

# *30 Days contemplating a spiritual home!*

*Every family is a painting within the tapestry of time.  
Each life is an incredible opportunity to bring glory to our Creator.*

This workbook is dedicated to those who wish to build a Kingdom home.  
A home we can present with confidence to our Father at the end of the  
age, and to which we hope He will reply "well done good and  
faithful servant...enter into the joy of your Master."

Begin your My Strong Homes journey with this  
[12 Principles for a Spiritual Paradigm](#)  
introductory notes and videos found at [MyStrongHome.com](#).  
Each is useful as a catalyst for family conversations within your  
home as well as with neighbors and friends.

*- Dave & Burney Nadler -*



# Strong Home Workbook

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This **Strong Homes Workshop** investigates principles focusing topics such as partnership in marriage, how to deal with our various family backgrounds, communication principles, keeping romance in our relationship, establishing measurable goals, and recording partner memories.

We also consider what it means to experience a family partnership as we teach values, self control, and compassion to our children. We focus on a number of practical approaches to building up and managing our family household.

The notebook table of contents is listed to the right, and if you have other questions please feel free to contact us at 515-987-6090 or 4@fourthstream.com.

We hope that these thoughts and principles will help you consider the "big picture" on family life, and will become a part of what you use to encourage your focus, and to share as a tool for others to do the same.

**Thanks for engaging!**

*"Handicapped children, sudden accident, old people,  
serious illness; even mumps, measles, and  
chicken pox are a part of family life.  
The storm, whether in the form of floods,  
earthquakes, illness, or bankruptcy,  
are not an interruption to family life,  
but a part of family life."  
- Edith Schaeffer -*



*"Family is the single-most potent opportunity  
for eternal impact we will ever know.  
The weighty privilege of prayerfully shaping lives  
provides a chance to weave King and  
Kingdom into hearts as they grow.  
It is a powerful stewardship most men  
and women ever come to realize."  
- Dave Nadler -*

## 12 PRINCIPLES FOR A SPIRITUAL PARADIGM

EACH OF THESE DISCUSSION VIDEOS ARE 2-6 MINUTES LONG AND WORK  
GREAT FOR SMALL GROUP FOLLOW-UP AND INTERACTION.

Listen to the brief videos "THE LETTER" & "FAMILY PARTNERSHIP."

### PRINCIPLES ONE & TWO: **FAMILY PARTNERSHIP: PROTECTION & NURTURE**

**Men:** Protectors of the home. How does this look in our home?

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**Women:** good nurturers/managers of the family as a safe place. How does this look for us?

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Listen to the brief video "DEEP CONNECTEDNESS."

### PRINCIPLE THREE: **DEEP AFFECTION & CONNECTEDNESS**

"Our need for acceptance and connectedness is huge." Our connectedness is:

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"Physical demonstrations are indispensable." Our family "warmth culture" is:

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Listen to the brief video "DISCIPLINE & CORRECTION."

**PRINCIPLE FOUR: DISCIPLINE & CORRECTION**

"We discipline our children out of love and respect for them." What does this look like?

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"Children who are not lovingly and properly disciplined will struggle in life." How do we feel about this? Where do we agree and/or disagree?

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**Proverbs 22:15**

"Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; The rod of discipline will remove it far from him.

**Ephesians 6:1**

"Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right."

**Hebrews 12:10**

"For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He disciplines us for our good, so that we may share His holiness."

What do these passages teach about the subject of discipline and correction?

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The **scepter of correction** (authority is linked inseparably with the act of correction). Where do you come down on the issue of teaching self-control through biblical discipline?

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## The Gift of Spanks

Political correctness, inter-generational breakdown, abusive backgrounds, and even state and federal agencies muddy the waters of the simple subject of spanking. Here are some things that we have found helpful to navigate this challenging issue.

*We were talking one day about "gifts" and my 5 year old grandson quipped "Papa has the gift of spans." Each of our children and grand-children know that they are very dear to both Burnadette and me. We have a peaceful, accepting, loving relationship - because they "respect" authority.*

*We disciplined our children because it was the kindest thing we could do! We have only needed to spank our grandchildren in our home ONCE EACH. Because their parents have laid a foundation of discipline and instruction (through their own work and agreement) our grand-kids only need to know that we WILL. We are an extension of their home standard for self-control. Discipline is a merciful part of raising children!*

- 1) Most spanking should be completed by the age of 4 or 5 (and started at an early age with hand-slapping for disobedience).
- 2) The goal of spanking is to [build a healthy respect](#) for others as well as an understanding of authority.
- 3) A key message of spanking: "my rights end where another person's nose begins."
- 4) A companion message of spanking: "we discipline you (spank) because we love you."
- 5) Absence of anger is not a requirement for spanking, but complete [control](#) is the only acceptable environment for implementation of any discipline.
- 6) We should never spank out of [embarrassment](#), lashing out, or being [inconvenienced](#) by our children. Discipline is always used to teach self-control, and as such, must always be self-controlled.
- 7) Spanking should be used primarily for [confrontations of the will](#) (to directives of parents) and situations where kids need to learn self-preservation skills (hot stove, running into the street; etc.).
- 8) It is not the actual spanking that should be the motivator, but the [displeasure](#) of mom and dad - children must learn to respect and care about authority figures in their lives.
- 9) Using "the rod" is a tool to help kids [grieve](#) over disobedience.
  - a neutral object is fine, just make sure it stings and does not bruise or abuse
  - target the backs of thighs, not diapered bunnies!
- 10) Process of satisfying [Discipline](#): Confront - Instruct (briefly) - Discipline - Explain - Comfort - Learn - Move Forward.
- 11) Be [consistent](#) and [vigilant](#) - and work hard to be in [agreement](#) as a couple.
- 12) Wrap all discipline in mountains of [affection, acceptance, and personal support](#). We discipline and spank so our children learn to have [control over their own spirit](#).

Listen to the video "SELFLESS KINDNESS."

**PRINCIPLE #5: A FAMILY CULTURE OF KINDNESS**

"It will be what we DO that carries the day over what we say." What are our kindness "specialties?"

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"Love (and kindness) cover a multitude of short-comings and sins." What are some of the central shortcomings we have observed about ourselves and our family?

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Listen to the video "PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT."

**PRINCIPLE #6: AGREEMENT PARTNERSHIP**

"Trouble from the inside of our marriage will undermine our entire family." What troubles?

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"There are many **styles** of parenting, but the **principles** must be agreed upon and applied."

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What specific things can we pray about and work toward that will help us be in agreement?

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What processes will help us adjust our expectations?

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Listen to the video "DINNER TABLE SPIRITUALITY."

**PRINCIPLE #7: DINNER TABLE SPIRITUALITY**

**Communicative cohesiveness can be developed through dinner table connectedness**

"Standards - feelings - reasoning processes - spirituality/should all be in open dialogue in a family."

How often are you together for a daily meal? Is this something that can be planned and kept? Do you see the need and have the will to do this as a couple?

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What mechanisms do you implement to produce connectedness and communication when you are together as a family? (reading, game nights, planned subject discussions)

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Listen to the video "BUILDING UNDERSTANDING."

**PRINCIPLE #8: BUILDING UNDERSTANDING LINE UPON LINE**

**Line upon line, layered instruction.** Bring the Living Word into your home by example.

- \_\_\_ Tell family stories about what is happening at work and school.
- \_\_\_ Model, build, and discuss character in light of everyday experiences.
- \_\_\_ Pray together when substantive things happen to ourselves or others we know.
- \_\_\_ Encourage heart sensitivity vs. mere compliance or "doing the right thing."

Which of these are most attainable for you? The most unreachable?

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In what ways do you feel adequate to provide this kind of guidance?

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In what ways do you feel inadequate?

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Listen to the video "SOMETHING EXTRA & BUSYNESS."

**PRINCIPLE #9: SOMETHING EXTRA & BUSYNESS**

**It is important to practice elective involvement in extra-curricular activities, as well as limit electronic connections with society (texting, social media, video games).**

"Don't let the tail wag the dog."

If we are not in agreement as a family about the standards by which we negotiate current cultural entanglements, family life will always suffer. What are your family agreements and how do you communicate and negotiate each within your "family culture?"

