

Seeking an Undivided Heart

*Teach me Your Way, O Lord, and I will walk in Your truth;
give me an undivided heart, that I may fear Your name.”*

Psalm 86:11

Turning Hearts

M I N I S T R I E S

**Turning Hearts is a non-profit, Bible-teaching
and discipling-making ministry with a particular
mission to strengthen and encourage families.**

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LESSON ONE:

A Prayer and a Promise

A number of years ago, a friend of mine pointed out two passages of Scripture to me that immediately captured my attention. As I meditated on these verses, the Lord began to formulate in my mind the study that we are about to embark upon together. I don't believe that this study is by any means complete. To me, it is just a beginning to which a lot will be added as we study God's Word together during this seminar. But the materials that I have prepared so far have come from the sincere desire to know God and His ways and are grounded in the conviction that the truth may be discovered through diligent study of His Word.

The Prayer: Psalm 86:11

*Teach me your way, O Lord, and I will walk in Your truth;
give me **an undivided heart**, that I may fear Your name.*

The Promise: Ezekiel 11:19, 20; 36:26 - 28

*I will give you **an undivided heart** and put a new spirit in you;
I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart
of flesh. Then you will follow My decrees and be careful to keep
My laws. You will be My people and I will be Your God.*

O. T. Teaching on an Undivided Heart: Deuteronomy 6:4, 5; Leviticus 19:18b

*Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.
Love the Lord your God with **all your heart**
and with all your soul and with all your strength.

... love your neighbor as yourself. I am the Lord.*

Jesus' Teaching on an Undivided Heart: Matthew 22:34-40; Mark 12:28-34

*'Love the Lord your God with **all your heart** and with all your soul and with all your mind.'* This is the first and greatest commandment. *And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'* All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.

Further Study:

Scriptural Use and Understanding of the Word, "Heart":

- Consistent in Hebrew and Greek thought
- The "center" of a person's being
- The "spiritual man"; soul
- The seat of desires, will, emotions, knowledge, wisdom, conscience, moral character

Some Working Definitions:

- An Undivided Heart - the description of a person whose fundamental motivations, hopes, dreams, desires, values, and loves are centered on God.
- A Divided Heart - the description of a person who puts someone or something before God - that person is an idolater.

Scripture on a "Divided Heart":

Scripture Passage

Principle Taught

Revelation 3:15a, 16

A divided heart is distasteful to God.

James 1:8

A divided heart causes a person to be unstable in every area of life.

1 John 2:15

A divided heart prevents a person from having the love of God in him.

Matthew 6:24

A divided heart keeps a person from serving God effectively.

James 4:4

A divided heart is described in God's Word as hatred towards God.

Matthew 10:37, 38

A divided heart was described by Jesus as unworthy of Him.

Scripture on the Importance of the Heart:

Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the well-spring of life.

Prov. 4:23

There are a lot of examples in the Bible of people who give evidence of a divided heart, and there are many things that the Bible reveals that can divide the heart.

- Cain - jealousy?
- Esau - immediate gratification
- Lot - material things
- Solomon - lust
- Nebuchadnezzar/Belshazzar - fame, power
- Ananias and Sapphira - greed, lies
- Peter - fear

But, ultimately, it all comes down to the primary sin that caused Lucifer and man to fall from a right relationship to God: **PRIDE - the god of self.** (C. S. Lewis, Mere Christianity, pp. 111-112.)

Like Lucifer and Adam and Eve, we all know the tendency we have to focus upon ourselves rather than on God. As a result, it is reasonable to ask questions like:

- What if it can't be done"
 - What if I can't have an undivided heart?
-
- Mention The Scots Worthies and A Cloud of Witnesses
 - Mention Fox's Book of Martyrs
 - Read Jesus Freaks, pp. 109 & 124.

Remember: the Prayer of Psalm 86:11, and
the Promise of Ezekiel 11:19, 20; 36:26-28

Further encouragement if you recognize the dividedness of your heart:
Read "The Room" from Joshua Harris' I Kissed Dating Goodbye.

THE ROOM *by Joshua Harris*

In that place between wakefulness and dreams, I found myself in the room. There were no distinguishing features save for the one wall covered with small index card files. They were like the ones in libraries that list titles by author or subject in alphabetical order. But these files, which stretched from floor to ceiling and seemingly endlessly in either direction, had very different headings. As I drew near the wall of files, the first to catch my attention was one that read "Girls I Have Liked". I opened it and began flipping through the cards. I quickly shut it, shocked to realize that I recognized the names written on each one.

And then without being told, I knew exactly where I was. This lifeless room with its small files was a crude catalog system for my life. Here were written the actions of my every moment, big and small, in a detail my memory couldn't match. A sense of wonder and curiosity, coupled with horror, stirred within me as I began randomly opening files and exploring their content. Some brought joy and sweet memories; others a sense of shame and regret so intense that I would look over my shoulder to see if anyone was watching.

A file named "Friends" was next to one marked "Friends I Have Betrayed". The titles ranged from the mundane to the outright weird. "Books I Have Read", "Lies I Have Told", "Comfort I Have Given", "Jokes I Have Laughed At". Some were almost hilarious in their exactness: "Things I've Yelled at My Brothers." Others I couldn't laugh at: "Things I Have Done in My Anger", "Things I Have muttered Under My Breath at My Parents". I never ceased to be surprised by the contents. Often there were many more cards than I expected. Sometimes fewer than I hoped.

I was overwhelmed by the sheer volume of the life I had lived. Could it be possible that I had the time in my 16 years to write each of these thousands or even millions of cards? But each card confirmed this truth. Each was written in my own handwriting. Each signed with my signature. When I pulled out the file marked "Songs I Have Listened To", I realized the files grew to contain their contents. The cards were packed tightly, and yet after two or three yards, I hadn't found the end of the file. I shut it, shamed, not so much by the quality of music, but more by the vast amount of time I knew that file represented.

When I came to a file marked "Lustful Thoughts", I felt a chill run through my body. I pulled the file out only an inch, not willing to test its size, and drew out a card. I shuddered at its detailed content. I felt sick to think that such a moment had been recorded.

An almost animal rage broke on me. One thought dominated my mind: "No one must ever see these cards! No one must ever see this room! I have to destroy them!" In an insane frenzy I yanked the file out. Its size didn't matter now. I had to empty it and burn the cards. But as I took it at one end and began pounding it on the floor, I could not dislodge a single card. I became desperate and pulled out a card, only to find it as strong as steel when I tried to tear it.

Defeated and utterly helpless, I returned the file to its slot. Leaning my forehead against the wall, I let out a long, self-pitying sigh. And then I saw it. The title bore "People I Have Shared the Gospel With".

The handle was brighter than those around it, newer, almost unused. I pulled on its handle and a small box not more than three inches long fell into my hands. I could count the cards it contained on one hand.

And then the tears came. I began to weep. Sobs so deep that the hurt started in my stomach and shook through me. I fell on my knees and cried. I cried out of shame, from the overwhelming shame of it all. The rows of file shelves swirled in my tear-filled eyes. No one must ever, ever know of this room. I must lock it up and hide the key. But then as I pushed away the tears, I saw Him. No, please not Him. Not here. Oh, anyone but Jesus. I watched helplessly as He began to open the files and read the cards. I couldn't bear to watch His response. And in the moments I could bring myself to look at His face, I saw a sorrow deeper than my own. He seemed to intuitively go to the worst boxes. Why did He have to read every one?

Finally, He turned and looked at me from across the room. He looked at me with pity in His eyes. But this was a pity that didn't anger me. I dropped my head, covered my face with my hands and began to cry again.

He walked over and put His arm around me. He could have said so many things. But He didn't say a word. He just cried with me.

