives should be involved.

Discipline of the children is an area of responsibility that many husbands avoid. They have isolated themselves and become irresponsible. They need to understand that well disciplined children earn respect for their parents. Discipline of the children should not be left to the mothers only.

The words the husband uses for asking or telling his wife to do something are very important. There is a proverb which says, "Sweet words can remove a snake from a jungle." Husbands need to know that harsh and brutal words used when talking to their wives create a distance between the two. (Ephesians 4:29) She will not feel free to tell her husband what her fears are and what she feels about a certain problem in the family if she expects to hear harsh words from him. A wife

and a husband are two different people with different thoughts, but each should take time to learn to understand the other. A husband should show much love to his wife. He should pray for her regularly. If she does not meet some of his requirements or if she is not a Christian, he should take the responsibility of leading her to make a commitment to the Lord just as Christ did the church.

APPLICATION TO MY LIFE

The most important requirement for loving one another is to commit one's self totally to Jesus Christ as Lord. This is the first and most basic commitment. Then we will be able to let him lead us to be what he wants us to be. It is hard for worldly men and women to show love and concern to their spouses. In many areas they appear to be irresponsible, and their selfishness leads to misunderstandings.

The Lord, however, will lead you to make decisions now about the home you will build in the future. Are you expecting to make a wonderful, peaceful home? Then you must be ready to love, care for and commit yourself to the woman or man you will marry. A wife remains the wife of her husband even if she gives birth to daughters only or to no children at all. Failure to have sons is not a reason for divorce or for taking another wife. God knows what is best for all of us, and we must trust his decisions. His will may not be our will, but we need to accept it.

God expects husbands to love their wives and care for them as they do to their own bodies. This positive attitude will help you build a happy family -- the one God intended for you to have in the world. He will be honoured by a Christian home which is made up of husband and wife planning together and doing things together. This comes as a result of good communication between the two. Pray that God will help you

to make good decisions about your future life. Ask him to show you what he expects you to do.

THINGS TO DO

1. Recite the Memory Verse every morning before you get out of bed.
2. What do you understand when the word, love, is mentioned?
3. Write some of the things you have learned that a Christian husband should do? What are the major factors contributing to being irresponsible husbands?
4. How are you planning to build a happy home?

CHAPTER SIX

GOD'S COMMANDS TO THE WIFE

AIM: I will learn what God expects of a wife.

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURES: Ephesians 5:22-33; 1 Peter 3:1-2; Titus 2:3-5

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON: Ephesians 5:22-33

MEMORY VERSE: "Likewise you wives, be submissive to your husbands, so that some, though they do not obey the word, may be won without a word by the behaviour of their wives" (1 Peter 3:1).

A STUDY OF THE LESSON

INTRODUCTION

After Mr. and Mrs. Peter were married, Peter's father told them to leave his home and find their own place. Peter asked

his father to let them stay there for one month, but the father said no. Therefore they went to another town where they stayed with the wife's parents. Peter started a new job after they had been married only one month. He had to go on duty leaving his wife in the house.

In the second month of their marriage, things started to change. The wife started to give harsh replies whenever her husband spoke to her. She did not have food ready when he came back from work. The wife was irresponsible to her husband and to God. Instead of communicating to solve their problems, they kept on quarrelling. This created more problems. Soon this became their way of life.

Girls should prepare to be wives, and boys should prepare to be husbands. Understanding the person before marriage and having common goals before hand are very important.

INTERPRETATION

God's command to the wife is to submit to and respect her husband. The term, submit, may be interpreted as being humble, kind and obedient to another.

In the book of Genesis wives are helpers and companions to their husbands. In Genesis 2:18 and Ephesians 5:22 God commands the wife to submit to her husband as to the Lord. Also verse 33 says every wife must respect her husband. Many wives have mistaken respect for fear. But if we can understand the meaning of respect between partners, it will guarantee equality in the marriage. Fear can only lead to slavery.

In 1 Peter 3:1-2, there is a similar command to wives to submit to their husbands. It adds that their good conduct will help any husband who does not believe in Jesus to be won to him. Hence, it says there is no need for the wife to say words to her husband who is not a believer. That man will see the pure and

reverent life of his Christian wife and want to come to the Lord because of that.

In Titus 2:3-5 old women are told to behave as women should and to live a holy life. They should not be slanderers or slaves of wine. They must teach what is good in order to train young women to love their husbands and children.

They must be self-controlled, pure and good housewives who submit to their husbands. They should live lives that will avoid all evil so the message that comes from God will not be discredited. All these verses speak of a Christian woman, one who has accepted Christ in her life as Lord and Saviour.

What can young women who will be wives in the future do to help them be what God wants them to be? Titus 2:4 says, "...train the young women to love their husbands and children." Read on to verse 5. What are the other things the young women should be taught? They should have and show good sense. They should keep their bodies pure for their husbands. They should learn how to care for the home and family, and they must be kind. In all these things, God's Word will be honoured.