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"Self-indulgence in no way equates with either happiness or depth of character." How do parents say no without alienating family members? In what ways is this a leadership issue?

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Listen to the video "THE VIGILANT HOME."

**PRINCIPLE #10: THE VIGILANT HOME**

**Perseverance** & diligence (vs. sporadic and lazy).

Would you consider your family one that perseveres and follows through or is pretty much start-stop?

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Would you describe your family as industrious or unmotivated (or even lazy)?

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Listen to the video "COMMON SENSE PARENTING."

**PRINCIPLE #11: COMMON SENSE PARENTING**

Educate and **challenge** yourself in common sense parenting...it is a life-long quest!

In what ways do you feel you are a "common sense" couple and family?

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In what ways do you feel you are weak in common sense as a family?

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Listen to the video "PARENTING IN COMMUNITY."

**PRINCIPLE #12: PARENTING IN COMMUNITY**

**Walk with others** who hold parenting in high regard...community can be a huge help!

Who are our best shot for friends that share our values as well as spiritual interest?

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Where are my outlets and inlets for older and younger interaction?

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FEEL FREE TO SUBMIT ANY FAMILY QUESTIONS YOU MAY HAVE AT [4@Fourthstream.com](mailto:4@Fourthstream.com)

*We hope you enjoyed this mini-course experience. Your spouse and children are your greatest gifts from the Father. May you find fulfillment beyond your wildest dreams when you look back upon your marriage and family journey. You can also engage more of our Strong Homes course at [4@Fourthstream.com](mailto:4@Fourthstream.com).*

- Dave and Burney and Friends



# *30 Days contemplating a spiritual home!*

Now we sentence you to 30 days for all of your hard work in the 12 Principles of a Spiritual Home Paradigm mini-course! (actually it is more like a bonus family learning explosion). :)

We have prepared three brief videos to introduce this Strong Home experience.

[Strong Home 1](#) focuses faith & imperfection  
[Strong Home 2](#) covers pages 1-27 of this guide  
[Strong Home 3](#) presents the "Tunnel" and parenting strategies of pages 29-50

You will want to view them now as you prepare for the Strong Homes Workbook experience to come.

As with so many things, the time you put in will determine the usefulness of the experience. Remember, we learned about drawing our thses principles over many years in our own homes within our community of relationships.

Each concept is simply worth every minute of your time as you reflect, plan, and pray for your own stong home.



Listen to the video "Home is Where Our Story Begins!"

### **THE MORNING STAR**

And so we have the prophetic word made more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts.

- 2 Peter 1:19

### **FAMILY DEVOTION**

Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one! "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart.

You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

- Deuteronomy 6

### **FAMILY REALITIES**

Unless the LORD builds the house, They labor in vain who build it; Unless the LORD guards the city, The watchman keeps awake in vain. It is vain for you to rise up early, To retire late, to eat the bread of painful labors; For He gives to His beloved even in his sleep.

Behold, children are a gift of the LORD, The fruit of the womb is a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, So are the children of one's youth. How blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them; They will not be ashamed when they speak with their enemies in the gate.

- Psalm 127

### **FAMILY HOPE**

Train up a child in the way he should go, Even when he is old he will not depart from it.

- Proverbs 22:6

### **FAMILY COMPASS**

It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline? But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons.

Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live? For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He disciplines us for our good, so that we may share His holiness. All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.

- Hebrews 12:7-11





*Getting Started*

*What I/we hope to gain from this workbook:*

*As a life partner, mother, and spiritual woman:*

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*As a life partner, father, and as a spiritual man:*

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Dear Friends:

With the decentralization of the inter-generational family, today's newly married couple and young family often finds itself adrift in a sea of trial and error. We try the best we can, hoping to capitalize on our own family-life perceptions and attempting to do at least as well as or better than our parents.

With the onset of a modern family style that is fueled by our hopes and dreams for the future, we often pay the price of increased isolation from our neighbors, as well as friendships that could so clearly encourage our marriage and parenting process. For those who want to look outside of themselves and to be stimulated to be all you can be in the home, the following workbook can be helpful.

Burney and I have encountered various stages and challenges as partners and parents and have carefully recorded the highlights and principles of the most critical magnitude. We offer these planning worksheets with a sincere hope to help you be all you can be as a spouse and parent. Don't let the simplicity fool you! It is through the application of basic principles in which we have found the most heartfelt success, as well as courage to continue toward the future!

Our children; Rachel, David, and John, have been our greatest gift and greatest challenge in our lives. It is to parents who consider their children as gifts from our Father that we dedicate this learning experience.

Dave & Burnadette Nadler

Handicapped children, sudden accident, old people, serious illness;  
even mumps, measles, and chicken pox are a part of family life.  
The storm, whether in the form of floods, earthquakes, illness, or  
bankruptcy, are not an interruption to family life,  
but a part of family life.

-Edith Schaeffer

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# *A Principled Marriage!*



## OUR CONTEXT

I have enjoyed the privilege (and sometimes wild ride) of engaging in pre-marital and marriage counseling with numerous couples over my years as a teacher, counselor, and elder. It has always been amazing to me how much time and money goes into a wedding day - and how proportionately little time goes toward preparing to build a fruitful marriage.

We were as dumb as rocks (inexperienced) when we married (well, at least I was), yet our Father has been amazingly gracious to Burney and me. He has been with us "through good times and bad, sickness and health, in wealth and poverty" as well as immaturity and times of rigorous growth. Side by side with our good friends we have picked up a few things in the process - so here you go!

A healthy marriage is based upon principle. From the beginning marriage was intended to provide [companionship](#) and [partnership](#) for the needs and rigors of life.

When it comes right down to it, I wonder how many men and women would be willing to give anything to find one life partner that could fulfill the needs of friend, lover, partner and companion? I am frightened and saddened to think of a generation of enlightened and independent once-married men and women living out lives of loneliness and isolation, when an effective (and principled) marriage is within everyone's grasp.

We have had to work hard to be such partners. By discovering principles and continuing to rededicate ourselves to those principles, we have built the foundation and rooms of our marriage home. This has often occurred despite our shortcomings!

The first subject we consider is the [Stages of Marriage](#). It is hard as newlyweds to even comprehend the big picture on an enduring marriage. As we understand and apply His principles we can step around the tapestry to see the reverse side of a progressing but not yet finished product. In our microwave world it is difficult to conceive that an enduring marriage is built slowly, step by step, layer by layer.

These foundations are carefully established as we grow together in the first five to ten years of a marriage. What it means to be [partners](#), how our [original families](#) impact us, and our developed [communication](#) abilities all have a significant bearing on the condition (or existence) of our long term relationship. How we come to terms with our mutually defined standards for [romance](#) and how we [plan together](#) in pursuit of our hopes and dreams impact the quality and longevity of our relationship and oneness.

**The next page describes and outlines the stages of marriage.**

**Review the stages and answer these questions:**

1. In which stage do we currently find ourselves? \_\_\_\_\_
2. In which stages have we experienced success? \_\_\_\_\_
3. In what stages have we blown it? \_\_\_\_\_
4. Do we have a view toward an enduring marriage? \_\_\_\_\_
5. How effective have we been at achieving oneness in our relationship? \_\_\_\_\_

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Listen to the video "A Principled Marriage."