Then He got up and walked back to the wall of files. Starting at one end of the room, He took out a file and, one by one, began to sign His name over mine on each card. "No!" I shouted rushing to Him. All I could find to say was "No, no," as I pulled the card from Him. His name shouldn't be on these cards. But there it was, written in red so rich, so dark, so alive. The name of Jesus covered mine. It was written with His blood. He gently took the card back. He smiled a sad smile and began to sign the cards. I don't think I'll ever understand how He did it so quickly, but the next instant it seemed I heard Him close the last file and walk back to my side. He placed His hand on my shoulder and said, "It is finished." I stood up, and He led me out of the room. There was no lock on its door. There were still cards to be written.

LESSON TWO:

Heart Evaluation

If we are going to pursue the ideal of an undivided heart with any degree of seriousness, it seems that an important step is an honest evaluation of the present condition of our hearts. What follows is a Biblical and practical approach to conducting such an assessment.

Biblical Examples to Use in "Heart Evaluation":

- **The Rich Young Ruler** Mark 10:17-22
Here is an example of an unsaved person whose heart is turned away from Christ toward earthly things.
- **Lot** Genesis 13, 19 2 Peter 2:7, 8
Here is an example of a "justified" (saved) person whose heart is turned away from God toward earthly things.
- **Abraham** Hebrews 11:8-19
Here is a contrasting example to Lot of a man whose heart is turned away from things that logically would grip his heart from an earthly perspective - the Promised Land and the promised son - and instead, is turned toward God.

Biblical Strategy to Use in "Heart Evaluation":

<p><i>Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.</i> Matthew 6:21</p>
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- In other words, what you value most will be what you really love most.

A Practical Strategy to Use in "Heart Evaluation":

- Be brutally honest with yourself about what you treasure.

A Practical Method to Use in Examining What We Value:

No one of the following will itself reveal what we value most. But taken as a whole, the following kinds of things can shed light on that which is most important to us.

- What we talk about (Deut. 6:6-9; 11:18-21; 32:46-47)

- How we spend our money
- What we defend
- What makes us forget about what others think
- What we devote time to; what we expend our energies on; what we pursue
- What we spend "spare" time on
- How we choose to identify ourselves; what we identify with (ex. Mr., Mrs. _)
- How we think about and conduct our social relationships
- What we seek to develop an intimate knowledge of
- What unites our mind (reasoning, imagination); emotions (hopes, dreams); will (decisions, obedience) Matt. 6:24 ("cannot serve two masters")

Following God's Treasure Map:

On the left are listed some of the central things that we expend a lot of effort pursuing for ourselves. God cares about us, and He cares about these things for us. Look up the verses on the right to reveal God's strategy for our life's "treasure".

What I Treasure

God's Directions

"I want to make sure my needs are met."

Matthew 6:33

"I want to make my dreams come true;
to have my deepest desires."

Psalms 37:4

"I want to plan for and map out my future;
to know where I am going."

Proverbs 3:5, 6

Did you recognize what God is saying in these verses?

God wants us to have our needs met; He wants us to have our deepest desires; He wants us to have a secure future; but He has designed only one way for this to happen: **He wants us to run after Him with undivided devotion.**

LESSON THREE:

Turning the Heart Toward God

Turning the Heart:

When we have honestly evaluated the condition of our hearts, especially in relationship to God's plans for us, we can see that we have a need for getting our hearts turned in the right direction. "Turning the heart" is the language of the Bible, and it can be both positive and negative. We will look first at some positive teaching from the Old and New Testaments concerning the "turning of the heart."

God's Desire and Plan for the Turning of Our Hearts:

- Malachi 4:5, 6 See, I will send you the prophet Elijah before that great and dreadful day of the Lord comes. **He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers;** or else I will come and strike the land with a curse."
- Luke 1:17 And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, **to turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous** - to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.

Now if God gives a message at the very end of the Old Testament before four hundred years of silence from God, and after that complete silence gives the same message as His first message in the New Testament era, you might get the idea that this is a very important message!

"To make ready a people prepared for the Lord"

- Prepared for:
- 1) judgment
 - 2) service
 - 3) purity

God's primary method for making ready "a people prepared for" Himself has a lot to do with the turning of father's (parents') hearts to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers (parents).

God's Way Versus the World's Way

We began this study with the theme prayer found in Psalm 86:11. The prayer begins with a petition to God that He teach us His way. If this prayer would be the cry of our hearts, we must be motivated by the sincere desire to follow in God's way. Fundamentally, there are really only two ways that we might follow: God's way and the "world's" way. Colossians 1:21 and Romans 5:10 reveal that before salvation we are "enemies of God," specifically "enemies of God in (our) minds." (Col. 1:21) In other words, outside of Christ all of us have understood and followed a "way" that is opposite of God's way. If renewal of the mind (Romans 12:2) is taking place through God's Truth, we will continually be confronted with things that we perhaps have always thought were all right, but now we find were not God's way at all. When we encounter these things, we must ask ourselves: "What will I do? Will I hold on to these things because they have been 'my way' all along, or will I be willing to leave them behind in order to follow the way that God is now revealing to me?"

A Closer Look at Psalm 86:11

Teach me Your way, O Lord

- implies a rejection of my own way (and of the world's way)

And I will walk in Your Truth

- a lifestyle and pathway consistent with God's perspective

Give me an undivided heart

- a single-minded commitment of mind, emotions, will, and values

That I may fear Your name

- the beginning of wisdom

Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path.

Psalm 119:105

Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a Voice behind you, saying, 'This is the way; walk in it.'

Isaiah 30:21

God's Way Versus The World's Way

Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world - the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes, and the boasting of what he has and does - come not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.

1 John 2:15-17

Scripture on God's Way

- Isaiah 55:6-9* *Seek the Lord while He may be found; call on Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake His way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the Lord, and He will have mercy on him, and to our God, for He will freely pardon. 'For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways,' declares the Lord. 'As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts'.*
- Psalms 18:30* *As for God, His way is perfect; the word of the Lord is flawless. He is a shield for all who take refuge in Him.*
- Psalms 145:17* *The Lord is righteous in all His ways and loving toward all He has made.*
- Daniel 4:37* *Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and exalt and glorify the King of heaven, because everything He does is right and all His ways are just. And those who walk in pride He is able to humble.*
- Hosea 14:9* *Who is wise? He will realize these things. Who is discerning? He will understand them. The ways of the Lord are right; the righteous walk in them, but the rebellious stumble in them.*
- Habakkuk 3:6* *He stood, and shook the earth; He looked, and made the nations tremble. The ancient mountains crumbled and the age-old hills collapsed. His ways are eternal.*
- Isaiah 40:13, 14* *Who has understood the Spirit of the Lord, or instructed Him as His counselor? Whom did the Lord consult to enlighten Him, and who taught Him the right way? Who was it that taught Him knowledge or showed Him the path of understanding?*
- Romans 11:33-36* *Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable His judgments, and His paths beyond tracing out! Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been His counselor? Who has ever given to God that God should repay him? For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever! Amen.*

Scripture on the World's Way

- Proverbs 12:15 *The way of the fool seems right to him, but a wise man listens to advice.*
- Proverbs 14:12 *There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death.*
- Proverbs 15:9 *The Lord detests the way of the wicked, but He loves those who pursue righteousness.*
- Proverbs 13:15 *Good understanding wins favor, but the way of the unfaithful is hard (does not endure).*
- Matthew 7:13 *Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it.*
- Romans 1:18-32

The World's Way = Idolatry

- **hollow and deceptive philosophy** *See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principle of this world rather than on Christ. (Colossians 2:8)*
- **destined to perish** *These are all destined to perish with use, because they are based on human commands and teachings. (Colossians 2:22)*
- **nullifies the Word of God** *...thus you nullify the Word of God for the sake of your tradition. (Matthew 15:6; Mark 7:8)*
- **leads to judgment** *(Romans 2:1-8)*
- **Christians can fall prey** *Since you died with Christ to the basic principles of this world, why, as though you still belonged to it, do you submit to its rules? (Colossians 2:20)*

“Ins and Outs of It”

John Fischer

“In it, not of it, ” the statement was made
As Christian One faced the world, much afraid
“In it, not of it,” the call was made clear,
But Christian One got something stuck in his ear.
“Not in it, or of it” was the thing he heard,
And knowing the world was painfully absurd,
He welcomed the safety of pious retreat
And went to the potluck for something to eat.