APPLICATION TO MY LIFE

What can you do to prepare to be the wife or husband God wants you to be? The first thing is, if you have never accepted Jesus as your Lord and Saviour, turn and follow him now. Everything else will follow. It is always hard for a non-Christian woman to know and understand the commands of God to wives. They do not go to church nor to women's groups and fellowships thinking that is a waste of time. Such wives have led their families into problems like Mrs. Peter did! They do not assume their responsibility in the house. Their children go hungry and dirty all day, the house is not neat

and nobody is there to receive the husband when he comes from work. The home of a wife like this is headed for destruction. Much of the problem comes from the wife's refusing to accept her responsibility.

Some wives are not ready to set the best example to younger women. Instead such women have involved themselves in a war of words--claiming their rights without concern for fulfilling their responsibilities. They may insist that they are equal with their husbands, but they forget the respect which is necessary between a wife and her husband. Wives should be ready to perform their duties to help the home run smoothly. When they do this their husbands will appreciate their work, and this will strengthen their relationship. This will also lead to their working together as partners in all activities instead of being as slaves.

As a future wife, what are your plans for your home? As a future husband, what do you expect of the one who will be your wife? Make your decisions in advance so you can obey God's commands on this important subject. You should pray that God will help you to be a good wife, one who will submit to, respect and be an active helper to your husband. Or you should pray that God will help you honour God by the way you treat your wife. A right companion will show concern for his or her partner. A good wife should be ready to break the silence and solve problems that come. She will pray for her husband when he is away and for her children. In setting up your home in this way, you will please God and be able to serve him well. What kind of home do you want? Are you willing to accept your responsibility in building that home?

THINGS TO DO

1. Say the Memory Verse, 1 Peter 3:1.
2. Pray every day that, when you marry, God will help you to be submissive and respectful to your husband or that he will help you be a kind and loving husband.
3. Make a list of things that God expects of a wife and husband.

CHAPTER SEVEN

HUSBAND AND WIFE WORKING TOGETHER

AIM: I will learn that husbands and wives must work together in the home.

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURES: Philippians 2:1-4;
Ephesians 4:2-3

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON: Philippians 2:1-4;
Ephesians 4:2-3

MEMORY VERSE: "Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ" (Ephesians 5:21).

A STUDY OF THE LESSON

INTRODUCTION

Husbands and wives pray for and expect happy lives of peace, love and unity in their marriage. But sometimes this does not happen. What goes wrong?

"No matter what my parents say, I must marry Joseph," said Esther. "He is rich." She thought it would be a wonderful and very comfortable marriage. As Joseph took the proposal to

her parents, they refused because they knew Joseph was a very hostile man in the village. He had already divorced two wives!

Esther's parents called Esther into the room and gave their reasons why they thought it unwise for her to marry Joseph. None of the relatives liked the idea, but Esther insisted that Joseph was her choice.

After their wedding, Joseph changed his behaviour. "Esther, know that you are here to be seen but not to be heard," said Joseph. He told her not to use anything in the house without his permission. The rules were so many and so strict that Esther was unable to obey them all. After five months she had to return to her parents whom she had ignored in the beginning.

When choosing a partner what things should you consider so your marriage will be happy? How can you plan for a happy home?

INTERPRETATION

Philippians 2:1-4 gives us some ideas about how to answer those questions. The first verse shows that our encouragement will be in Christ. He is the one who will comfort us in times of trouble, and he will help us in all we undertake for him. His Spirit will be with us at all times to help us in the problems of every day.

We should not do anything from selfish ambitions nor from the desire to boast, but we always need to be humble, considering others better than ourselves. We should also look out for one another's interests and encourage each other. It is important that both partners in a marriage have the same mind, the same love, the same goals and the same desires for that marriage. If both husband and wife are depending on Jesus in all the decisions of life, they will want to please him in

their marriage. They will seek his help in all decisions, and they will enjoy unity in their marriage. If a member of the family is a Christian he or she wants God's will to be done in the home. If another member is not a Christian, that one wants the home to be run in a worldly manner. These two do not have the same goal in mind, and so there is trouble already in that marriage. Each is working toward a different aim, and there is no way for harmony to exist.

The Bible has the perfect prevention for this problem. Please turn to 2 Corinthians 6:14. This verse says, "Do not be mismated with unbelievers...." This means that young people need to plan well before they marry. They need to choose a person who believes the way they do about God. A Christian should not marry an unbeliever, for they will be mismated. There is no way that home can be peaceful, because they are not working toward the same goal. Husbands and wives cannot work together unless they are reaching toward the same goal. When they are working together, they can pray together and God will direct them in the good way he has chosen for them.

These verses in Philippians also tell us that nothing should be done in selfishness. Each marriage partner is to think more of the other one than of self. Decisions should never be made according to what one wants, but in everything each should consider what the other one wants or needs.

Ephesians 4:2-3 tells us that we should always be humble, gentle and patient. We need to show love by being tolerant with one another. Apart from what we have read from the above Scriptures, what else do husbands and wives need in order to work together as a team in their family?

They need to communicate with each other in a clear and direct way. People sometimes say one thing and mean

something different. This is very dangerous in a marriage relationship. Each person should have the opportunity to speak on the matter of concern. He or she should speak clearly about it, and the couple should decide together what they will do for the good of all concerned.