## The Stages of Marriage

### 1 GROWING UP

Through our childhood, young adulthood, and single life we formulate a view of marriage. This is influenced by our parents and relatives, peers, reading and other forms of media, as well as our various encounters with the opposite sex. It is during these years that we formulate our answer to the question:

**What do I think that marriage involves?**

### 2 DATING & COURTSHIP

As we enter into puberty we experience such things as infatuation and understanding the basics of the beginnings of commitment. Here we are concerned with acceptance, establishing and living up to values, developing interests, and experiencing the fulfillment of our needs through romance. Here we ask the question:

**What do I hope that marriage will bring to me?**

### 3 COMMITMENT & BUILDING

Here we face the realities of married life. The honeymoon is over, the newness is worn off. We either learn and grow or fall to independence and conflict of the will. It is time to work and surrender to a new marriage system. It is time to accept and modify the two family systems we brought into the relationship. It is time to solidify our mutual commitment to the purpose for our marriage, and to establish a marriage that follows higher principles. Here we ask the question:

**What am I willing to give to my marriage?**

### 4 GROWING & PERSEVERING

Deep and enduring affections characterize this stage of marriage. We have established our values and interests and shared our lives with one another. We continue to grow individually and together. We are becoming older and have the choice to turn and help those who are younger. We ask ourselves the question (and hope we are happy with the answer):

**Am I able to appreciate/accept what my marriage is becoming?**

## The Marriage Foundation

...Marriage was given to complete Man & Woman.  
 ...Companionship is the highest relational priority in life.  
 ...We need associations that encourage us in this process.  
 ...When we get stuck we should find help.

|               |          |
|---------------|----------|
| PARTNERS      | ORIGINS  |
| COMMUNICATION |          |
| ROMANCE       | PLANNING |
| ONENESS       |          |

### PARTNERS

- \_\_\_ Partners learn to trust each other and divide responsibilities, maximizing strengths and minimizing weaknesses.
- \_\_\_ Partners learn to recognize, give, and receive valid criticism (differentiated from personal preferences with self-centered motives).
- \_\_\_ Partners never run their spouse down in front of others and they are careful to build and maintain mutual respect.
- \_\_\_ Partners are very interested in each other's spiritual welfare and truly desire to see their spouse excel and grow in all areas of life.

### FAMILY OF ORIGIN

- \_\_\_ You do marry your spouse's family system.
- \_\_\_ A new system must be allowed to develop, but we are by nature resistant (It takes a decade).
- \_\_\_ We cannot afford to be overly critical or blindly accepting of our own or our spouse's family of origin, which could cause us to overreact or avoid helpful insights and make healthy modifications.
- \_\_\_ Negative and unhealthy influence must be grown through from myself and my spouse outward as we take care to face our weaknesses and cultivate our strengths.
- \_\_\_ We are developing healthy community support relationships.

### COMMUNICATION

- \_\_\_ Opposites do attract and difficulty in communication is normal.
- \_\_\_ Communication patterns and needs often differ.
- \_\_\_ Character qualities and personalities are a double-edged sword and greatly impact our ability to communicate.
- \_\_\_ To not communicate is the epitome of self-centeredness. We can be so ego-centric that meaningful and satisfying communication is the exception, not the rule. The embittered will not communicate.



THE MARRIAGE FOUNDATION CONTINUED:

ROMANCE

— — Negative or unrealistic pre-conceptions develop dysfunctional shortfalls and expectations for intimacy and sex.

— — Affection must permeate our lifestyle. Physical touch, verbal encouragement, and caring body language are all critical.

*Here are several key expressions of romance:*

— — He or she is interested in things that are important to me.

— — He or she is a willing participator in the mutual responsibilities of our life together.

— — He or she is physically affectionate and initiates non-sexual contact, offering me affection and emotional support when I need it.

— — We have a satisfying and growing physical relationship, taking care to not let our intimacy be consumed by selfishness, bad habits or disproportionate life demands.

— — Bitterness, feeling sorry for myself, and an out of control temper are in check in our lives together.

PLANNING

— — We know and share our goals, taking the time to check signals and make plans.

— — We consult and communicate on important decisions that we make.

— — We actively plan activities and experiences that maximize both of our strengths and minimize our weaknesses.

— — We have a system and "appointed times" for recording our memories and reflecting upon our milestones.

ONENESS

— — I embrace the concept of independent responsibility for my personal spiritual welfare.

— — I contribute to experiencing a living, spiritual, mutual exchange.

— — We are facing and negotiating the difficulties of living by one another's past and present decisions/challenges.

— — The fear factor in angry issues (broken trust and respect) is under control in our lives.

— — The arrogance factor in angry issues (lack of compassionate love) is under control in our lives.

**Here are some helpful thoughts on developing your marriage as a partnership.**

What are your individual goals for your marriage? In what ways do they overlap?

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How would you rate your mutual respect for one another?

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How would you rate your shared compassion for one another?

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**The overall focus of your marriage:**

- \_\_\_ **Build it on Empathy**...this is the ability to put yourself in your spouse's place and to truly search after his or her best interests.
- \_\_\_ Enemies of empathy: A driving or intolerant personality, an uninvolved or aloof partner, and a non-reflective or overly busy lifestyle.
- \_\_\_ **Build it on Maturity**...this is the learned wisdom of acting responsibly and unselfishly toward your spouse.
- \_\_\_ Enemies of maturity: Unrealistic views of life and marriage, uncontrolled anger or temper, uncontrolled lust or jealousy, and baggage from my family of origin.
- \_\_\_ **Build it on Dignity**...dignity is the ability to be gracious, thoughtful, and measured about our responses to life's challenges.
- \_\_\_ Enemies of dignity: An unrestrained tongue, wandering affections, or a scoffing heart.

**An overall principled understanding on a marriage partnership includes:**

What are the attractive qualities in any man or woman?

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How is a spouse to deal with what he or she feels is unacceptable in their spouse?

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What is the root of most women's anger? Most men's anger?

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How are respect and trust established in the arena of a marriage relationship?

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What does it mean to "live with your spouse in an understanding way?"

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How do we give honor to someone as a partner in life?

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The family in which we each grew up has tremendous impact upon our newly established marriage. Together we must [experience the freedom to develop our own family system](#). Here are some helpful insights:

1. To experience a learned ability to discuss one another's family of origin without a critical spirit.
2. Gradually establishing a mutually agreed upon understanding concerning our combined family of origin can be very helpful.
3. Giving yourself and your spouse time to sort out and deal with the positive and negative aspects of your family of origin over a period of years is key.
4. [Taking care to together decide what you want for your own family system](#) and determining why you want it, as well as designing strategies for learning how to make these qualities a part of your daily lives together is critical.

#### [MY FAMILY BACKGROUND](#)

Take this opportunity to complete an evaluation of your perceptions of your own and your spouse's family of origin, taking care to be specific, concise, kind, and as non-judgmental as you know how to be.

HUSBAND OF OWN FAMILY:  
Strengths

Weaknesses

HUSBAND OF WIFE'S FAMILY:  
Strengths

Weaknesses

WIFE OF OWN FAMILY:  
Strengths

Weaknesses

WIFE OF HUSBAND'S FAMILY:  
Strengths

Weaknesses

Communication is one of those things we will probably never master. And it also takes continued attention as time passes and life-changes occur. **Here are some ideas on how to become better communicators.** Answer the question: "In what ways have we addressed these concepts and principles?"

1. Don't let the sun go down on your anger without coming to resolution.

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2. Don't allow yourself to be entrapped in bitterness.

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3. Learn a willingness to humble yourself and pray, knowing that all grumbling and complaining is ultimately against God.

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4. Pay attention to each others heart. Keep working on your marriage system and marriage relationship. Define the places where you are not connecting.

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Define and build upon the places you are connecting.

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5. Spend time together alone, cultivating mutual interests and evaluating current successes and failures. Communicate every day!

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6. Include a mutually agreed upon objective third person when you get stuck.

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7. Identify other serious-minded couples with whom to grow and learn.

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*My Strong Home.com*  
**Keys to Communication**  
(continued)

*Day Five*

**TO TALK ABOUT:**

What are the things that make me angry?

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What are the things that make me fearful?

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Are there any mutual or individual roots of bitterness in our lives?

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What part does forgiveness play in our relationship?

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What mechanisms do you find that help you to humble yourself?

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I feel my spouse and I don't connect when...

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I feel my spouse and I connect when...

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I feel my spouse and I disconnect when...

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I feel we are cultivating mutual interests when we...

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I believe that we are stuck in the area of...

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A mutually agreed upon person with whom we would both be willing to consult would be...

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The other people with whom we commune and share our lives are...

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## Keep the Heart-Fires Burning

*"Growing up in our culture I have discovered we know very little about true love."*

How can I know if I am experiencing true love? True love involves sex, but is obviously not merely sex. Commitment is apparently a part of true love, but how does one keep a long-term commitment? (Should I even expect long-term commitment?)

Just how much of myself should I be willing to sacrifice for the sake of someone I love (and won't I run the danger of losing myself if I go too far)?