Not Christian Two, he knew what to do,
He’d show those fundies a thing or two!
How will the world ever give Christ a try
If we don’t get in there and identify?
So, “In it and of it,” he said in his car,
As he pulled in and stopped at a popular bar.
“I’ll tell them the truth as soon as I’m able
To get myself out from under this table.”

Now along comes Christian Three, jogging for Jesus
In witnessing sweats made of four matching pieces.
His earphones are playing a hot Christian tune
About how the Lord is coming back soon.
“Not in it, but of it,” he turns down the hill
And stops for a bite at the Agape Grill.
Like the gold on the chain of his “God Loves You” bracelet,
He can have the world without having to face it.

While way up in heaven they lament these conditions
That come from changing a few prepositions.
“Not in it, or of it,” Christian One thought.
But who in the world will know that he’s not?
“In it, and of it,” thought Christian Two.
But who in the world will know that he knew?
“Not in it, but of it,” thought Christian Three.
But who in the world watches Christian TV?

And Jesus turns to Gabriel, shaking His head.

“In it, but not of it, wasn’t that what I said?”

LESSON FOUR:

Another Turning of the Heart

1 Kings 11:1-13

¹ King Solomon, however, loved many foreign women besides Pharaoh's daughter—Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians and Hittites. ² They were from nations about which the LORD had told the Israelites, "You must not intermarry with them, because they will surely turn your hearts after their gods." Nevertheless, Solomon held fast to them in love. ³ He had seven hundred wives of royal birth and three hundred concubines, and his wives led him astray. ⁴ As Solomon grew old, his wives turned his heart after other gods, and his heart was not fully devoted to the LORD his God, as the heart of David his father had been. ⁵ He followed Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and Molech the detestable god of the Ammonites. ⁶ So Solomon did evil in the eyes of the LORD; he did not follow the LORD completely, as David his father had done.

⁷ On a hill east of Jerusalem, Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the detestable god of Moab, and for Molech the detestable god of the Ammonites. ⁸ He did the same for all his foreign wives, who burned incense and offered sacrifices to their gods.

⁹ The LORD became angry with Solomon because his heart had turned away from the LORD, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice. ¹⁰ Although he had forbidden Solomon to follow other gods, Solomon did not keep the LORD's command. ¹¹ So the LORD said to Solomon, "Since this is your attitude and you have not kept my covenant and my decrees, which I commanded you, I will most certainly tear the kingdom away from you and give it to one of your subordinates. ¹² Nevertheless, for the sake of David your father, I will not do it during your lifetime. I will tear it out of the hand of your son. ¹³ Yet I will not tear the whole kingdom from him, but will give him one tribe for the sake of David my servant and for the sake of Jerusalem, which I have chosen."

Early in his reign, the supreme example of Solomon's wisdom was in his saving a baby; towards the end of his reign, he is putting up altars to the god of the Ammonites, Molech. A primary form of worship of the god, Molech, was the sacrifice of human babies.

What could change a man so much? What could turn a man's heart so much?

- The answer is idolatry. But it is not what you might think at first.
- Look back at verse 4. What (or who) "turned his heart"?
- What turned the heart of Solomon was not the worship of gods of wood or stone. **It was the idolatry of lust.**
- **Hosea 4:11** - The sin (along with alcohol) that "takes away the heart."

God's Way

Versus

the Idolatry of "Romance"

- founded on Biblical love
 - based on character and commitment
 - God's Word prioritizes self-sacrifice, mutual respect, and honoring one another above self
- founded on a false view of love
 - based on attraction and emotion
 - promotes self-interest, personal pleasure, and instant gratification

**American young people grow up in a culture where they come to understand all of what they call "love" in terms of the world's way and not God's way.
(see 1 Samuel 16:7)**

- Some studies of youth in the United States, using anonymous surveys, tell us that young people who regularly attend church or a Christian school admit that they are as sexually active as those whose education is completely secular.
- The United States has one of the highest divorce rates in the world (#10). Over 1 of every 2 marriages ends in divorce (53%).
- Other studies have reported that "born again" Christians are at least as likely to divorce as people who make no claim to Christianity.
- According to an over twenty-year-old study by Josh McDowell, young people who regularly attend church favor divorce for parents who no longer "love" each other by a margin of two to one.

From "The Way of the Wise: Teaching Teenagers about Sex", Paul David Tripp, The Journal of Biblical Counseling, Volume 13, Number 3, Spring 1995.

"The presence of overt sexual expression in our culture should not surprise us since it is rooted in a view of life that has 'exchanged the worship and service of the Creator for the worship and service of the created thing.' The view of life from which modern sexual expression emerges holds these 'truths' to be self-evident:

- 1. That people are ultimate and autonomous. That is, there is nothing more important than the individual; I am self-sustaining and free from any authority I do not choose to follow.*
- 2. That the highest of human values and experiences is personal satisfaction and pleasure. I am entitled to my share of pleasure and comfort.*
- 3. That I must be constantly vigilant that my 'needs' will be met.*

4. That the most important of loves is the love of self. Without this I will be unable to function.
5. That bigger pleasure is better - a constant desire for greater, more effective stimulation.
6. That what is important is the here and now, leading to a constant pursuit of instant gratification.
7. That the physical person is more important than the spiritual person, leading to an inordinate body focus.

In a culture that looks at people as ultimate, God as absent, and pleasure as the highest experience, it is no wonder that sexuality becomes such a dominant force. It provides a powerful pathway to instant physical pleasure. **It provides false worship (counterfeiting the first great command) and false relationship (counterfeiting the second great command).**

Romans 1:18-27 portrays sex as a principal way in which a person reveals who or what is really ruling his life. Sexual sin is by its very nature idolatrous; that is, it is a place where we refuse to live for God's glory, where we exchange worship and service of the Creator for worship and service of the created thing. Sexual sin is driven by the sinful desires of the heart rather than a desire to live by God's principles for His pleasure. It is a place where a person exchanges the protection and freedom of God's truth for a host of self-serving lies.

It is significant that when Paul talks about the sinner's rejection of God's revelation and glory, the primary fruits he discusses are inordinate sexual desire and sinful sexual behavior. Sex is presented in Scripture as a principal way a person expresses his submission to or rebellion against God. He submits his heart and body to God's higher agenda or uses heart and body to get what is pleasurable when and where he wishes."

I believe that there may be some things that equal it, but none that surpass the influence of a false and worldly view of love in turning the hearts of young people away from their parents, and ultimately, away from God.

God's Purpose in Marriage:

The foundational structure of human society is the marital union of a man and a woman for a lifetime. If we would understand God's ways with regard to family and seek a Biblical perspective on how God brings a man and woman together, we must look to God's Word to discover His purposes in marriage. Failure to understand God's purposes leads to confusion, wrong expectations, and division; things which are all too familiar problems in marriage today.

Romans 8:28 - 30

And we know that **in all things** God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to **His purpose**. For those God foreknew He also predestined **to be conformed to the likeness of His Son**, that He might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those He predestined, He also called; those He called, He also justified; those He justified, He also glorified.

**God's purpose in marriage - like His purpose in all things
for those who love Him - is to work for our good that we might
be conformed to the likeness of His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.**

God's purposes in marriage are Gospel purposes: Gen. 2:24; Eph. 5:25-33 - oneness pictures regeneration; Rom. 8:28 - conformity to His Son pictures sanctification; Malachi 2:15 - reproduction and adoption.

Problems in marriage often occur because one or both partners do not have God's purposes in mind. They do not desire to see their partner conformed to the likeness of Christ. Instead, they seek to conform the other to themselves or their idea of what a spouse should be.

Idolatry has been the foundation for many marriages.