The husband and wife should plan money matters together. Money is often the cause for disagreements in homes and families. Children need food, clothes and school fees. Many families are starving because of poor usage of money. This should not happen. If they plan together how they will handle their money and how much they can spend for each need and then do according to the plan, this should not be a cause for problems.

The relationship between husbands and wives can be compared to three cooking stones. One stone represents Jesus, the second represents the husband and the third represents the wife. All three stones are necessary to make the home a happy one. If one is missing, the cooking pot will fall. The head of the family is Jesus Christ, and the husband and wife share equally in the family decisions.

The husband and wife should pray and read God's Word together every day. They should also spend time doing things together. Perhaps they will even have some work projects they can do together. There should be time that the parents can spend with the children and do things they enjoy. This will build the family bonds and help the family work together.

APPLICATION TO MY LIFE

In the world today people are busy trying to restore and maintain unity. That unity starts at home where husband and wife are bound together. That spirit of unity can spread to church, community and finally to the whole world.

When we find a strong and growing church today, we will find that the members' have unity in their homes. God wants his people to be united and work together as a team. Husbands and wives should understand each other through unselfishness, good communication, good management of money and asking the Lord daily to direct their homes. Discipline of the children is a responsibility of both parents.

As you plan for your future, ask the Lord to direct you in building a home that will honour him. Make decisions about what you will do when that time comes, and then you can carry out your desires. May God help you as you plan for your future home.

THINGS TO DO

1. Repeat your Memory Verse every morning.
2. Write a list of things you want to do to make your home a happy one. Include in that list ways you and your future partner can work together. Keep this list in a safe place and discuss it with your partner before you marry.
3. Pray that God will lead you to the partner with whom you can work together for his glory.

CHAPTER EIGHT

PARENTS' GOALS FOR THEIR CHILDREN

AIM: I will learn what parents should want for their children.

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Deuteronomy 6:4-9;
Ephesians 6:4; 1 Timothy 3:4-5

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON: Deuteronomy 6:4-9;
Ephesians 6:4; 1 Timothy 3:4-5

MEMORY VERSE: "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it" (Proverbs 22:6).

A STUDY OF THE LESSON

INTRODUCTION

Paul was the only son of Andrew and Elizabeth. As parents they were concerned with the future of their son. They carried out their responsibility of teaching and disciplining Paul. Both parents instructed the child about what was expected of him at school, at home and in society.

When Paul started school at the age of seven he had already decided to obey his parents whether they were present or not. His school was two miles away from home, and the path to school went through some big farms. Beautiful trees bore different kinds of fruits along the path.

One day when Paul and his friends were going home from school, they saw ripe fruit in Stephen's farm. They were tempted to steal a few oranges and mangoes, but Paul remembered what his parents had told him. He warned his friends not to steal, but they insisted they would not be caught.

Paul walked on his way home as his friends went to steal the fruit.

Those boys were caught by the farm owner, beaten and suspended from school for several weeks. Paul was thankful for the teaching of his parents as he continued with his studies. Which of those boys would you want to have been your son?

INTERPRETATION

The Israelites were commanded by God to remember the commandments. They were told to teach them to their children, to repeat them when they were at home, when they were walking along the way, when resting and when on duty. They were told to tie them on their hands and to wear them on their foreheads as a reminder. Also they were to write them on the door posts of their houses. Read from Deuteronomy 6:4-9.

In these ways the commandments would be so much a part of the lives of the children that they would always think of them. They would not forget what God had commanded in a time when they needed to know. The children would be able to obey God better because they had these teachings so obvious in their lives. They had not experienced as much with God as their parents had, and so they needed help in remembering his commandments.

In Ephesians 6:4 parents are told not to treat their children in a way that will make them angry. Instead, they should bring them up with Christian discipline and instructions. Children should learn early that God loves them and wants to save them. They should learn about Jesus and his death on the cross for the sin of all mankind. Because of what Jesus has

done, children should learn to want to love him too and serve him all their lives.

In 1 Timothy 3:4-5 we read that parents must be able to manage their families well and make their children obey them with respect.

All of these Scriptures help us know how to raise our children so they can be all God wants them to be. What then should be the desire of parents for their children? The first aim of Christian parents for their children should always be to lead them to know God and to accept God's Son, Jesus, as their Saviour. Children should know that God made them and then he gave his only Son to be their Saviour. Therefore they belong to him and should seek his will for their lives. Like Old Testament people, we should have the responsibility of teaching our children the Word of God. They will remember best what they learn at home. Many parents think that schools and churches are responsible for teaching and disciplining the children. They forget that the child is at home much more than he is at church. Although he is in school many hours, some teachers are not Christians. They are not able to teach God's Word to the children. It is at home where children should get a firm foundation for their lives.

Children learn much by what they see their parents doing or failing to do. They learn quickly that something is important to a parent, and so it will be important to them. If a child sees the parents going to church regularly, giving tithes and offerings, praying before meals and reading God's Word, they will learn that they too should do these things. Likewise, if a child sees his father staying away from church services, he will decide that church is not important for him.

Parents should desire that their children learn the power of prayer. If they see parents praying over the problems they

have, the children will soon learn that they can ask God to help them too.