We have grown up and matured in a very confusing atmosphere with many mixed and varied signals!

*We have found several principles helpful for kindling the spark in our relationship.*

This in no way implies that we do not highly value our consistent and deep long-term commitment to each other, but we have come to recognize that there are things that we can do to keep the romance in our relationship!

- \_\_\_ Don't quit experiencing new things together, and don't be afraid to rediscover old ones!
- \_\_\_ Continue to explore your partners interests.
- \_\_\_ Don't let romance and sex get boring.
- \_\_\_ Don't stay angry or bitter without getting help.
- \_\_\_ Pursue enjoyable and encouraging relationships with other couples who love and enjoy each other.
- \_\_\_ Reflect and recount your successes.
- \_\_\_ Don't be afraid to openly discuss your defeats, shortcomings, and fears.
- \_\_\_ Be lifelong companions and friends, choosing not to live separate lives.

*Companionship is the key to a satisfying marriage, and to live as true friends is worth the work - and the gold standard for real partner spirituality!*

*My Strong Home.com*  
**Marriage: Measurable Goals**

*Day Seven*

Date \_\_\_\_\_

As we look to the future it is profitable to establish short and long-term marital goals, taking into account significant areas of marriage need. The following checklist is given as a sounding board with which to isolate pertinent issues. Both partners should indicate their own choices and come together to define perceptions. This exercise is something that can be done periodically throughout the various stages of a marriage!

**MY CHOICES:**

**MY PARTNER'S CHOICES:**

- \_\_\_\_ Accomplishments and qualities to be verbalized \_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_ Cultivating mutual interests and learning one another's interests \_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_ Friendship building strategies between spouses \_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_ Satisfying needs for intimacy \_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_ Approaching no talk issues \_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_ Destructive individual patterns to correct \_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_ Destructive partner patterns to correct \_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_ Constructive patterns to encourage \_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_ The need for individual counseling in areas where we are stuck \_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_ The need for marriage counseling in areas where we are stuck \_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_ Values that need to be strengthened in our marriage \_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_ Financial expectations, communication, and patterns that affect us \_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_ Specific decisions that need to be made (our process) \_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_ Friendship building strategies with others that can encourage our marriage \_\_\_\_

A marriage is never static. Issues from within and without cause needs in a marital relationship to continually modify and sometimes even change. We must not lose our composure or be surprised at our difficulties, but press on to maturity in marriage!

**Based upon the above areas of measurable goals, over the next few months in our marriage we purpose to:**

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Take a few minutes to reminisce and jot down a few of your memories - depending upon how far along you are in the "memory continuum."

Our first year and when we met:

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Two - Five Years as we were starting out:

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Child-Raising Partner Memories (with young kids):

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Age of Opportunity Years Memories (with teens):

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Productivity Years Memories (45-75):

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# *My Strong Home.com* Marriage Resources

There are few perfect books and resources. These are some we have found to be helpful. Read EVERYTHING critically and use common sense.

## [Saving Your Marriage Before It Starts](#)

by Drs. Les and Leslie Parrot

## [The Blessing](#)

by Smalley/Trent (understanding the greater purpose of family)

## [Cry of the Soul](#)

by Paul Allender (understanding the roots of a healthy marriage)

## [Connecting](#)

by Larry Crabb (discovering true community in relationships)

## [Effective Father](#)

by Gordon MacDonald (a good snapshot of fatherhood)

## [Affliction/What Is A Family](#)

by Edith Schaeffer (how trials and stress are a part of family life)

## [Wild At Heart](#)

by John Eldredge (focusing the true needs of a man)

## [Captivating](#)

by Stasi and John Eldredge (focusing the true needs of a woman)



# *A Principled Family!*



I don't know who had more fun the day we "picked out" a tractor from my sister's dealership, our oldest son David or Burney and me. Often we would take things we were planning to do and add "special plans" to make it a deeper memory for all of us. Even if these things only happen now and then, they can add up over a child-raising career!

Listen to the video "A Principled Family."

Family values are an interesting proposition today. We listen to experts and leaders who abound in insight and perspective on the nuclear family, and have observed the turn of another century with disturbing and mixed signals. While the institution of the family endures tinkering by social architects, we are left to await yet another revealing discovery about parenting and child-rearing. Forgive my cynicism, but [common sense and biblical principles appear to be an unwelcome visitor at these debates!](#)

Capturing the [big picture](#) on parenting seems to be of incredible importance. "What does parenting ask and require from me?" seems to be a difficult question to address. Understanding the Family Foundation gives us a place to return to some blueprints for building a family. The subjects of discipline, instruction, creating memories, promoting industry, and pursuing healthy individuality all contribute to this blueprint or master plan.

Mechanisms to accomplish this building process are important. Establishing a Family Partnership and Setting a Course for your household is key. An architect needs a plan, and specific and successive steps to make such a plan a reality. Teaching Self-control and Instructing in Values must be fearlessly tackled by the modern parent. With everyone (and their mother) claiming expertise in parenting, it is critical that we choose intentionality in our teaching of values or be left with the fruits of having such opportunity fulfilled by others. It may "take a village" for some, but for our family it takes a community. And if our "village" doesn't hold to our basic standards or values, they can stay out of our house.

[Managing our family is important.](#) "Manage your family or your family will end up managing you." We will consider a variety of mechanisms for evaluation that will help you to keep on track with your overall goals. Your Child's Changing Needs, Family Action Planning, and Family Measurable Goals are just a few of the tools you can use to keep on track. Keeping the Homefires Burning and the Pains and Prizes worksheets can help you to keep the big picture. After all, we are talking about a several decade process!

The resources you will find in this section are by no means comprehensive, they are representative. There are many family styles, but few sets of values that are truly successful!

The next page describes and outlines the stages of parenting.  
[Review the stages and answer these questions:](#)

1. In what stage do we currently find ourselves?
2. In what stages have we experienced success?
3. In what stages have we blown it?
4. Do I (we) have a view toward an enduring family?

## The Stages of Parenting

### 1 Introduction and response to PARENT PRESENT RESPONSIBILITY

Acceptance...Affection...Discipline

What do my parents want from me?

### 2 SELF DISCIPLINE to an awareness of Omnipresent Authority.

Character...Value Resolution...Knowledge

What do my parents want from me?

### 3 Integration to INDEPENDENT RESPONSIBILITY before Omnipresent authority.

Firsthand Morality

Person Adjustments

What do I want from me!?

Letting go accelerates.

Peer pressure increases!

### 4 Complete INDEPENDENT RESPONSIBILITY before Omnipresent Authority.

Christian & Personal Maturity

What does God want from me!?

...The family was given to perpetuate  
the will of God in the world.  
...We need friends and good examples  
to encourage us in this process.  
...If you're stuck, get help.

| DISCIPLINE    | INSTRUCTION |
|---------------|-------------|
| MEMORIES      | INDUSTRY    |
| INDIVIDUALITY |             |

## DISCIPLINE

- \_\_\_ \_\_\_ I am committed to discipline that is firm, consistent, non-abusive; and born of principle, discussion, and agreement.
- \_\_\_ \_\_\_ When do we start and what are our plans and parameters?
- \_\_\_ \_\_\_ We apply the process of discipline, comfort, and redirection.
- \_\_\_ \_\_\_ We are pursuing the concept of moving our children solidly toward a life of ruling their own spirit - independent from us.
- \_\_\_ \_\_\_ We are creative and swift in discipline; forward-moving and emphasizing the positive.

## INSTRUCTION

- \_\_\_ \_\_\_ We emphasize maturity and independent morality, (stages of parenting).
- \_\_\_ \_\_\_ We provide for and pray for our children to have a spiritual, practical, and relevant understanding of the Scriptures.
- \_\_\_ \_\_\_ We teach them to be socially effective and yet personally inoffensive.
- \_\_\_ \_\_\_ We help and prepare them to face the challenge of being in a believing minority.
- \_\_\_ \_\_\_ We are teaching and modeling how to become a team player before our children.