(from teaching by Norm Wakefield)

- Idolatry masquerades as love, and that makes it dangerous.
- When an idol doesn't meet your need, you get rid of it.
- When the idol doesn't satisfy, you "carve" on it to meet your own image or desire.
- Idolatry has difficulty tolerating differences, difficulties, forgiveness, etc.
- If you give to get (idolatry) and it doesn't achieve the desired result, you're angry and hurt. These reactions betray fundamentally wrong motives.

LESSON FIVE:

Theme Verses & Some Deceptions of the World's Way

How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to Your Word.

Psalm 119:9

Your word I have hidden in my heart that I might not sin against You.

Psalm 119:11

In seeking to know God's ways, we must of course look first to His Word. Though we will be dealing with many different passages of Scripture throughout the Bible, we will begin with some "theme" passages:

Finally, brothers, we instructed you how to live in order to please God, as in fact you are living. Now we ask you and urge you in the Lord Jesus to do this more and more. For you know what instructions we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus. It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; that each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honorable, not in passionate lust like the heathen, who do not know God; and that in this matter no one should wrong his brother or take advantage of him. The Lord will punish men for all such sins, as we have already told you and warned you. For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life. Therefore, he who rejects this instruction does not reject man but God, who gives you his Holy Spirit.

1 Thessalonians 4:1-8

I would like you to be free from concern. An unmarried man is concerned about the Lord's affairs—how he can please the Lord. But a married man is concerned about the affairs of this world—how he can please his wife— and his interests are divided. An unmarried woman or virgin is concerned about the Lord's affairs: Her aim is to be devoted to the Lord in both body and spirit. But a married woman is concerned about the affairs of this world—how she can please her husband. I am saying this for your own good, not to restrict you, but that you may live in a right way in undivided devotion to the Lord.

1 Corinthians 7:32-25

Additional Theme Passages:

Genesis 2:24

Proverbs 1:1-9

Proverbs 2:1-22

Proverbs 3:1-8, 11, 12

Proverbs 5:1-23

Proverbs 6:20-25

Proverbs 7:1-27

Proverbs 23:22-28

SANCTIFY, **v. t.** (*American Dictionary of the English Language, Noah Webster, 1828*)

1. In a general sense, to cleanse, purify or make holy.
2. To separate, set apart or appoint to a holy, sacred or religious use.
3. To purify; to prepare for divine service, and for partaking of holy things.
4. To separate, ordain and appoint to the work of redemption and the government of the church.
5. To cleanse from corruption; to purify from sin; to make holy by detaching the affections from the world and its defilements, and exalting them to a supreme love to God.
6. To make the means of holiness; to render productive of holiness or piety.
7. To make free from guilt.
8. To secure from violation.

We look to God's Word first, but we can gain insight into God's ways also by taking a look at some of the ways of the world and recognizing that God's ways will most likely be exactly the opposite. What follows is an attempt to take an honest look at some of the promises that "the world's way" makes to us in the area of relationships between men and women, in order that we may see in the light of Scripture how the world's way cannot possibly make good on its promises.

Some Deceptions of the World's Way:

1) The world's way really helps you to get to know another person.

In 1 Samuel 16:7, God is speaking to Samuel concerning the search for God's choice for the new king of Israel. He says, "Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart." Because the world's way is based on attraction and emotion - the externals - what people most often present to others is a "false front." They put forward their best appearance and show only a part of themselves. Often, by the time a person gets to know the real person behind the false front, an emotional attachment has already been formed, and sometimes, a formal commitment has been established. When commitments such as these are dissolved, there is often a great deal of hurt involved. It is not uncommon to hear a person express a sentiment such as, "I guess I didn't know them as well as I thought I did."

2) **The world's way prepares you for marriage.**

- Logic tells us that engaging in a series of relationships which provide a feeling of intimacy without true commitment will not prepare us for a lifetime commitment.
- One over twenty-year-old statistic claimed that the average American has 10 serious relationships before marriage. By the time a person makes a "lifetime" commitment, he has already made and broken nine or ten relationships with a significant degree of emotional commitment. Will he have become good at keeping a relationship together, or will he simply have practiced breaking up?
- Another statistic provides an insight that can answer the previous question: the United States now boasts a divorce rate of over 50%. Does "the world's way" appear to be working very well?

3) **The world's way helps you to know what qualities you want in a marriage partner.**

4) **The world's way is the natural and healthy way to conduct your social relationships.**

From Genesis 2:24, Proverbs 5 and 31, Malachi 2, and other passages of Scripture, we learn that God designed marriage to be the ordained union between one man and one woman for a lifetime. Another way of putting it would be that we each created to be a "one-woman man" or a "one-man woman." If this is how the Creator of the universe designed us to be by nature, is it really "the natural and healthy way" to conduct our social relationships in a manner that is inconsistent with that ideal?

5) **You can do things the world's way and avoid negative consequences.**

1 John 2:15-17 *Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world - the cravings of sinful man (lust of the flesh), the lust of his eyes (lust of the eyes), and the boasting of what he has and does (pride of life) - comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.*

James 4:4 *You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God.*

Proverbs 6:27 *Can a man scoop fire into his lap without his clothes being burned?*

Proverbs 5:1-14

LESSON SIX:

Some Dangers of the World's Way

1. The world's way can draw a Christian into relationships which are in direct disobedience to God's Word.

2 Corinthians 6:14-17

1 Corinthians 7:39

2. The world's way promotes leaving and cleaving in ways God did not design and hinders leaving and cleaving as God did design.

Genesis 2:24

3. The world's way promotes "romance" and lust, not the Biblical love God desires between a husband and a wife.

How do you know when you really love someone?

John 3:16 Galatians 2:20 Ephesians 5:1-2 Ephesians 5:25 1 John 3:16

Not that they make you happy - but when your commitment to them is such that you desire to put their happiness and their needs first before your own.

4. The world's way encourages people to focus on external appearance rather than on character.

1 Peter 3:3, 4 - *Your beauty should not come from outward adornment... Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight.*

Luke 16:15 - *What is highly valued among men is detestable in God's sight.*

Proverbs 11:22 - *Like a gold ring in a pig's snout is a beautiful woman who shows no discretion.*

1 Timothy 2:9-10 - The opposite of modesty is self-centeredness.

5. The world's way can cause those who follow it to have to deal constantly with physical purity.

"How far is too far?" is the wrong question. The question we need to be asking is "How pure can I stay?"

1 Corinthians 7:1

Job 31:1

1 Timothy 5:1, 2

Special acknowledgement to "A Match Made in Heaven" by Rev. Richard Crisco for the insights in the following points:

6. The world's way can cause men and women to "defraud" one another.

Defraud: "To deprive of right, either by obtaining something by deception or artifice, or by taking something wrongfully without the knowledge or consent of the owner; to cheat; to cozen; to withhold wrongfully from another what is due to him; to prevent one wrongfully from obtaining what he may justly claim; to defeat or frustrate wrongfully." (Webster, 1828)

Hebrew meaning: "To oppress, violate, get deceitfully, deceive."

Scripture References:

Principal Teaching from Scripture:

1 Thessalonians 4:6

1 Corinthians 6:18 - 20

1 Corinthians 7:5

1 Corinthians 7:1 - 5

Leviticus 19:13

7. The world's way can create unnecessary and inappropriate concerns.

1 Corinthians 7:32

- Emotional stress
- Physical attractions
- Social pressures

8. The world's way distracts us from pursuing God the way He intends for us to do - **with undivided devotion.** 1 Corinthians 7:35

9. The world's way can bring about division in the Body of Christ. 1 Corinthians 12

10. The world's way promotes the sin of "inordinate affections."

Colossians 3:5 - 10

INORDINATE - "irregular; disorderly; excessive; immoderate; not limited to rules prescribed, or to usual bounds." (Webster, 1828)

Our affections should follow our commitment, not the other way around, which is "out of order."

11. The world's way often isolates a couple from other vitally important relationships.

- parents/family
- friends
- the Church
- the Lord

12. The world's way can cause discontentment - particularly with the special time of singleness.

1 Corinthians 7:32 - 35 Philippians 4:11 1 Timothy 6:6

13. The world's way distracts teens from preparing properly for their future.

Teen years = 13 to 19 = 7 years

Psalm 90:10 *The length of our days is seventy years - or eighty, if we have the strength...*

7 is 1/10th of seventy years.