Parents should teach children the value of education and honest work. A child should never be used to gain money for the parents, but he should not get the idea that he should not do work.

APPLICATION TO MY LIFE

In African society in the days of long ago, it was a shame if parents failed to discipline their children well. Children began to learn in their early stages through riddles, tales and stories. Normally mothers had to deal with girls while fathers worked with boys. Their goals were to prepare these young people for their futures. Today the old system has been ignored in many cases. Children are left to grow up on their own. This has led them to learn many things that are not pleasing at all.

Often parents blame the children forgetting that they also ignored their responsibility for giving guidelines about bad and good behaviour. As future parents, what can you do in order to overcome these problems? Remember, God has commanded us to teach and discipline our children. We therefore must have visions and aims of fulfilling God's commands. Parents should not fear to teach their children about certain facts in life. For example, a mother finds it hard to teach her daughter about sex matters, or the father to teach the son. Because of the parents' fear, the children do not understand the things they need to know until problems arise.

Another problem that young parents say they face today is lack of knowledge on what to teach their young ones. They give the excuse that they were not taught. The church is ready to give more information to parents and children as a family.

The Bible has many teachings on how a child should be taught. Ask God to prepare you to be the good parent he would like for you to be. Decide now that you will be responsible to teach your children the things they need to know. Take advantage of the opportunity to read and make notes of things that will help you be a good parent when that time comes.

Ask for wisdom from God who is all wise.

THINGS TO DO

1. Pray that God will prepare you to be a good parent when that time comes.
2. Why have parents today ignored their responsibility of teaching children? What will you do about this?

CHAPTER NINE

WHO SHOULD DISCIPLINE CHILDREN?

AIM: I will learn that parents have the responsibility to discipline their children.

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURES: Hebrews 12:5-11; Proverbs 3:11-12; 13:24; 29:15-17

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURES: Hebrews 12:5-11; Proverbs 3:11-12; 13:24; 29:15-17

MEMORY VERSE: "He who spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is diligent to discipline him" (Proverbs 13:24).

A STUDY OF THE LESSON

INTRODUCTION

Stephen and Martha are parents who brought up their only son during hard times. The only thing they had was a piece of land and two cows. At the age of seven, the boy was left to do things on his own with limitless boundaries. The parents did not bother to teach him how to differentiate right from wrong.

As days went by things began to change, until one day the boy decided to take someone else's property. The young man started with things like plates, a cooking pot and a chicken. Then it was goats, sheep and cows. Whenever he took the stolen things home, his father and mother received them with open hands. They blindly encouraged the boy by appreciating his foolish actions.

The boy went on stealing from neighbours, until they began to complain. Then one night he stole a cow that belonged to the village elder. Soon some people were appointed to find out who the thief was. Within a short time the boy was caught. As he watched over the stolen cow, he heard an abrupt noise behind him. "He is here, we've found the thief." He could not escape, and he was taken away to the jail.

What was this boy's problem? Do you think he might have developed different habits if his parents had taught him differently? What decisions can you make now that will prevent this happening in your family in the future? What does the Bible say about this? Let us look at this today.

INTERPRETATION

The Bible reminds us that God never forgets to encourage his children, and we must pay attention now or regret it later. (Hebrews 12:5-11)

The Lord corrects everyone whom he loves and punishes everyone whom he accepts as a son. Likewise human parents punish their children, and they respect them. Those who are disciplined will reap the reward of a righteous life in the future.

When you look at some young people today you can see that they will have difficulties ahead of them. Much of this is due to their parents' failure to love and discipline their children at their early age. If you want your children to be good, kind, tolerant, appreciative, honest and unselfish people in the future, you must teach them from childhood. You can help to shape your child's life.

Proverbs 13:24 shows us that if we do not punish our sons we do not love them. If we love them, then we must correct them. Children need to be warned and corrected, because they often do wrong things without knowing. It may be necessary to whip them sometimes, but it is always necessary to discuss the problem together. This will enable them to understand what you do not like and why it is wrong.

Some parents think schools are there to discipline their children on their behalf. In taking this attitude, they are disobeying God's command for parents to discipline children. To make sure you have given your child right attitudes for the future, you must take your responsibility as a parent. In Proverbs 29:15-17 we are told that correction and discipline are good for children. It adds that a child left to his/her own way will bring shame to his mother. Verse 16 reminds us that when evil men are in power, crime increases. But the righteous will live to see the downfall of such men.

In verse 17, parents are encouraged to discipline their children so they can be proud of them. Truly, if a parent gives the child clear and good directions in life, he/she will appear worthy

and responsible. Indeed, God expects every parent to take this important responsibility for disciplining their children. Otherwise parents will be held responsible for their children's wrong doing. A responsible child will come from a family where love and discipline have been well balanced. It is a command from God. Take it and apply it.

APPLICATION TO MY LIFE

Can you imagine how you will carry out your responsibility to discipline your children?

Before helping someone else to change his behaviour you must make your own relationship with God and man to be right. Then God will help you to do what he expects of you in every way. Discipline is not only punishing the child for doing wrong. It is teaching him to fulfil his responsibility at home, in school and in all the relationships in life. Discipline helps in forming correct attitudes in mind and character. A child learns how he is expected to react to events in life by discipline.

