

### 3. FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

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### 3.1 Role of Families

Families are the cells that make up the organism called our civilization. They are the smallest and most permanent economic unit of our civilization and they are the means for bringing up the next generation of citizens and taxpayers. Unfortunately, the bible doesn't specifically talk about the role of families as a separate entity, but they surely have a role that is far more important than any other relationship or role. They are:

1. A means of passing down knowledge, lore, and moral values from generation to generation. For instance, older people (grandparents) can impart wisdom to their grand children.
2. A support network that allows people to help each other. For instance, parents and grandparents can provide daycare for younger couples who need some time alone together or have family matters to attend to. This has the effect of strengthening younger marriages and encouraging the goals of item #1 above. This in turn encourages economic prosperity, because two together can always live more economically than two living separately.
3. A means of honoring God by encouraging and maintaining unity, peace, and unselfishness among his children.
4. A mechanism for providing balanced sex role-models to children. Children learn by example how to behave from their parents and how healthy marriages are supposed to function and thereby get the tools for living life.
5. A way to prevent loneliness and give people purpose in their lives.
6. A way to transfer wealth from generation to generation through inheritance.
7. Back before we had social security and Medicare and all several other government entitlement programs as a safety net, they provided the equivalent of welfare when people were having a hard time. Family members would provide shelter and food to help each other get back on their feet when they fell on hard times. However, since that time, income taxes mainly have allowed the usurpation of the role of families in this area and have forced us into an unhealthy kind of idolatry, where the government replaced all these functions.

### 3.2 Getting Our Personal Act Together: First Things First

Before we have a prayer of interacting effectively with other members of the family, we have to get our *own* act together first. Just as Jesus said in Matt. 7:3-5:

*And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother 'Let me remove the speck from your eye and look, a plank is in your own eye?' Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.*

If we are hypocrites, then other people in the family will recognize it and we will lose the respect and credibility that we need to interact effectively with them. Therefore, we need to continually focus on cleansing our soul, renewing our faith in God, and in demonstrating our faith through good works and the fruit of the spirit before we can expect to get the respect we deserve from other family members. We must work diligently to earn their respect before we can expect them to cooperate with us and work out problems collectively. This section focuses on how to do that.

### 3.2.1 Proper Attitude

*Life can't give me joy and peace,  
it's up to me to will it.  
Life just gives me time and space;  
it's up to me to fill it.*

The following section provides a benediction to be read before the start of each day as an exercise to improve one's perspective and attitude for the remainder of the day. Our own outlook and attitude is the single most important factor that influences how we relate to other people in the family.

It's quiet. It's early. The sky is still black. The world is still asleep. The day is coming. In a few moments the day will arrive. It will roar down the track with the rising of the sun. The stillness of the dawn will be exchanged for the noise of the day. The calm of the solitude will be replaced by the pounding pace of the human race. The refuge of the early morning will be invaded by decisions to be made and deadlines to be met.

For the next twelve hours I will be exposed to the day's demands. It is now that I must make a choice. Because of Calvary, I'm free to choose. And so I choose.

**I choose love**... No occasion justifies hatred or apathy; no injustice warrants bitterness. I choose love. Today I will love God and what God loves.

**I choose joy**... I will invite my God to be the God of my circumstances. I will refuse the temptation to be cynical..the tool of the lazy thinker. I will refuse to see people as anything less than human beings, created equal by God. I will refuse to see any problem as anything less than an opportunity to see God.

**I choose peace**... I will live forgiven. I will forgive so that I may live and share with others the same mercy that God and his son Jesus gives to me continually.

**I choose patience**... I will overlook the inconveniences of the world. Instead of cursing the one who takes my place, I'll invite him to do so. Rather than complaining that the wait is too long, I will thank God for a moment to pray. Instead of clenching my fist at new assignments, I will face them with joy and courage.

**I choose kindness**... I will be kind to the poor, for they are alone. Kind to the rich, for they are afraid. And kind to the unkind, for such is how God has treated me.

**I choose goodness**... I will go without a dollar before I take a dishonest one. I will be overlooked before I will boast. I will confess before I will accuse. I choose goodness.

**I choose faithfulness**... Today I will keep my promises. My debtors will not regret their trust. My associates will not question my word. My loved ones will not question my love. And my children will never fear that their parent will not come home.

**I choose gentleness**... Nothing is won by force. I choose to be gentle. If I raise my voice, may it be only in praise. If I clench my fist, may it be only in prayer. If I make a demand, may it be only of myself.