## MEMORIES

- \_\_\_ \_\_\_ Of time spent enjoying one another in both spontaneous and planned settings and activities.
- \_\_\_ \_\_\_ Of a father and mother who know how to resolve conflict and remain committed to each other.
- \_\_\_ \_\_\_ Of a developing friendship with family members. Especially work on:
  - A) The child who is most like you.
  - B) Father to daughter
  - C) Mother to son
- \_\_\_ \_\_\_ Of our home as a safe place and a refuge from conflict.
- \_\_\_ \_\_\_ Of a home where others who are in need are helped within the walls and resources of our family.

THE FAMILY FOUNDATION: Continued

**INDUSTRY**

- \_\_\_ \_\_\_ We come along side of our children and help them to be good workers.
- \_\_\_ \_\_\_ We teach and model how to develop & follow through on an interest or project.
- \_\_\_ \_\_\_ We teach the big picture on planning, executing, and enjoying a completed job.
- \_\_\_ \_\_\_ Our children know how to work with others to participate toward a common goal.
- \_\_\_ \_\_\_ We provide follow-up to encourage consistency in task accomplishment.
- \_\_\_ \_\_\_ We teach and model how to save, give, and spend.

**INDIVIDUALITY**

We are helping our children to understand:

- \_\_\_ \_\_\_ Their unique relationship to maleness (Dad) and femaleness (Mom).
- \_\_\_ \_\_\_ Their complete uniqueness and opportunity as the seed of God in the world.
- \_\_\_ \_\_\_ How to have the courage to make their own decisions despite pressure from others.
- \_\_\_ \_\_\_ To understand our nature and its effect on how we think and act.
- \_\_\_ \_\_\_ The impact of my behavior and attitudes upon peers, as well as those who are older and younger.
- \_\_\_ \_\_\_ How to be helped to recognize both my strengths and the shortcomings that make me unique.

There are two columns where you can each assess your thoughts on how much progress has been made to date on each of the categories and descriptions listed on this and the previous page.

- ... The family is the place where ethics, values, and personalities are forged.
- ... Within the family world views are shaped and tyrants or saints are nurtured.
- ... Life compasses are set in this very powerful environment.
- ... What occurs in families will continue to shape the world.

The family is a series of partnerships. These partnerships are the anvil upon which raw materials are forged into steel! Husband to wife, wife to husband, father to son, father to daughter, mother to son, mother to daughter, brother to sister, sister to brother, sister to sister, brother to brother, older to younger, and younger to older are just a few of the critical partnership relationships in a family of only four! Incorporate the extended family, a previous marriage, and other life circumstances, and it is no wonder that parenting can seem so complex! Let's view a few of these key partnerships and attempt to assess their power for good.

### The Couple Partnership

The strength of the family begins with the individuals and is reflected in the marriage. Our love for one another is what binds us or blinds us to the souls of our children. True compassion and caring are models that are far superior to self-centeredness and disinterest, yet both life-styles are incredibly powerful. To the degree that partners model the ability to function as a partnership, our children will understand their own role in society.

### The Father and Son Partnership

"Accept me, love me, believe in me. Instruct me and even discipline me if you must, but please let me please you! Let me know that I am worth something to you. Help me to develop a sense of order in the midst of chaos. Help me to discern principles that will help me make my way in life, and give me the freedom to try and to fail and to succeed and to still be your son!"

### The Father and Daughter Partnership

"Notice me, love me, believe in me. Let me know that I am special to you, that I don't repulse you, and that I am significant. Please keep loving me, please don't reject me. Please try to understand me and take me seriously. Please trust me and love me no matter what. Help me to discern principles that will help me make my way in life, and give me the freedom to try and to fail and to succeed and to still be your little girl!"

### The Sibling Partnership

"Stick with me. Stick up for me. Talk to me. Honor me. Care for me because I am family. Care for me because we have been companions for life. Care for me because you are older. Let's care for each other because we are each other's flesh and blood!"

And these are just the basics! There are partnerships with the child-most-like-you, the child-most-like-your-spouse, and the child you wonder from which planet he or she arrived! How these partnerships function, are tested, and succeed or fail; all form the foundations for life. This is where we learn what makes a team. This is where we should experience the ultimate refuge. This is the place where our world-view and significance is established. *The Family Partnership is perhaps the most important institution under all of creation!*



# *My Strong Home.com*

## Keep the Homefires Burning!

*Day Twelve*

We must be careful to live our values as we attempt to teach those same values to our children. There are several parenting qualities that are helpful in giving us a framework for living out our beliefs in front of our children. For each positive value there is a negative counter-value. One will bring them up, one will shake them up and tear them down.

### ACCEPTANCE (rather than Ridicule)

Even though I don't always like what you do, this is distinctly separate from my feelings about you. You are special to me. We are in this for the long haul. You will succeed, and I will be there to correct you when you're wrong, comfort you when things are not well, and to applaud you when you overcome. But I will always take you seriously. *Ridicule is not a tool for training. It simply is ineffective at best, and destructive on all fronts.*

### HONESTY (rather than Situation Ethics)

It is of utmost importance in our family that we be truthful with one another. If the truth cannot be told within our family, it probably won't be communicated outside of our family. We must all admit when we are wrong and attempt never to lie to one another. *We must learn that the truth cannot be bent for our own purposes.* We can try to do so, but we will surely fail!

### INTIMACY (rather than Distance)

It is important that we be close. *We cannot afford to be isolated from each other.* We must have the freedom and the listening ear to share our deepest thoughts and to have them be respected and honored. We can do this without smothering each other or meddling.

### ACCOMPLISHMENT (rather than a Better Way)

I must allow my children to learn with guidance. Even at an early age they must learn to successfully complete and accomplish. It must be my high priority to see them succeed, level by level. I must rejoice in their success, even if they end up eclipsing my own. After all, this is one of the goals of good parenting! I need to avoid holding them to standards that I know deep within my heart I do not even keep myself. *Even though they may fall short on particulars, I am confident in their ultimate success!*

### FAILURE FREEDOM (rather than Performance)

Just as I have never done anything perfectly the first time, so my children have many years to perfect their skills. As they experiment and fail and succeed, it is my job to encourage the desire to continue to try. *Even though they may fail, they are not failures!* They can disappoint me without being a disappointment.

### SELF DISCIPLINE (rather than Control by Guilt)

*It is my job to help my children to the place where they can rule themselves.* All discipline moves toward this goal of independent responsibility. I am not my children's or my spouse's conscience. It is my job to help them to accept responsibility for their own beliefs and actions - and to press on!

Date \_\_\_\_\_

As we look to the future it is helpful to establish short and long-term family goals that are measurable and attainable. Here are some areas you may wish to address in your planning. Which items focus on the current condition of your family? Partners should accomplish this together, taking care to talk through indicators in the most obvious areas. Use this checklist as a sounding board to isolate pertinent issues. Narrow your discussion to the two or three most pressing needs.

- \_\_\_ Our child learning to be a learner
- \_\_\_ Our family atmosphere of acceptance
- \_\_\_ To be accepting of others different from ourselves
- \_\_\_ Physical and sexual education about our bodies
- \_\_\_ To learn self-discipline and personal responsibility
- \_\_\_ To develop confidence in achieving goals
- \_\_\_ To learn where my rights end and another's begin
- \_\_\_ To learn forgiveness
- \_\_\_ To learn sharing
- \_\_\_ To develop listening skills
- \_\_\_ To be allowed to hope and to dream
- \_\_\_ To be exposed to controlled experimentation
- \_\_\_ Having room to fail
- \_\_\_ Having room to grow
- \_\_\_ Learning respect for authority
- \_\_\_ An awareness of the spiritual dimensions of life
- \_\_\_ How to be a good friend to others
- \_\_\_ To experience the family as a refuge
- \_\_\_ A good spectrum of exposure to various interests and experiences

**Over the next few months in our family life we purpose to:**

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## **THE PAINS OF GROWING**

It would seem in our tech-rich, media saturated society that the sheer affluence of our nation would insure happiness for our growing teens. It is easy to minimize their pressures (from an adult perspective) and caste everything in either a motivated or unmotivated paradigm. Here are some things to be aware of as you design strategies to get your teens and pre-teens through what we liked to call "the tunnel." (children enter around 11 or so and usually come out in their 20's!)