Parents are also responsible to teach their children the basic things he or she will need to know in taking care of himself and his home. Many girls come to the time when they get married without knowing how to cook or clean the house. The parents say they are unable to teach them because the house girl does the work in the home. What kind of wife and mother will such a girl become?

Boys grow to become fathers, but they do not understand the role of a father. The reason is that the father comes home late and hardly has any time to be with his sons. Who is to blame them?

Children must be disciplined in all types of work at home. Disciplining of a child is not a choice. It is God's command.

There is much evidence in churches today that parents have ignored their responsibility of child discipline. Children make noise by playing, going in and out and laughing and talking with friends. Why? Because children are not taught the importance of being quite and reverent in the church. It is not an easy task to control young children, but you must be consistent by applying both love and discipline to each child.

Parents should also use care in what they discuss in the presence of their children. They do not have the ability or the need to make decisions about many problems.

Make sure that your children know your relatives and friends, and teach them to respect grandparents and other elders. To balance love and discipline is a hard task; but through God, who is your strength and wisdom, all will be possible. Sometimes the love and discipline sound complicated, but when a parent shows love to a child, the child will always want to obey the parent to assure keeping that love.

THINGS TO DO

1. Ask God to show you areas of your own life that need discipline.
2. What will you decide to do about discipline in your home?
3. Why do you think God gave this command to parents?

CHAPTER TEN

THE FAMILY AT WORSHIP

AIM: I must learn how my family can worship God together.

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURES: Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Acts 2:46-47; Revelation 14:7

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON: Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Acts 2:46-47; Revelation 14:7

MEMORY VERSE: "And he said with a loud voice, 'Fear God and give him glory, for the hour of his judgment has come; and worship him who made heaven and earth, the sea and the fountains of water'" (Revelation 14:7).

A STUDY OF THE LESSON

INTRODUCTION

The term, worship, in the Bible is very broad, but the essential idea in the whole Bible is "service." As you think about family worship, remember that sin and Satan are real enemies of both Christians and non-Christians all over the world. Satan does not want you to have worship in your family. He will try to discourage you whenever he can, but Jesus will help you and you will learn to worship God in spirit and in truth. (John 4:24)

Family worship is not a new concept in Africa. Parents used to teach their children daily after evening meals. They instructed them on how to face life in the future. Parents knew God as the Creator who made man and commanded him to obey him always. Fathers would teach their sons while mothers taught the daughters. They taught them how to accept responsibility by choosing right from wrong. They assured the children that

the Creator would see their deeds and prove them either right or wrong.

They did not use Bibles, but those parents knew their responsibility to teach their children. It should remain our prayer and practice to revive the old system of family worship into biblical family worship, where the family gets together to study and learn the living Word of God.

INTERPRETATION

In Deuteronomy 6:4-9 the Israelites were told to love God with all their hearts, soul and strength. They were told not to forget the commands given to them. Verse 7 says they were to teach the commandments to their children, to repeat them when at home and when they were away, when resting and when working. They were to tie the commandments on their arms and wear them on their foreheads as a reminder. They were to write the commandments on the doorposts of their houses and on their gates.

Many people who come across these verses do not take them seriously at all! Why? They think they understand the needs of their children better than God. That is why they have ignored their responsibility of teaching children even how to worship God. Proverbs 22:6 says that parents should teach their children the way they should live, and they will never forget it.

Family worship is a very important time for Christians, both parents and children. Children will learn from their parents that which is required of them by God. Some people think little children are not capable of learning things so they think teaching them is a waste of time. It must be understood that children can learn well if a good method is used to teach them. If you can think back to your young years, you can remember many things you heard at the age of 5-10 years. So

you should teach children that God loves them and in turn they will love God.

They can learn how to pray in family worship and how to do different activities in the church. Children can easily memorize the prayer from Matthew 6:9-13. You must keep on reminding them what God expects of them from childhood to their old age. They must know and understand that everything they see in the world was created by God. Revelation 14:7b says, "... worship him who made heaven and earth, the sea and the fountains of water." When walking show them plants, birds and animals as God's creatures. When eating let them know that God is good and kind, and he made all the food they have. Remind them often that when people talk to God through prayer he listens. He always provides our needs.

In family worship, children should be taught how to behave well with others and that they should always keep quiet in worship services unless they are using their voices in the worship. Thanking God at times of need and when help comes is one factor contributing to Christian maturity. Praying for other people, even enemies, is another factor. A child must know how to be faithful to parents and to God to be the best he can possibly be. That child also needs to learn to share what he has, whether it is much or little. God has commanded us to give and to be kind to others.

Deuteronomy 6: 9 says to write the command on the doorposts and on the gates. One pastor said he often saw pictures of the Aga Kahn in the homes of his followers. In Christian homes, however, the walls are decorated with wedding pictures and calendars. Pictures are good aids for teaching children.
for teaching children.

Acts 2:46-47 shows that believers had their meals together in their homes, eating with glad and humble hearts, praising God

and enjoying the good will of all the people. It is through family worship that parents and children can do God's will in one accord.