1/10th is the "tithe."

A tithe is not like an offering. The tithe is given to God because it belongs to God already.

One would tithe out of his "first fruits."

Among the people of God, a young person became a member of the adult community at 13 years of age.

One might think of the teen years as the first fruits of one's adult life.

What if our young people began to see their teen years as their tithe to God? It would change our families; it would change our churches; it would potentially change the world for Jesus Christ.

I do not believe that God thinks of believing teens as rebellious and irresponsible by nature. Now is not the time to be in the great worldly search to discover "who you are." Instead, it is the time to pursue the Truth of God's Word and His ways and come to understand, in that light, WHOSE YOU ARE!

LESSON SEVEN:

In Search of God's Way

We began this portion of the study by examining some theme verses, then continued by seeking to honestly evaluate some deceptions and dangers of "the world's way." From this, we discovered a major principle of God's way:

#1 An unmarried believer is to "run after" God with undivided devotion.

If we accept this as Biblical and authoritative, then we must begin the process of recognizing the implications of this truth on how we understand and conduct our relationships with others and with God.

"I the Lord do not change. So you, O descendants of Jacob, are not destroyed. Ever since the time of your forefathers you have turned away from My decrees and have not kept them. Return to Me, and I will return to you," says the Lord Almighty.

"But you ask, 'How are we to return?'

"Will a man rob God? Yet you rob Me.

"But you ask, 'How do we rob You?'

"In tithes and offerings. You are under a curse - the whole nation of you - because you are robbing Me. Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house. Test Me in this," says the Lord Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it. I will prevent pests from devouring your crops, and the vines in your fields will not cast their fruit," says the Lord Almighty. "Then all the nations will call you blessed, for yours will be a delightful land," says the Lord Almighty."

(Malachi 3:6 - 12)

In the course of examining the flaws and fallacies of “the world’s way,” we also uncovered a second major principle of God’s way:

#2 In God’s sight, purity goes deeper than the physical.

God’s Standard - Heart Purity

Some recent studies show that church youth are as sexually active as young people who make no claim to Christianity. The same goes for Christian schooling, where there appears to be no appreciable difference in the percentages of those reporting that they are sexually active between young people in Christian schools and those in secular schools. The “church” has been preaching about physical purity for generations, apparently with little success. Does God’s way not work? Or is it, perhaps, that we have failed to train our children and young people about what God’s way really is?

Proverbs 23:7

For as a man thinks in his heart, so is he.

Matthew 12:35

The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him.

Matthew 5:27-30

You have heard that it was said, ‘Do not commit adultery.’ But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell.

2 Corinthians 10:5

We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

Colossians 2:8

See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ.

Romans 12:1, 2

Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God - which is your spiritual worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is - His good, pleasing and perfect will.

Believers must not conform to the world's standards, but understand and live according to God's standards.

We have, for a very long time, held up virginity (see Ezekiel 23:3) as though it was the sacred standard by which we measure purity before marriage. But, God's standard goes deeper than the physical. So what if you are still physically a virgin when you get married? What about our thought lives? Are these not of great concern to God?

There is more to save for marriage than just the physical relationship - we ought to save our hearts. Prov. 4:23

Reminded of these Scriptures, most would agree heart purity is God's standard. Knowing the teaching of the Word of God concerning marriage, most would also agree that God requires physical faithfulness prior to and throughout marriage. **Why would we not also recognize that the logical conclusion is that God would want us to maintain "heart purity" during and before marriage also?**

Becoming a "one-man woman" or a "one-woman man" relates directly to the principle of the **undivided heart** from Psalm 86:11, and may perhaps be one of the most significant ways that a young person can show his/her commitment to running after God with undivided devotion.

What about crushes? It is part of the way God made us = affinity, attraction. It is not sin. The issue is how it is governed.

Do you think that a person's ability to be attracted to someone other than his spouse stops after he gets married? Of course not. But the health and happiness of the marriage certainly depends on how those affinities, those attractions are managed? Why would it not also be true that how those affinities and attractions are managed during singleness has everything to do with the health and happiness of your future marriage?

Up to the early 1900's, cultural traditions helped to govern these things. No longer.

Consider this: ***Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the Lord.***
(Proverbs 18:22; KJV)

The Hebrew word for "find" – matsa – means "to come forth; to appear or exist; to occur; to meet or be present; to come upon; cause to find." One of the meanings is "to come (or happen) upon." Perhaps you might go out for a walk and, as you walk along, you spot something green under the dried leaves. It is a \$100 bill. That would be a good thing. But you didn't start out on your walk thinking, "I'm going out to find a \$100 bill." You happened upon it. You might consider the finding of a wife (or husband) in a similar way. You start out pursuing another goal – that of undivided devotion to the Lord. Along the way, (and by God's grace), you happen upon that person He has for you to spend your life with.

Remember this: **Matthew 6:33** **Psalms 37:4** **Proverbs 3:5, 6**

God wants us to have our needs met; He wants us to have our deepest desires; He wants us to have a secure future; but He has designed only one way for this to happen: **He wants us to run after Him with undivided devotion!**

A Godly Strategy - Heart Faithfulness

We should encourage and teach our children in God's way so that they will not spend all their energy in searching for Mr. or Miss Right; and instead, as they seek to run after God with all their heart, He can concentrate on helping them to become a Mr. or Miss Right!

LESSON EIGHT:

In Search of God's Way - Part Two

Some Thoughts on the Development of "Heart Faithfulness"

1. Faithfulness is a character quality that is intrinsically linked to Biblical love.

Proverbs 3:3 *Let love and faithfulness never leave you...*

Genesis 24:27; 32:10	Exodus 34:6	Numbers 14:18	Isaiah 16:5
2 Samuel 2:6; 15:20	1 Kings 3:6	Psalms 25:10	Hosea 4:1
Psalms 26:3	Psalms 40:10,11	Psalms 57:3	Micah 7:20
Psalms 61:7	Psalms 85:10	Psalms 86:15	John 1:14, 17
Psalms 89:1, 2, 14, 24	Psalms 92:2	Psalms 98:3	Revelation 2:19
Psalms 100:5	Psalms 108:4	Psalms 115:1	
Psalms 117:2	Psalms 138:2	Proverbs 3:3	
Proverbs 14:22	Proverbs 16:6	Proverbs 20:28	

2. Faithfulness must be the disposition of our character because it is the disposition of the nature of God.

Exodus 34:6 *And He passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, 'The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and **faithfulness**'...*

Psalms 36:5 *Your love, O Lord, reaches to the heavens, Your **faithfulness** to the skies.*

Psalms 89:1, 2 *I will sing of the Lord's great love forever; with my mouth I will make Your **faithfulness** known through all generations. I will declare that Your love stands firm forever, that You established Your **faithfulness** in heaven itself.*

1 Corinthians 1:9 *God, who has called you into fellowship with His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, is **faithful**.*

Hebrews 10:23 *Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for He who promised is **faithful**.*

1 Peter 4:19 *So then, those who suffer according to God's will should commit themselves to their **faithful** Creator and continue to do good.*

Revelation 19:11 *I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called **Faithful** and True...*

3. Faithfulness must be our disposition in relationships because it is God's disposition in His dealings with us.

Deuteronomy 7:9 *Know therefore that the Lord your God is God; He is the **faithful** God, keeping His covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love Him and keep His commands.*

1 Kings 8:56 *Praise be to the Lord, who has given rest to His people Israel just as He promised. **Not one word has failed** of all the good promises He gave through His servant Moses.*

1 Corinthians 10:13 *No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is **faithful**; He will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, He will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.*

2 Thessalonians 3:3 *But the Lord is **faithful**, and he will strengthen and protect you from the evil one.*

2 Timothy 2:11-13 *Here is a trustworthy saying: 'If we died with Him, we will also live with Him; if we endure, we will also reign with Him. If we disown Him, He will also disown us; if we are faithless, He will remain **faithful**, for He cannot disown Himself.'*

Hebrews 2:17 *For this reason He had to be made like His brothers in every way, in order that He might become a merciful and **faithful** high priest in service to God, and that He might make atonement for the sins of the people.*

4. Faithfulness leads to a good reputation, with man and God.

Proverbs 3:3, 4 *Let love and **faithfulness** never leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart. Then you will win favor and a good name in the sight of God and man.*

5. Faithfulness in "little things" leads to trustworthiness in "greater things."

Matthew 25:14-30 *Well, done, good and **faithful** servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness! (verse 23)*

6. Faithfulness is a fruit of the Spirit.

Galatians 6:22-23 *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, kindness, goodness, **faithfulness**, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.*

Some Strategies for the Development of “Heart Faithfulness”

The following are some thoughts concerning strategies that might be considered for fostering the development of “heart faithfulness” as a character quality in ourselves and in our children and young people.