### **FACING THE PRESSURE THAT I MAY LET SOMEONE DOWN**

This is especially difficult when it causes me to be scrutinized - I'd rather just fit in! Even if it seems that our kids do not care a whit about what we think, don't take it personally. Sometimes the most rebellious behaviors respond best to a kind, patient response - even when you would rather throttle them!

### **DEALING WITH MY DESIRE TO BE ON MY OWN AND DO THINGS MY WAY**

This especially difficult when you feel "oppressed!" It is a tricky thing to protect an emerging adult while at the same time letting go. And the needs of young women and young men are very different. Collaborating is key during this time, because it is almost impossible to bridge this issue.

### **SUDDEN OR IMPENDING EVIDENCES OF MY DISCOMFORT WITH ME**

I'm a bundle of nerves because there's so much I need to figure out. Am I really a dork? Will I be able to deliver? Will someone love me? What lies on the road ahead? Do I have what it takes to be the man or woman I know I am expected to be?

### **MY MISTAKES OR MY AGE BEING THROWN IN MY FACE**

I hate being treated like a child. "If you act grown up we would treat you like a grown-up!" Again, a "gentle answer turns away wrath." Often what we are seeing in a rebellious face is the mask of an insecure ego.

### **FACING THE CRITICISM OF NOT MEASURING UP TO PEOPLE'S EXPECTATIONS**

When I fail everything falls apart. And when I fail - I am not likeable, useful, or lovable.

### **DEALING WITH THE EXPECTATIONS OF MY FRIENDS AND MY PEERS - I WANT TO BE COOL.**

My needs are changing. I need to be respected and cared for by others than my family. My parents don't understand what I am going through. We never talk any more. I have just given up (as though anyone would want to talk to a narcissistic, ungrateful ex-adolescent who used to love me.)

*These things are painful, but remember, some day they WILL come out of the tunnel launch, and you will want to have a foundation for an adult friendship. I think it is easy for parents to take ourselves too seriously. Just like all teen-agers do. Whether they admit it or not!*

## The Understanding Years

Parenting is not always a fulfilling and encouraging process. In fact, sometimes it can be downright frightening! Here are some of the less desirable pains that must be courageously faced. Anything look familiar?

\_\_\_ ENDURING YOUR CHILD'S MISTAKES

This is especially difficult when it reflects poorly on you!

\_\_\_ DEALING WITH OPEN OR PASSIVE REBELLION

This is especially difficult when it reflects poorly upon you!

\_\_\_ SUDDEN OR IMPENDING EVIDENCES OF GEEKINESS

This is especially...well, you get the idea!

\_\_\_ PEERS BEING THROWN IN YOUR FACE

Being taken for granted.

\_\_\_ BEING EMBARRASSED BY SOMETHING YOUR CHILD DOES OR SAYS

Being let down by your children.

\_\_\_ FACING THE FRUITS OF THEIR INEXPERIENCE, LAZINESS, AND LACK OF INTEREST

Patiently dealing with lack of follow through.

\_\_\_ DEALING WITH THE FACT THAT THEY BREAK MY THINGS

Dealing with the child who is so much like me.

\_\_\_ DEALING WITH THE CHILD THAT IS SO MUCH LIKE MY SPOUSE

What does this reveal about the Understanding Years? Does anything relate to your situation?

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These are indeed painful at times, but remember, there is not a parent who has ever parented who has not felt some or all of the same pains you are experiencing. There are also great rewards...

### THE PRIZES OF PARENTING

These are worth the investment and the wait!

\_\_\_ Seeing your child value and practice moral purity.

\_\_\_ Observing as your child is not swept away by greed.

\_\_\_ Viewing your child's personal spiritual interest.

\_\_\_ Enjoying your child as an independent thinker who is discerning.

\_\_\_ Raising an industrious child.

\_\_\_ Observing your child's ability to relate to others and to live with compassion.

\_\_\_ Raising a child who is wise and harmless at the same time.

What are your thoughts about these prizes?

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We invest so much in our children that sometimes it is hard to let them go. For those who actually want to see their children grow up and function on their own, here are some pointers. Answer the question: "how is this working for us?"

1. Recognize and communicate your child's strengths, growth, and triumphs.

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2. Let them experience the consequences of acting foolish (with your personal support).

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3. Encourage spiritual knowledge of a relational nature, not merely content.

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4. Treat them maturely, long before they ask to be treated like adults.

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5. Let them pursue their own path, avoid living out your dreams through your kids.

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6. Let them always be aware that you will stick with them no matter what, and when their consequences affect you, respond with grace!

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7. Keep a sense of humor. Take yourself seriously but don't go overboard!

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Listen to the video "Watchful Parenting - from Proverbs!"

### REJECTING PRESUMPTION (13:10)

1. Teach them not to jump to conclusions
2. Teach them that no one owes them anything
3. Teach them to be deeply respectful of others feelings
4. Teach them to be very careful with others property
5. Teach them to be tactful with their tongue
6. Teach them to be gracious in receiving gifts or hospitality

*"In so doing you spare you & your household much strife."*

### AVOIDING ISOLATIONISM (18:1) & Combating self-righteousness

1. Teach them how to deal with hurt and feelings of self-pity
2. Model good social skills and help them to combat shyness
3. Teach them how to have multiple relationships & still feel secure
4. Teach them how to deal with perfectionism
5. Teach them to avoid social traps (anger, bad habits, smart aleck, etc.)
6. Teach them how to enjoy different types of people

*"In so doing you will keep them from breaking out of the patterns of wisdom."*

### WALKING WITH THE WISE (13:20; 15:22; 19:20; 20:18; 21:1)

1. To know the difference between a foolish & a wise person
2. To get counsel as a way of life, and not to merely inquire of those from whom we will get the answers we want
3. Teach them to accept counsel once they get it
4. Teach them to weigh & objectively evaluate pros & cons in decision-making, and to be able to make decisions

*"In so doing you will clarify vague issues that can "trip up" your household."*

### ACCEPTING REPROOF (17:10; 27:5,6,17)

1. Learn to take criticism & not to feel that you are rejected along with your faults.
2. Learn to weigh criticism honestly & objectively
3. Learn to make personal changes in response to criticism
4. Learn not to retaliate with counter-criticism

*"In so doing you help to accept reproof as a way of life."*

### RULING YOUR SPIRIT (16:32; 17:27; 25:28)

1. Temper tantrums are unacceptable (adult or child)
2. Learn to confront conflict head on and with propriety
3. Quick to hear, slow to speak, and slow to anger
4. Learn how to manage your feelings

*"In so doing you help them respond to the One Who made them."*

*My Strong Home.com*  
**Your Child's Changing Needs**

*Day Seventeen*

Name\_\_\_\_\_ Age\_\_\_\_\_ Date\_\_\_\_\_

*Our children are constantly changing and meeting various challenges that coincide with their particular personality and various stages of development. We should periodically assess the key issues for each of our children. As you evaluate, here are some points to keep in mind that will help you to isolate current needs:*

- |                               |   |                       |
|-------------------------------|---|-----------------------|
| ___ Mood Swings               | ___ School Pressures                        | ___ Home Pressures    |
| ___ Physical Changes          | ___ Bad Habits                              | ___ Good Habits       |
| ___ Character Strengths       | ___ Character Weaknesses                    | ___ Physical Problems |
| ___ Friendships               | ___ Current Social Experiences              |                       |
| ___ Attitudes around the Home | ___ Attitudes about things outside the home |                       |
| ___ Current Interests         | ___ Relationship with Mom                   |                       |
|                               | ___ Relationship with Dad                   |                       |

**Current Successes and Joys:**

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**Current Problems and Impasses:**

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**Our Strategies to meet our child's current needs:**

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### Spiritual Goals

Everyone usually has some kind of spiritual interest and goals. Whatever your religious background, most will readily agree that the spiritual dimension of a person's life is of some significance. There are basically three spiritual training priorities for the family.

**Reaching Out** to those who are most like us... By the allocation and dedication of our time and talents and resources, we can truly make a difference in the lives of those with whom we associate most closely. These are the people that are a part of our lives in the most obvious associations: neighborhoods, school, work, religious practices, hobbies and interests, sports; etc. Do we see our family (and life together) as a mission?