APPLICATION TO MY LIFE

In the current generation many parents have ignored their responsibilities of taking time to bring their families together for worship, guidance and counselling. Young people today should take time for their Christian growth. Some may ask, "What if there is no Christian worship in my home?" It will be your responsibility to pray and try to start it. Talk to your parents about what you feel in starting family worship. If they agree, arrange a time together when it will be convenient for all members in the home to participate. The worship service should include prayers, songs suitable for the ages of those present, Bible reading, interpreting those verses and applying them to today's life. It is good to learn to memorize verses of Scripture. In the end one can lead in prayer, while the rest repeat after him/her. As you pray thank God and ask for guidance for the needs you have at that time. Pray for other people who have needs, and pray that God will continue to strengthen your family worship.

If you should meet opposition to beginning family worship, just pray about it. It may take a short time or a long time for your prayers to be answered. Whatever time it may take remain faithful in your private worship. Be humble and obedient to your parents, and God will answer your prayers in his own time.

As the head of the family it would be best for the father to take the lead in family worship. If he does not want to do it, the mother can lead. Otherwise, any other Christian can do it. This is the time, when the family can learn the Word of God, grow strong in the faith and remain close to God. We should

also remember the blessing of worship in the church where parents can arrange for their family to sit together. Then the parents can know that their children are not disturbing anyone else. They are learning together about God.

THINGS TO DO

1. Pray that God will give you courage to start family worship and that you will continue it in your future family.
2. If you have family worship in your home, write some ways you are being blessed by it.
3. If there is no family worship in your home, talk to your parents about starting it.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

GOD'S COMMANDS TO THE CHILD

AIM: I will learn that children should obey their parents, and adult children should honour their parents.

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURES: Exodus 20:12; Ephesians 6:1-3; Matthew 19:19; Romans 5:19

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON: Ephesians 6:1-3; Luke 2:51; Colossians 3:20; Proverbs 13:1; 1 Peter 1:14

MEMORY VERSE: "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 'Honour your father and mother' (this is the first commandment with a promise)" (Ephesians 6:1-2).

A STUDY OF THE LESSON

INTRODUCTION

Being faithful and obedient to God and trusting in his promises will give strength to the weak. Their failures can be turned to successes, and those who had despaired can begin to

have hope. But those who are disobedient to God have no hope of eternity.

Disobedience results in regret, disaster and sadness. A good example comes from the Bible, 1 Samuel 2:12-36. This is the story of Eli and his sons. Eli was the priest of the Lord, and he stayed in the tent of the Lord. His two sons were also priests who offered sacrifices to God in the tent at Shiloh. The sons of Eli sinned against God and did not listen to their father's warnings against doing wrong things in the house of God. They paid no attention to the regulations concerning what the priest could demand from people. When the Israelites offered their sacrifices to God, Eli's sons ate the best part of the animal which was supposed to be burnt for God. They treated the Lord's offerings with disrespect.

Eli, who was then an old man, heard the complaints from people who went to Shiloh to offer sacrifices. His sons were even sleeping with the women who worked at the entrance to the tent of meeting.

Eli warned his sons and told them to stop the evil things they were doing, but they would not listen to their father. So the Lord decided to kill them. Through the prophet, God told Eli that he would remove the priestly leadership from his family. His clan would always be poor, and both sons would die on the same day. Read 1 Samuel 4 to see how both sons died in battle with the Philistines. Disobedience is sin, and the wages of sin is death.

INTERPRETATION

God does not allow disobedience at all. Obedience is very important. When the Israelites failed to obey God on their journey to Canaan, they always experienced his punishment. Because Jonah refused to obey God, he made his bed in the

belly of a fish for three days. Jonah reported that it was not a comfortable place to be.

In Ephesians 6:1-3, children are commanded to obey their parents as their Christian duty. It is the right thing to do. Children are told to obey father and mother, which is the first commandment that has a promise added to it. If they obey, all will go well with them, and they will live a long time in the land. Children are always to obey their parents, for this is what pleases God. (Read Colossians 3:20.)

Respect to parents draws one closer to God who is the provider of peace, joy and prosperity in life. This is the goal of every person right from childhood. After going to the temple, Jesus went back to Nazareth with his parents, and he was obedient to them. (Luke 2:51)

Children should obey and respect their parents for it is their Christian duty. It is a command to all children of all backgrounds. Parents are their guides, so they need to follow their advice.

Disobedience always results in sorrow and regret. If you want to be a good, responsible person in the community tomorrow, you must listen to and respect your parents today. Proverbs 13:1 tells us that a wise son pays attention when being corrected.

APPLICATION TO MY LIFE

Think of some of the things your parents did for you when you were younger. They provided your food, clothing, school fees, medicines and other things. They kept you safe from harm and taught you many things about life.

Think again of how you behave with your parents. Do you show that you appreciate them? What is the best way you

could show that you are grateful to them for all they have done for you? It is by respecting them and obeying them.

There are some definite ways you can show your appreciation. When school is closed you could go home and help them with their work. You can be responsible in the care and use of the things they have given you. Even your work at school can show your appreciation for your parents' sacrifice so you could go to school. Are you doing the best you can in your studies? This is your time to prepare for your future. If you use your time wisely, you can express your thanks to your parents.