1. Guarding Your Heart Proverbs 4:23

The primary responsibility for guarding a child’s heart is on the child’s parents. (Eph. 6:4; Prov. 19:18; Mal. 4:5, 6; Lk. 1:17; Prov. 22:6; Deut. 4:9, 6:7, 11:18-21, 32:46 & 47)

- Purposefully teaching and exemplifying God’s view of love and faithfulness. (Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Psalm 78; Isaiah 38:19)
- Clearly confronting the deceptiveness of the world’s way. (Colossians 2:8)
- Regularly affirming what is of great value in God’s sight. (1 Peter 3:3-5)
- Establishing foundational pre-suppositions in our children’s thinking about God’s ways. (Proverbs 22:6)
- Protecting our children from unrestricted, unevaluated messages of the world. (Genesis 35:2; the book of Proverbs)

The responsibility for guarding the heart shifts to the young person when he/she passes out of childhood, and he/she should be “companioned” or disciplined by the parents.

- Regularly evaluate thinking in light of Scripture. (Psalm 119:1-16, especially 9-11; Ephesians 4:17-24; Philippians 4:4-13; Colossians 2:8)
- Keep your heart open to your parents and family. (Malachi 4:5,6; Luke 1:17; Proverbs 2:1-5, Proverbs 3:1, 2; Proverbs 4:1-13)
- Develop and practice strategies for avoiding and resisting temptation. (1 Cor. 10:13; Matt. 5:29, 30; Gen. 39:7-12; 2 Tim. 2:22-26; Col. 2:8; Ps. 101:2b-3; Job 31:1)
 - Think rightly about sin. (relationship vs. rules)
 - Avoid the source of temptation and the place of temptation.
 - Run! Put great energy into resisting temptation.

2. Recognizing the Character of Faithfulness

Scriptural Words Denoting "Faithfulness"

emunah - certainty, faithfulness, truth
synonymous with "sedeq" - righteousness
"hesed" - loving kindness
"mispat" - justice

aman - to be certain; enduring; to trust, believe
(verb)

aletheia - truthfulness; dependability; uprightness; truth; reality

pistos - trustworthy; faithfulness; reliability (consistency); rest;
confidence; faith

Vine's Expository Dictionary on "Falsehood" - *"As faithfulness is a relational term, 'falsehood' denotes 'one's inability to keep faith' with what one has said or to respond positively to the faithfulness of another being."*

Scriptural Depictions of Faithfulness

(* indicates KJV)

Ps. 37:3 (NASB) *Trust in the Lord and do good; dwell in the land and cultivate faithfulness.*

Prov. 3:3, 4 A faithful person will have a good reputation.

Prov. 11:13* A faithful person will be someone you can count on.

Prov. 13:17* A faithful person will protect the reputations of others.

Prov. 14:5* Faithfulness is evidenced in honesty.

Prov. 20:6 There is a difference between the inclination to a pledge of commitment and actual faithfulness.

Prov. 27:6 A faithful friend will tell you the "hard things."

Prov. 28:20 Faithfulness is rewarded with blessings.

Mt. 24:45-51 A faithful person will be responsible and caring to those
Lk. 12:42 -48 over whom he has authority.

Mt. 25:14 - 30 A faithful person will be attentive to small matters.

Lk. 12:47, 48; A faithful person does what he knows is right (his
16:10 - 12; Master's will) without being told and without need of
19:17 supervision.

1 Cor. 4:2 Faithfulness is required of those who have been entrusted.

LESSON NINE:

In Search of God's Way - Part Three

Searching the Scripture for insights which shed light on God's way of directing us in relationships has led me to recognize the principle of authority and submission. As it relates to young people, their social relationships, and the preparation for marriage and family, we might phrase the principle this way:

#3 Parental authority is provided by God as guidance and protection in all areas of development.

The Principle of Authority and Submission

1. God's Authority

Exodus 20:2, 3

We must certainly recognize that God's authority is primary and absolute. There is to be nothing and no one who may occupy the place of reverence and respect in our lives that is God's alone. God's relationship to us is also the basis of the establishment of any earthly authority. Human authority relationships exist by the decree of God and as an extension of God's authority. (Gen. 1:26-28; Rom. 13:1)

2. Governmental Authority

Romans 13:1-7

1 Peter 2:13-21

Titus 3:1, 2

The Word of God asserts obedience to civil authority as a spiritual matter. Those who disobey the governmental authority are in disobedience to that which "God has instituted," and therefore it is sin. This submission to earthly authority is portrayed also as a vehicle for the furtherance of the Gospel, and is a testimony to godly character.

3. Spiritual Authority

1 Corinthians 16:15, 16 **1 Peter 5:5**
Hebrews 13:17

Obedience to authorities in the community of believers is seen as the recognition of wisdom, service, and responsibility; and as a matter of godly love for the person in authority.

4. Other Earthly Authorities

Ephesians 6:5
1 Timothy 6:1
1 Peter 2:18

Colossians 3:22
Titus 2:9

In Biblical times, these passages referred to slaves; for us, perhaps we might see these as guidelines for our relationships with employers. The Scripture encourages our obedience and respect of these authorities, even unjust authorities, as matters of Christ-like love and character, and as a matter which reflects on the reputation of our Lord and His Gospel.

5. Parental Authority

Exodus 20:12
Deuteronomy 5:16; 27:16
Proverbs 30:17
Proverbs 1:8; 6:20
Colossians 3:20

Leviticus 19:3
Matthew 15:4
Ephesians 6:1

When God communicates His moral law in Exodus, He establishes the pattern for spiritual priorities with the succinct directive that "you shall have no other gods before Me." When He goes on to discuss human relationships, the standard-bearer for His campaign for godly relationships is that of the first unit of human society, the family - "Honor your father and mother." This command was followed with the promise, "so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you." The "Promised Land" being a picture, not of heaven, but of the Christian life, we might see the fulfillment of the Old Testament promise for us as a matter of sanctification. In other words, the honoring of parents might have something to do with our spiritual growth.

Submission as Portrayed in the Scriptures

hupotasso - hupo, "under" tasso, "to arrange"

Vine's Expository Dictionary says that this was a term primarily used of the military, meaning "to rank under." It is used in Scripture to mean "to put in subjection, to subject," and "to subject one's self, to obey, or be subject to."

hupeiko - hupo, "under" eiko, "to yield"

This word, less commonly used in the New Testament, means "to retire, withdraw" and "to yield, submit."