**Reaching Out** to those with special needs...By the choices we make for the allocation of time and resources we form our family's spiritual core. Our willingness to extend ourselves beyond the boundaries of our comfort zones sows character development that can provide a harvest for years to come! These associations include community service, extension to the underprivileged and less fortunate, and a general attitude of care and concern for those with whom our paths cross. Sending \$25 each month to a destitute child in another country is an example of this.

**Reaching Up**...Developing an understanding of our spiritual significance before God can be accomplished by providing an atmosphere of inquiry and investigation concerning the spiritual realities of life. This often happens around a dinner table or electronic-free family experience.

Using these categories, list specific commitments your household can make to set a course to pursue a strong sense of purpose in the world. Define specific relationships and opportunities that fit the scope of your family's current situation. For instance - "we will share a meal each Sunday, talk about our upcoming week, and be 'just us' for several undistracted hours."

**Reaching Out to those in our life sphere...**

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**Reaching Out to those beyond our normal life sphere...**

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**Reaching up as a family to grow in our spiritual understanding of life...**

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**Our goals for our family's commitment to discipline:**

(Could include modes of discipline, ways to negotiate discipline differences between spouses, when to discipline, how to recognize the difference between rebellion and genuine learning opportunities; etc.) Remember - the purpose of discipline is to produce self-control!

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**Our plans for encouraging implementation of our discipline plan:**

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**Our resources for encouragement to accomplish effective instruction in self-control:**

(This could include learning resources, other people with similar standards, older people from whom to request advice; etc.)

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### **Our goals for our family's value system:**

(categories include emotional, material, spiritual, ethical, and intellectual values)

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### **Our plans for encouraging implementation of this value system:**

(categories include relationship affiliations, ongoing learning contexts (both family and external), and practiced standards between the various relational contexts in our home).

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### **Our resources for encouragement to accomplish these values:**

(This could include learning resources, other people with similar standards, older people from whom to request advice; etc.)

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If you were to summarize what your family would be known for based upon your own evaluation as well as those who know you well, what strengths and weaknesses would you list? Consider general bents, character qualities, habits, or ongoing characteristics that accurately describe your household.

|            |             |
|------------|-------------|
| STRENGTHS: | WEAKNESSES: |
|            |             |

## Quality Character

There is a passage in the New Testament that describes the most important aspects of character that need to be evidenced in a household. We believe that these qualities provide a stable and growing environment. Take this opportunity to consider each one, determining whether or not evidences of these particular qualities are increasing in your home:

| The Quality  | How it is evidenced... | How it is not being evidenced... |
|--------------|------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Love         |                        |                                  |
| Joy          |                        |                                  |
| Peace        |                        |                                  |
| Patience     |                        |                                  |
| Kindness     |                        |                                  |
| Goodness     |                        |                                  |
| Fruitfulness |                        |                                  |
| Gentleness   |                        |                                  |
| Self Control |                        |                                  |

In the Bible there is a very practical definition of the attributes of true love. It is found in the first letter to the Corinthians in the thirteenth chapter, from verses 4-8. We list these qualities to help you define a standard of true love among the members of your household. In what ways does your family evidence - or not evidence - these qualities of love?

| Quality                               | Evidence | Lack of Evidence |
|---------------------------------------|----------|------------------|
| Love is...                            |          |                  |
| Patient                               |          |                  |
| Kind                                  |          |                  |
| Not Jealous                           |          |                  |
| Not Bragging                          |          |                  |
| Not Arrogant                          |          |                  |
| Not Becoming                          |          |                  |
| Not Self-Seeking                      |          |                  |
| Not Provoked                          |          |                  |
| Not Accounting of past wrongs         |          |                  |
| Not rejoicing in unrighteousness      |          |                  |
| Rejoicing in the things that are true |          |                  |
| Bearing all things                    |          |                  |
| Believing all things                  |          |                  |
| Hoping all things                     |          |                  |
| Enduring all things                   |          |                  |
| Never Failing                         |          |                  |

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**Family Action Items**

*Day Twenty-Two*

Brainstorming for good ideas and planning several months ahead can help give you specific family plans to implement. Creative and thoughtful planning are important when creating family experiences...and their consequent memories! You may want to interact with other families for creative ideas that fit your family's needs and resources (spending money is not always the key to good family memories!). And remember, planning can help, but follow through is crucial. Good family experiences are investments to be made carefully, willingly, and consistently!

Our Idea:

When Planned:

What was accomplished:

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A healthy family will establish and consistently enforce a variety of family agreements for the welfare and harmony of the entire household, and the encouragement and protection of each individual. You may wish to enter into a series of family agreements (beginning with parental agreement) that help to set uniform standards for family conduct. This helps a family manage by pre-determined agreement and minimizes crisis management. We have listed several. You are sure to find plenty of your own!

**Suggested agreements:**

PRIVACY, SHARING RESPONSIBILITY, USE OF THE TONGUE, KEEPING YOUR HANDS TO YOURSELF, THE UNACCEPTABILITY OF TANTRUMS AND OTHER CHILDISH BEHAVIORS, USE OF THE PHONE, DATING STANDARDS, CRITICIZING IN FRONT OF OTHERS, OUR SYSTEM FOR RESOLVING CONFLICT; ETC.

**Agreement**\_\_\_\_\_ **Date**\_\_\_\_\_

**Agreement**\_\_\_\_\_ **Date**\_\_\_\_\_

**Agreement**\_\_\_\_\_ **Date**\_\_\_\_\_

**Agreement**\_\_\_\_\_ **Date**\_\_\_\_\_

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**Family Responsibilities**

*Day Twenty-Four*

Consistency around the home is critical to the "team" atmosphere of the family. Specific chores that make responsibilities around the home a shared experience should be cultivated at an early age and modified to fit the various ages of your household members. This encourages personal initiative and cooperative effort, and will do wonders for your children's maturity level!

Specific responsibility:

Family Member:

Schedule:

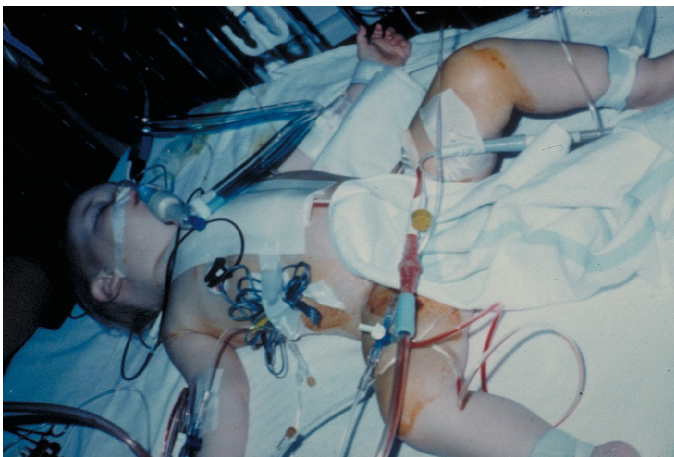
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As life unfolds our families are faced with challenges that impact our entire household's balance and structure. Illness, career struggles, school issues, neighbors, finances, untimely deaths...the list of significant events go on and on. During times like these a family can turn to God to help find guidance, comfort, and decision-making wisdom in the midst of difficult challenges. A legacy of God answering prayer can encourage both ourselves and our children as we learn to reflect upon God's kindness to us. Make your requests and record the results as the years unfold!

| Date | Request | Answer |
|------|---------|--------|
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# *A Spiritual Paradigm!*



Whether the first day of school (above), open heart surgery early in life (left), or watching new generations come alive into His world...spiritual life is THE great reward of living! If His Kingdom can grow in us and through us, we will find satisfaction in life!

## Family Shelter Paradigm

Listen to the video "Family Shelter!"

Read the following passages. What do you learn about family life?  
Family was made to be life-shelter (Luke 13:18,19/Hebrews 12:9).