**I choose self-control**... I am a spiritual being. After this body is dead, my spirit will soar. I refuse to let what will rot, rule the eternal. I choose self-control. I will be drunk only by joy. I will be impassioned only by my faith. I will be influenced only by God. I will be taught only by Christ. I choose self-control.

**Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control**. To these I commit my day. If I succeed, I will give thanks. If I fail, I will seek His grace. And then when this day is done, I will place my head on my pillow and rest.

### 3.2.2 Mutual Respect

Respect is about esteeming and valuing other people. Truly respecting ourselves is hard if we don't respect others. People are encouraged when they feel respected.

We show respect by:

1. **Helping others**: This includes friends and neighbors.
2. **Being polite**. Everyone appreciates being treated politely. Use the words "please" and "thank you" frequently.
3. **Admiring and encouraging the good actions of others**. This will help develop their character and make them better people.
4. **Giving people resources, space, and time have their own identity apart from the relationship**. This means:
  - 4.1. Giving them privacy when they need it.
  - 4.2. Giving them some territory or domain within the relationship that they have complete and ultimate authority over and can "own." For instance, if they are the woman, you might want to let them decide how the house gets decorated inside and the furnishings that are bought. If they are the man, it might be letting him decide how to do the landscaping.
  - 4.3. Giving them a budget or allowance of their own to do what they want with and don't question how they spend the money or ask for an accounting.
  - 4.4. Letting them spend time alone with friends and doing things without their spouse involved.
  - 4.5. Not trying to control or influence every aspect of their life.
5. **Being a good listener, and not interrupting people when they are talking**. Let them finish what they are saying and repeat back what they said when they are finished to make sure you understand before you start talking in response.
6. **Giving people equal time to talk**. Let them have enough space to get their feelings off their chest without interruption.
7. **Focus on the importance of the relationship and the value of the people**. Always end disagreements with a focus on how to fix problems, instead of who is to blame. Emphasize helping people and solutions rather than judgment, blame, and punishment.
8. **If you have to label things as bad or harmful, focus on behavior rather than people**. God loves everyone, but he hates bad behavior.

Expect your spouse and child to treat you respectfully too. Begin by telling them what you expect. If they forget, don't nag. Instead offer gentle reminders. If they get angry about being reminded, then rebuke them.

### 3.2.2.1 Appreciate That People are Different<sup>8</sup>

Our world is full of people who are different from one another. We come from large families and small families. We are of different races, religions, and values. We enjoy different activities. We have different interests, talents, and abilities. The Bible talks about how we should accept this kind of diversity and the differences between us in Romans 12:3-18:

*3 For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith. 4 For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, 5 so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. 6 Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith; 7 or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; 8 he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.*

*9 Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good. 10 Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another; 11 not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; 12 rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer; 13 distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality.*

*14 Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. 15 Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. 16 Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion. 17 Repay no evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. 18 If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.*

Teach your children to appreciate these differences, and show that you appreciate them.

### 3.2.2.2 Respecting Your Children

Parents often complain that their children do not respect them. Yet, many times, adults show children a lack of respect. How? By nagging, yelling, hitting, or talking down to them. By doing things for children that they can do for themselves. By following a double standard.

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<sup>8</sup> The Parent's Handbook, Don Dinkmeyer, 1997, American Guidance Service, ISBN 0-7854-1188-7, p. 57.

In a democratic family, no one is considered more or less important than anyone else. You show respect when you treat your child like an equal.

- Does this mean that you are both the same? No. You know more and have more life experience than your child. You have more responsibilities. But both you and your child are human beings. You both deserve respect.
- Does it mean that your child can tell you what to do? Or that you are not in charge? No. You need to be in charge. It is your job to guide your child. But you can guide your child respectfully.

A good rule to remember is that you want to treat your child and your spouse with the same respect you would show a friend. It may take some time for your spouse or your child to begin to show respect back to you. Don't give up if this doesn't happen right away. We all need to practice this habit and be willing to take the first step.

### 3.2.3 Stages of Personal Growth<sup>9</sup>

On the maturity continuum, there are three stages that we go through as we grow to adulthood:

1. Dependence: Dependence is the paradigm of *you*—*you* take care of me; *you* come through for me; *you* didn't come through; I blame *you* for the results.
2. Independence: Independence is the paradigm of *I*—*I* can do it; *I* am responsible; *I* am self-reliant; *I* can choose.
3. Interdependence: Interdependence is the paradigm of *we*—*we* can do it; *we* can cooperate; *we* can combine our talents and abilities and create something greater together.

Dependent people need others to get what they want. Independent people can get what they want through their own effort. Interdependent people combine their own efforts with the efforts of others to achieve their greatest success.