You must give them total obedience by going where you are sent and doing what you are told to do. You should heed the warnings your parents give you. In the story in the Introduction, if Eli's sons had paid attention to their father's warning against doing wrong in the house of God, they would not have died. If your parents warn you against doing something, they know the danger that is there. It is very important for children to listen to their parents and obey them. They may be old and illiterate, but they may have great wisdom. Furthermore, God has commanded children to obey their parents. It is not a choice for the child to make. It is a command of God. When a student fails to follow exam instructions he/she will fail the exam. What of those among us who have disobeyed God's instructions to obey their parents?

THINGS TO DO

1. Read your Memory Verse daily before going to bed, and learn to say it without reading it.
2. Can you remember a time you obeyed your parents although you really wanted to do something else? What happened?

3. Pray that God will help you be obedient to your parents and forgive you where you have gone wrong.

CHAPTER TWELVE

WHOM SHOULD I MARRY?

AIM: I will learn that God has a perfect plan for my life, and he will lead me in the choice of a mate.

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURES: 2 Corinthians 6:14-15; Genesis 24; Hebrews 13:4

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON: 2 Corinthians 6:14-15; Genesis 24; Hebrews 13:4

MEMORY VERSE: "Do not be mismatched with unbelievers. For what partnership have righteousness and iniquity? Or what fellowship has light with darkness?" (2 Corinthians 6:14).

A STUDY OF THE LESSON

INTRODUCTION

Sarah was a beautiful girl 24 years old when she married. She was born of Christian parents and had confessed before the Church that she would follow Christ as her personal Saviour. At the age of 22 she had completed her studies and was employed in the town as a secretary. There she met John, a co-worker.

John promised to marry Sarah soon. She admired the boy so much that, whenever he was away, she felt very lonely. She only felt happy being with him. John was not a devoted Christian, but he was rich enough. He looked handsome and seemed to make genuine decisions. He always took Sarah to interesting places. "Perhaps he will become a Christian after

we are married," Sarah thought. "Then we can serve the Lord together."

Two years later, they were married. Soon they began to have trouble. Two people who were so different in character and faith could not stay together happily for life. Sarah lived a life of dissatisfaction.

INTERPRETATION

The marriage plan was made by God, and all who intend to marry must know what God wants them to do. The apostle Paul wrote about one great fact that should not be overlooked when choosing a life partner. He says we should not mix with unbelievers. We should marry people of our faith.

We can find many things in Genesis 24 which should be considered before marriage. Abraham wanted his son Isaac to get a wife from his homeland, the place where he was born. A servant was sent, and he brought Isaac a wife from there. Abraham wanted Isaac to marry a person with common interests and one who could share the same experiences instead of marrying a foreigner.

In verse 6 we learn that, before the servant began the journey, Abraham had faith that the Lord would find his son a wife. The servant took ten camels and went to northern Mesopotamia. On arrival at the well, he prayed that the Lord would keep his promise to his master. In verses 16-28 we see that the Lord brought out a beautiful, young girl who was a virgin. The girl filled her jar with water. The servant wanted a drink, and the girl gave him enough water for himself and for all his camels. When the servant saw this, he gave the girl, Rebecca, a golden ring and bracelets. Rebecca knew that God was working a miracle in her life, and she went to tell the whole story to her mother's household.

In verses 50-61, we find that when Abraham's servant came in, the family and Rebecca wanted to put God first. They knew it was God's will, and they did not hesitate. Rebecca followed Abraham's servant to her husband, Isaac. Isaac loved Rebecca very much.

When Abraham wanted a wife for his son, he had faith in God. He told his eldest servant that God would find his son a wife. Everyone who wants to marry must have faith that God will provide a partner. The Lord who provided for Abraham provides for all. The Bible teaches that we can inherit many things from our father, but we can only get a partner from God. Read Proverbs 19:14.

Abraham wanted his son to marry from his own homeland, someone with common interests. Couples who marry should be of the same faith and should have common objectives. In 2 Corinthians 6:14-16, Paul says that Christians should not be mismatched with unbelievers as light and darkness cannot stay together. In Genesis 24, we see that Isaac could have found many girls in Canaan to be his wife, but they were of the world. In our Introduction, Sarah made the mistake of marrying John because of his outside appearance and the good times he gave her. And as a result their love ended quickly. Two people of different faiths and characters cannot stay together. The Bible says, "You shall not plough with an ox and an ass together" (Deuteronomy 22:10).

Some people marry non-Christians with the hope that they will one day change their faith. This is contrary to Bible teachings. In 2 Corinthians 6:17, Christians are told to separate themselves from the non-Christians, and God will welcome them.

APPLICATION TO MY LIFE

Those who intend to marry must have a pure life before God. While Abraham's servant waited at the well, the Lord brought a beautiful girl who was also a virgin. Rebecca had kept herself pure because she wanted to please God more than men.

Hebrews 13:4 teaches, "Let marriage be held in honour among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled; for God will judge the immoral and adulterous." A Christian must fear God so that person is pure before him.