- 1. Submission to human authority is to be a reflection of submission to God.**
Ephesians 5:21, 22, 25; 6:1, 5 1 Peter 2:13 Colossians 3:18, 20, 22-24
- 2. Submission is following the example of Christ.**
Luke 2:51 Hebrews 5:7-10 1 Peter 2:21-23
- 3. Submission is due to those who have responsibility given them by God.**
Romans 13:1-5 Hebrews 13:17 Ephesians 5:22-24; 6:1
- 4. Submission is to be rightly motivated.**
Ephesians 6:1, 5, 6 Hebrews 13:17
- 5. Submission leads to freedom from fear.**
Romans 13:3, 4 1 Peter 3:5-6
- 6. Submission furthers the Gospel and can win people to Christ.**
1 Peter 3:1
- 7. Submission is the pathway to spiritual strength & victory over sin.**
James 4:7
- 8. Submission is part of godly wisdom.** **James 3:17**
- 9. Submission may have an influence on the effectiveness of our prayers.**
Hebrews 5:7 1 Peter 3:7
- 10. Submission is to be a characteristic attitude of every believer, though it is manifested in different ways.** **Ephesians 5:21**

- The Greek word, ταπεινος (tapeinos), and its derivatives were words of contempt.
- To be low in the social scale, in poverty, socially powerless was seen as shameful; it was considered an insult.
- “Groveling, cringing, servile, low, slavish, mean-spirited.” (Earle, Word Meanings in the New Testament)
- No Classical Greek writer used it before the Christian era. Josephus used it, but only in the bad sense.
- The Greeks and Romans did not even have a positive word to express the idea.
- Yet it is exalted as the supreme characteristic of Christ and the single most identifying quality of Christ-likeness by the NT writers and by Jesus Himself.
- And when Jesus became a man (Luke 2:51, 52), it is the only quality noted about His character (hupotasso; “a man under authority”).
- When Jesus ended His earthly life, His last expressions to the heavenly Father directly depicted this quality - “Not My will” and “Father, into Thy hands...”
- Submission = “not-my-willness”; “not my will but Thine (God’s will) be done”
- use balsa wood airplane illustration

God’s Way and the Principle of Authority and Submission

1. For the believer, God’s authority and submission to Him must be central in all of our relationships.

Matthew 10:37 Luke 14:26; 20:23-25 Acts 5:29

- Do I know what God’s Word teaches about my relationships to parents and family? my “neighbor”? my enemies? other Christians? unbelievers?
- In seeking to follow the teaching of God’s Word, am I motivated by fear or pride, or am I motivated by a desire to keep an unbroken relationship with my Lord and others?
- Do I know God’s character well enough to know what His ways are in areas where His Word is silent or unclear to me? (consider Joseph)

2. For a believing young person, parental authority and wisdom is a primary source of guidance and protection in social relationships.

Luke 2:51, 52 Proverbs chapters 1 - 7

- Do I have my heart turned rightly towards my parents?
- Do I desire my parents' insight, involvement, and intervention in disciplining me in my social relationships?
- Do I pray for my parents in their most difficult of jobs? (1Timothy 2:1 - 4)
- Do I pray with my parents in the area of my relationships, practicing reliance upon and submission to God?

Cultural norms of Bible times and peoples included the participation of parents in the process of preparation for marriage. The corruption of sin in this area led to abuses like "arranged" marriage, polygamy, things like what Laban did to his daughters Leah and Rachel (Genesis 29 - 31), and attitudes and behaviors like Esau (Genesis 26:34, 35; 28:6-9), Samson (Judges 14-16), and Shechem (Genesis 34). The purposes and plan of God were also communicated in the context of these same cultural practices which are distinctly different from our own. Perhaps the best example of this is the story of Isaac and Rebekah.

LESSON TEN:

In Search of God's Way - Part Four

Genesis 24: The "Godly Romance" of Isaac and Rebekah

¹ Abraham was now old and well advanced in years, and the LORD had blessed him in every way. ² He said to the chief ^[1] servant in his household, the one in charge of all that he had, "Put your hand under my thigh. ³ I want you to swear by the LORD, the God of heaven and the God of earth, that you will not get a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I am living, ⁴ but will go to my country and my own relatives and get a wife for my son Isaac."

⁵ The servant asked him, "What if the woman is unwilling to come back with me to this land? Shall I then take your son back to the country you came from?"

⁶ "Make sure that you do not take my son back there," Abraham said. ⁷ "The LORD, the God of heaven, who brought me out of my father's household and my native land and who spoke to me and promised me on oath, saying, 'To your offspring ^[2] I will give this land'-he will send his angel before you so that you can get a wife for my son from there. ⁸ If the woman is unwilling to come back with you, then you will be released from this oath of mine. Only do not take my son back there." ⁹ So the servant put his hand under the thigh of his master Abraham and swore an oath to him concerning this matter.

¹⁰ Then the servant took ten of his master's camels and left, taking with him all kinds of good things from his master. He set out for Aram Naharaim ^[3] and made his way to the town of Nahor. ¹¹ He had the camels kneel down near the well outside the town; it was toward evening, the time the women go out to draw water.

¹² Then he prayed, "O LORD, God of my master Abraham, give me success today, and show kindness to my master Abraham. ¹³ See, I am standing beside this spring, and the daughters of the townspeople are coming out to draw water. ¹⁴ May it be that when I say to a girl, 'Please let down your jar that I may have a drink,' and she says, 'Drink, and I'll water your camels too'-let her be the one you have chosen for your servant Isaac. By this I will know that you have shown kindness to my master."

¹⁵ Before he had finished praying, Rebekah came out with her jar on her shoulder. She

was the daughter of Bethuel son of Milcah, who was the wife of Abraham's brother Nahor. ¹⁶ The girl was very beautiful, a virgin; no man had ever lain with her. She went down to the spring, filled her jar and came up again.

¹⁷ The servant hurried to meet her and said, "Please give me a little water from your jar."

¹⁸ "Drink, my lord," she said, and quickly lowered the jar to her hands and gave him a drink.

¹⁹ After she had given him a drink, she said, "I'll draw water for your camels too, until they have finished drinking." ²⁰ So she quickly emptied her jar into the trough, ran back to the well to draw more water, and drew enough for all his camels. ²¹ Without saying a word, the man watched her closely to learn whether or not the LORD had made his journey successful.

²² When the camels had finished drinking, the man took out a gold nose ring weighing a beka ^[4] and two gold bracelets weighing ten shekels. ^[5] ²³ Then he asked, "Whose daughter are you? Please tell me, is there room in your father's house for us to spend the night?"

²⁴ She answered him, "I am the daughter of Bethuel, the son that Milcah bore to Nahor." ²⁵ And she added, "We have plenty of straw and fodder, as well as room for you to spend the night."

²⁶ Then the man bowed down and worshiped the LORD, ²⁷ saying, "Praise be to the LORD, the God of my master Abraham, who has not abandoned his kindness and faithfulness to my master. As for me, the LORD has led me on the journey to the house of my master's relatives."

²⁸ The girl ran and told her mother's household about these things. ²⁹ Now Rebekah had a brother named Laban, and he hurried out to the man at the spring. ³⁰ As soon as he had seen the nose ring, and the bracelets on his sister's arms, and had heard Rebekah tell what the man said to her, he went out to the man and found him standing by the camels near the spring. ³¹ "Come, you who are blessed by the LORD," he said. "Why are you standing out here? I have prepared the house and a place for the camels."

³² So the man went to the house, and the camels were unloaded. Straw and fodder were brought for the camels, and water for him and his men to wash their feet. ³³ Then food was set before him, but he said, "I will not eat until I have told you what I have to

say."

"Then tell us," Laban said.

³⁴ So he said, "I am Abraham's servant. ³⁵ The LORD has blessed my master abundantly, and he has become wealthy. He has given him sheep and cattle, silver and gold, menservants and maidservants, and camels and donkeys. ³⁶ My master's wife Sarah has borne him a son in her ^[6] old age, and he has given him everything he owns. ³⁷ And my master made me swear an oath, and said, 'You must not get a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, in whose land I live, ³⁸ but go to my father's family and to my own clan, and get a wife for my son.'

³⁹ "Then I asked my master, 'What if the woman will not come back with me?'

⁴⁰ "He replied, 'The LORD, before whom I have walked, will send his angel with you and make your journey a success, so that you can get a wife for my son from my own clan and from my father's family. ⁴¹ Then, when you go to my clan, you will be released from my oath even if they refuse to give her to you—you will be released from my oath.'