**OUR FATHER'S KINGDOM HAS COME TO THE EARTH.**

(He is revealing Himself - and eternal life - to the world)

**Kingdom eclipses family.**

(family serves the greater Purpose)

**Family serves Kingdom.**

(for we shall ultimately be married to God - Revelation 21)

**Family gives way to Kingdom.**

(for we shall be called sons of God - Luke 20)

**Family is our Destination!**

(for the Father is everything - Colossians 1:18)

**The Father's Family is the family of the great King.**

(Luke 2:4 - Ephesians 3:15)

Genesis 25:8/2 Samuel 7:18/Ruth 1:15

Luke 22:42/Revelation 19:6-16

In what ways have you experienced **shelter**? Have you extended shelter?

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In what ways have you been "uncovered?" In what ways have you uncovered others?

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# *My Strong Home.com* Building a Spiritual Marriage

## Day Twenty-Seven

There are several guiding principles that help lay a strong foundation for a marriage and family. Spend a little time thinking about each one and how it is (or is not) reflected in your marriage.

### DESIRE

From the Song of Solomon we learn that passion and desire are made by our Creator. Whether we are speaking of romance or life-long devotion it is clear that men and women alike desire secure love. *But to find security we must reciprocate vulnerability, and in the end we must find TRUST.* In His world, this is expressed through:

- \_\_\_ a willingness to mutually choose to submit to God and choose the path of humility
- \_\_\_ commitment to the pursuit of a godly, growing, satisfying physical relationship
- \_\_\_ a willingness to learn about my husband/my wife's love language
- \_\_\_ a willingness to learn about and live a life of forgiveness

Each of these require selfless love, and selfless love is a rare treasure.

### CHERISH/RESPECT

From Ephesians 5 we learn that family is a partnership. It is an opportunity for nurturers and protectors to work together, forging an environment conducive to growth of the soul. Such understanding of partnership is deeply fulfilling and will be evidenced by:

- \_\_\_ an increasing knowledge of what *respect* and being *cherished* mean for men and women
- \_\_\_ a recognition and acknowledgement of my partner's core strengths
- \_\_\_ an understanding of my own strengths that I bring into our home
- \_\_\_ a mutual reliance upon my partner's role in our relationship and family

### VALUE

A spiritual home includes a deep understanding of relationships: brotherhood/sisterhood - 1 Peter 3:7

- \_\_\_ working together for the glory of God and extending this vision to our children
- \_\_\_ appreciation and reliance upon one another's gifts (as well as the entire family)
- \_\_\_ acceptance of our weaknesses, limitations, strengths, and potential

### ONENESS

- \_\_\_ Does our companionship reflect Peace, Love, and Hope?
- \_\_\_ Am I submitted to a life of love and respect?
- \_\_\_ Do we read His Word together?
- \_\_\_ Do we pray together and reflect upon life?
- \_\_\_ Do we spend time with other spiritually motivated couples and friends?

Which of these resonate most with where you feel you are in your spiritual marriage journey?

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"Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one! You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up. "You shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead. You shall write them on the door posts of your house and on your gates."

- Deuteronomy 6

Here are some [suggestions](#) on what this kind of spiritual life can look like. Also read: Psalm 127; Ephesians 5:1-4; Hebrews 12:9-11

1. Attempt to [share at least one daily meal as a family](#) and talk about how you are each integrating your lives into God's life as you address each days' stories.
2. Be a spiritual leader by learning to [cherish](#) your wife and [respect](#) your husband.
3. [Live in submission to the authority of the Word](#) - revere/honor God in your home.
4. [Maintain a spiritual relationship](#) with each one of your children/teens (this means alone time together). Continue to make new memories. Talk about Him together. Stay close - whatever the personal cost.
5. [Don't bow to external pressure](#) to conform to cultural family practices (be selective about opportunities such as sports/extra-curricular pursuits). Busyness is a trap. Industry is a virtue.
6. Be decisive and proactive about your family objectives and [protect your time](#) as a family (be consistent, teachable, and don't waffle).
7. Be appropriately honest about your [short-comings and family weaknesses](#) (be anti-arrogant).
8. [Pray daily](#) as a couple for the spiritual welfare of your children and grandchildren.
9. Engage in [spiritual family relationships](#) and interactions with others of like mind. How am I giving to others? How am I using my gifts? Am I supporting those who are praying for me and living lives of faith just as I am?
10. Pay attention to, anticipate, and [walk toward](#) the current challenges your family is facing.

**Most pertinent of the 10 suggestions above:**

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# Foundations for Spirituality

*Day Twenty-Nine*

According to 1 Corinthians 11:3 submission and humility are key qualities for men and women to live truly spiritual lives. Here are some thought-provoking check-offs for what this might look like.

## **Goals for becoming a spiritual man:**

Men are made to be good providers and protectors of the integrity of the family. We are designed to take initiative and reject passivity (this is often reflective of how we have been raised).

What place will spiritual motivation play in our home? What will this look like?

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How highly will our marriage relationship be regarded in my heart - and between us?

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How far am I willing to go to provide a nurturing/cherishing environment for my wife?

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In what ways do I need to be healed of my past in order to ensure a hopeful future?

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What pillars of character will form the foundation of our home?

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What will our economic pursuits provide and require from our family?

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What will be the end-game picture for our family?

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Where I feel I am prepared and strong as a man:

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Where my foundations need work as a protector:

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**Goals for becoming a spiritual woman:**

Women are built to be strong nurturers and managers of the home as a safe place. We are built to be responsive to need and intuitive toward nurture (this is reflective of how we were raised).

Am I committed to nurturing a personal relationship with God?

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How far am I willing to go to provide a supportive environment for my husband?

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In what ways will our children be placed as a high priority in our home?

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What are my special contributions to the growth of our family?

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What will the learning and nurturing atmosphere look like in our home?

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What things will make our home a "secure" place for our children?

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In what ways do I need to be healed of my past in order to ensure a hopeful future?

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Where I feel I am prepared and strong as a woman:

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Where my foundations need work as a nurturer:

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**Family Questions**

*Submit your question about family life to [4@fourthstream.com](mailto:4@fourthstream.com).*

*What if we are in disagreement over discipline and instruction of children?*

*What do we do if there seems to be something "off" in our marriage?*

*What do we do when things don't go the way we had hoped?*

*What do I do if I find myself alone as a parent?*

*What are my responsibilities now that my children are no longer under my roof?*

*What is my responsibility to other "children" who are not my own?  
(Matthew 18:1-7)*

*I am concerned that spanking will harm my child or reflect poorly to those around me. I was also excessively disciplined as a child. What can I do?*

*What do I do about being emotionally abused by my spouse?*

*How do I deal with an angry, uncommunicative teen?*

*How do we negotiate the issue of in-laws, grandkids, and time spent together?*

*What do I do if my personal issues always seem to get in the way of my contribution to marriage and family life?*

*How do we find older men and women to interact with on marriage and family life?*

Listen to the video "Generations"





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*What we intend to implement from this study:*

*As a life partner, mother, and spiritual woman:*

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*As a life partner, father, and as a spiritual man:*

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**FAMILY RESOURCES**

There are few perfect books and resources. Below are a few we have found to be helpful. Read everything critically and use common sense, sifting author's ideas through the scriptures.

[Curious Journey](#) by Dave Nadler  
(on Kingdom Paradigm/personal story)

[Saving Your Marriage Before it Starts](#) by Les & Leslie Parrot  
(foundations of a strong home)

[Captivating](#) by Stasi and John Eldredge  
(understanding the heart of a woman)

[Wild At Heart](#) by John Eldredge  
(understanding the heart of a man)

[Shepherding A Child's Heart](#) by Tedd Tripp  
(solid parenting principles)

[Age of Opportunity](#) by Paul David Tripp  
(preparing to navigate life with teen-agers)

[Every Man's Battle](#) by Steve Arterburn  
(practical help dealing with our obsessions)

[Affliction/What is a Family](#) by Edith Schaeffer  
(big picture on a spiritual home)

[Birth Order Book](#) by Kevin Lehman  
(general family dynamics)

[Love Must be Tough](#) by James Dobson  
(applying principles of dignity to home life)

[The Blessing](#) by John Trent and Gary Smalley  
(practical insights into the endgame of family relationships)

[New Parent Power](#) by John Rosemond  
(practical advice on day to day parenting issues)