When Abraham's servant asked for water to drink, the girl was willing to water the camels too. This shows that Rebecca was a girl who was kind and neighbourly. She was also intelligent, bold, adventurous and ambitious. Marriage partners should be of the same character.

Another fact to notice is how your partner treats his or her parents. When Rebecca got the news, she went to her mother's household and explained the whole story. Rebecca honoured her parents even in marriage. This should be true of everyone. "Honour your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land which the Lord your God gives you" (Exodus 20:12).

Couples should be willing to put Christ first in their lives. In Genesis 24:50-51, 58, Rebecca and her family knew it was God's plan that she should be married to Isaac, therefore they did not disagree with the servant. When a Christian wants a partner, he should understand God's will and be ready to put God first, before and after marriage. Jesus said, "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well" (Matthew 6:33).

It is only in Jesus that a marriage alliance can be safely found.

THINGS TO DO

1. When thinking about who you will marry, what should you consider? Make a list of those things.
2. Is it important that you marry someone from your own country? What about your tribe?
3. Is it important that you choose someone from your own church? Why?
4. Pray that the Lord will lead you to a partner suitable for you for his glory.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

WHO SHOULD CHOOSE MY PARTNER?

AIM: I will learn to depend on God to choose my mate, but I will honour my parents in all things including this very important matter.

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURES: Exodus 20:12; Jeremiah 29:11-13

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON: Exodus 20:12; Jeremiah 29:11-13

MEMORY VERSE: "Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you stand firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel" (Philippians 1:27).

A STUDY OF THE LESSON

INTRODUCTION

Susanna lived at home and attended a secondary school not

far away. James came from a nearby town where he lived in a small house. He worked when he had to have money, but he did not keep any job very long.

Sometimes James took Susanna riding in his car while school was in session. They often went to his house and stayed there several hours. Eventually she became more interested in James and his activities than she was in school. Her grades went lower and lower as her absences increased.

One evening James and Susanna decided to live together as man and wife. They did not tell their families, and it was four days before Susanna's parents knew where she was. Then James went to her home with her to get her clothes. He told her father he had married Susanna.

Susanna and James had started a married life without the knowledge of their parents. In doing this they dishonoured their parents and did not receive their blessings on their marriage. They did not ask God to be a part of their marriage.

INTERPRETATION

In this story we see that James and Susanna did not involve God or their parents in their marriage. God should take first place in our lives. Read Jeremiah 29:11-14. Here we have his promise. God knows the best plan for our lives. He promises us a future and a hope. He allows us the privilege of praying to him knowing he is listening.

What does God require of us? He requires that we seek him earnestly. We must seek him with all our hearts. We must earnestly want to know and to do God's will. Then we will experience his blessing.

When we choose a partner, we are making a choice which will affect our whole life. If we fail to involve God in such an

important matter, we shall surely suffer. God should come first. We must obey him more than anyone else.

"House and wealth are inherited from fathers, but a prudent wife is from the Lord" (Proverbs 19:14).

Susanna also neglected her parents. This is a violation of God's law. Exodus 20:12 says, "Honour your father and your mother...."

Honour should be given to anyone who is superior to another. This law says to honour both parents. This is the first of God's commandments regarding man's dealings with other people. This shows the command is vitally important. Read the rest of that verse from your Bible. It tells us that when we honour our parents the days of our life are prolonged. There is the promise of longer life when we obey this command.

Therefore parents should be honoured even in marriage. In Genesis 24:28, we read that when Abraham's servant who had been sent to get a wife for Isaac met Rebecca and talked to her, Rebecca ran to her mother's household to explain to her. Rebecca did not make her marriage to Isaac a secret or a personal affair. She made it clear that her parents were also concerned. In verses 50 and 51 we find that Laban and Bethuel granted permission for the servant to take Rebecca to his master. They did not oppose the marriage. Parents should not oppose their children's choices without genuine reasons. Read Ephesians 6:4. Parents should be honoured, and they should work with their children so everyone can be happy.

APPLICATION TO MY LIFE

Young people who want to marry should work with their parents so everyone will be happy about the marriage. They should pray together and ask God to lead them in these important decisions. Then the marriage will be based on God.

If both partners are seeking to do his will, and all parents also want to serve God, then all decisions can be made in a way that will honour him and bring happiness to all.

What happens if one partner is not a Christian? Read chapter 12 of this book again if you do not remember what it said. Also read 2 Corinthians 6:14-16.

What happens if a Christian young man or woman comes from a non-Christian home? This is often true. In these cases the young people should be very careful to give a strong Christian testimony before their parents. They should pray that God will help them show the parents the way to Christ through this experience. It may mean waiting longer until the parents are convinced that this young man and woman should be man and wife. It will be very important to try diligently to get the blessings of both sets of parents.

In all things, it is important to do as we are taught in 2 Timothy 2:15: "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth."

THINGS TO DO

1. Think of how you will get your marriage partner. Whom will you consult?
2. Think of your own family. What kind of testimony can you give before them to help them come closer to God?
3. Why is it necessary that you should honour your parents in the matter of your marriage partner?
4. Pray that when the time for your marriage comes you will be able to depend on the Lord in every decision.