⁴² "When I came to the spring today, I said, 'O LORD, God of my master Abraham, if you will, please grant success to the journey on which I have come. ⁴³ See, I am standing beside this spring; if a maiden comes out to draw water and I say to her, "Please let me drink a little water from your jar," ⁴⁴ and if she says to me, "Drink, and I'll draw water for your camels too," let her be the one the LORD has chosen for my master's son.'

⁴⁵ "Before I finished praying in my heart, Rebekah came out, with her jar on her shoulder. She went down to the spring and drew water, and I said to her, 'Please give me a drink.'

⁴⁶ "She quickly lowered her jar from her shoulder and said, 'Drink, and I'll water your camels too.' So I drank, and she watered the camels also.

⁴⁷ "I asked her, 'Whose daughter are you?'

"She said, 'The daughter of Bethuel son of Nahor, whom Milcah bore to him.'

"Then I put the ring in her nose and the bracelets on her arms, ⁴⁸ and I bowed down and worshiped the LORD. I praised the LORD, the God of my master Abraham, who had led me on the right road to get the granddaughter of my master's brother for his son. ⁴⁹ Now if you will show kindness and faithfulness to my master, tell me; and if not, tell me, so I may know which way to turn."

⁵⁰ Laban and Bethuel answered, "This is from the LORD; we can say nothing to you

one way or the other. ⁵¹ Here is Rebekah; take her and go, and let her become the wife of your master's son, as the LORD has directed."

⁵² When Abraham's servant heard what they said, he bowed down to the ground before the LORD. ⁵³ Then the servant brought out gold and silver jewelry and articles of clothing and gave them to Rebekah; he also gave costly gifts to her brother and to her mother. ⁵⁴ Then he and the men who were with him ate and drank and spent the night there.

When they got up the next morning, he said, "Send me on my way to my master."

⁵⁵ But her brother and her mother replied, "Let the girl remain with us ten days or so; then you ^[7] may go."

⁵⁶ But he said to them, "Do not detain me, now that the LORD has granted success to my journey. Send me on my way so I may go to my master."

⁵⁷ Then they said, "Let's call the girl and ask her about it." ⁵⁸ So they called Rebekah and asked her, "Will you go with this man?"

"I will go," she said.

⁵⁹ So they sent their sister Rebekah on her way, along with her nurse and Abraham's servant and his men. ⁶⁰ And they blessed Rebekah and said to her, "Our sister, may you increase to thousands upon thousands; may your offspring possess the gates of their enemies."

⁶¹ Then Rebekah and her maids got ready and mounted their camels and went back with the man. So the servant took Rebekah and left.

⁶² Now Isaac had come from Beer Lahai Roi, for he was living in the Negev. ⁶³ He went out to the field one evening to meditate, ^[8] and as he looked up, he saw camels approaching. ⁶⁴ Rebekah also looked up and saw Isaac. She got down from her camel ⁶⁵ and asked the servant, "Who is that man in the field coming to meet us?"

"He is my master," the servant answered. So she took her veil and covered herself.

⁶⁶ Then the servant told Isaac all he had done. ⁶⁷ Isaac brought her into the tent of his mother Sarah, and he married Rebekah. So she became his wife, and he loved her; and Isaac was comforted after his mother's death.

Appendix A

God's primary method for making ready "a people prepared for" Himself has a lot to do with the turning of father's (parents') hearts to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers (parents).

Now look at American culture.

Are the hearts of fathers being turned towards their children? Are the hearts of children and young people being turned towards their parents?

Statistics from studies in Josh McDowell's book, Right from Wrong, published in 1994:

- the US divorce rate climbed 120% from 1960 to 1991
- US currently has a 53% divorce rate (10th highest in the world)
- also from 1960 to 1991, the percentage of children living with single mothers went from 8 to 22 percent
- births to unwed mothers increased from 5.3% to 28% (a leap of 400%)
- only one in five churched young people say that they frequently do something special with their dads that involves just the two of them
- only one out of four churched young people say they frequently seek advice from their fathers
- only one in nine say that frequently discuss personal concerns with their dad
- one of every seven kids claim they spend no time in meaningful conversation with their dads
- less than half of our young people say that they want marriages like those of their parents
- more than a third say that they definitely do not wish to duplicate their parents' relationships
- less than half agreed that "if the traditional family in America falls apart, American society will collapse"
- young people favor divorce for parents who no longer "love each other" by a margin of two to one
- sixty percent of our youth in church define family as "those who deeply care about you, or whom you deeply care about" - a definition based upon feeling, no longer upon legal, let alone, biblical foundations

The American family in the church is also under attack, because the devil is smart - he knows what God's way is, and he does everything in his power to oppose it.

Appendix B

Some Thoughts on Leaving and Cleaving: Essentials to Oneness

Genesis 2:24

For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.

The Institution of Marriage Genesis 2:24

- Matthew 19:5; Mark 10:7 Jesus considered it authoritative & inviolable.
- Ephesians 5:31 Paul taught it as authoritative & sacred.

God's Design for Marriage

- "For this reason..." - refers back in larger context to all of God's creation design
- "...they will become one flesh." - the mysterious union - "God has joined together"
- "...a man will leave his father and mother..." - God has designed for a man to do this
- "...and (a man will) be united to his wife..." - God's design for a woman as well
- **Leaving and cleaving are essential to oneness in marriage.**

Some Implications of Genesis 2:24

- Primary human relationship before marriage is with parents.
- Primary human relationship after marriage is with spouse.
- **A right understanding of leaving and cleaving are essential to right relationship to my parents and spouse. (and God, since it is His design)**

What are leaving and cleaving?

- אָזַב (ya'ă-zāb) - from azab (aw-zab') - to leave, forsake, relinquish, leave behind, let go
- דָּבַק (wə-dā-baq) - from dabaq (daw-bak') - to cleave, to stick, as things that are glued together; to be closely joined
- καταλείπει (kataleipsei) - from kata, an intensifier, and leipó, "to leave behind"; means to forsake or abandon
- κολληθήσεται (kollēthēsetai) or προσκολληθήσεται (proskollēthēsetai) - both words are from kólla, "glue"; means to bond (cleave), adhere to, "glued together", join to

More Thoughts on Leaving and Cleaving

- Leaving takes place over a period of time prior to marriage.
- Cleaving takes place over a period of time prior to and throughout marriage.
- When leaving takes place, cleaving accompanies it.
- When cleaving takes place, leaving will also occur.
- Leaving and cleaving have spiritual implications. (Eph. 5:25 - 33)

Leaving that is NOT according to God's Design:

- disobedience
- dishonoring
- seeking autonomy in decision-making
- desiring freedom
- developing independence
- exploring identity
- asserting self - willfulness
- shifting relational allegiance outside of the family

Cleaving that is NOT according to God's Design:

- Fostering emotional attachments and attractions prior to marriage
- Pursuing exclusive, quasi-committed relationships w/o the intent to marry
- Prioritizing persons, activities, goals, interests, or commitments above family obligations & responsibilities

Leaving that IS according to God's Design:

- obedience leading to trustworthiness
- honoring leading to security
- seeking maturity in decision-making
- desiring responsibility
- developing dependability
- establishing identification
- denying self - "not-my-willness"
- shifting relational allegiance to spouse

Cleaving that IS according to God's Design:

- Nurturing heart faithfulness to spouse prior to and throughout marriage
- Pursuing one marriage relationship until parted by death
- Preparing for and prioritizing the primary role and identity of husband/ father and wife/mother

Some Implications for my Marriage

- Am I honoring my father and mother?
- Am I leaving my father and mother according to God's design?
- Is my future wife confident that I will be leaving my father and mother according to God's design?
- Have I left or am I leaving everything else that might compromise oneness in my approaching marriage?
- Am I preparing to be united to my future wife in every area of our relationship?

Some Implications for my Parenting

- Am I pursuing strategies with the purpose of teaching my future children to leave and cleave according to God's design?
- Am I fostering or even encouraging attitudes, behaviors, relationships, or commitments in my myself that may result in my future children leaving and cleaving in ways that are not according to God's design?