If I were physically dependent—paralyzed or disabled or limited in some physical way—I would need you to help me. If I were emotionally dependent, my sense of worth and security would come from your opinion of me. If you didn't like me, it could be devastating. If I were intellectually dependent, I would count on you to do my thinking for me, to think through the issues and problems of my life.

If I were independent, physically, I could pretty well make it on my own. Mentally, I could think my own thoughts, I could move from one level of abstraction to another. I could think creatively and analytically and organize and express my thoughts in understandable ways. Emotionally, I would be validated from within. I would be inner directed. My sense of worth would not be a function of being liked or treated well.

It's easy to see that independence is much more mature than dependence. Independence is a major achievement in and of itself. But independence is not supreme.

<sup>9</sup> *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, Stephen R. Covey, 1989, Fireside, pp. 49-52.

Nevertheless, the current social paradigm enthrones independence. It is the avowed goal of many individuals and social movements. Most of the self-improvement material puts independence on pedestal, as though communication, teamwork, and cooperation were lesser values.

But much of our current emphasis on independence is a reaction to dependence—to having others control us, define us, use us, and manipulate us.

The little understood concept of interdependence appears to many to smack of dependence, and therefore, we find people often for selfish reasons, leaving their marriages, abandoning their children, and forsaking all kinds of social responsibility—all in the name of independence.

The kind of reaction that results in people “throwing off their shackles,” becoming “liberated,” “asserting themselves,” and “doing their own thing” often reveals more fundamental dependencies that cannot be run away from because they are internal rather than external—dependencies such as letting the weaknesses of other people ruin our emotional lives or feeling victimized by people and events out of our control.

Of course, we may need to change our circumstances. But the dependence problem is a personal maturity issue that has little to do with circumstances. Even with better circumstances, immaturity and dependence often persist.

True independence of character empowers us to act rather than be acted upon. It frees us from our dependence on circumstances and other people and is a worthy, liberating goal. But is not the ultimate goal in effective living.

Independent thinking alone is not suited to interdependent reality. Independent people who do not have the maturity to think and act interdependently may be good individual producers, but they won't be good leaders or team players. They're not coming from the paradigm of interdependence necessary to succeed in marriage, family, or organizational reality.

Life is, by nature, highly interdependent. To try to achieve maximum effectiveness through independence is like trying to play tennis with a golf club—the tool is not suited to the reality.

Interdependence is a far more mature, more advanced concept. If I am physically interdependent, I am self-reliant and capable, but I also realize that you and I working together can accomplish far more than, even in my best, I could accomplish alone. If I am emotionally interdependent, I derive a great sense of worth within myself, but I also recognize the need for love, for giving, and for receiving love from others. If I am intellectually interdependent, I realize that I need the best thinking of other people to join with my own.

As an interdependent person, I have the opportunity to share myself deeply, meaningfully, with others, and I have access to the vast resources and potential of other human beings.

Interdependence is a choice only independent people can make. Dependent people cannot choose to become interdependent. They don't have the character to do it; they don't own enough of themselves.

As you become truly independent, you have the foundation for effective interdependence. You have the character base from which you can effectively work on the more personality-oriented “Public victories” of teamwork, cooperation, and communication.

### 3.2.4 Dealing with Personal Problems Effectively

Over the years, I have developed some very effective techniques for dealing with my own personal problems. I have learned that if we follow a structured plan for managing and fixing our personal problems, then they are much easier to deal with and we can converge on a much happier and more satisfying life over time. Here is the procedure I have developed:

1. Periodically sit down and review your life, your goals, and your accomplishments. I call this a “personal performance review”. The concept is just like a performance review at your job, but instead you are evaluating how good *you* have been at getting what *you* need out of life to make yourself happy. A good time to do this is at least once per month during a quiet time where you have at least two hours without interruption and access to a computer. If you are married, you should do this *with a spouse* and not separately. This time is:
  - 1.1. A time to review your personal journal and look at when problems are happening in your life and the factors or causes prior to the occurrence of the problem that contributed to the problem.
  - 1.2. A time to be honest with yourself about things you may be doing to contribute to the undesirable aspects of your living situation and your relationships.
  - 1.3. A time to read section 2.5 3 of this document: “God’s Memorandum to Us” before you begin writing things down.
  - 1.4. A time to focus on things that you can influence and control in a positive way and constructive way, and which you and your spouse and only the two of you are responsible for dealing with.
  - 1.5. To be used for prayer and brainstorming solutions to your personal problems or “wellness issues”.
  - 1.6. A time when you can sit down and evaluate how good you have been during the past month at making yourself and your spouse happy and meeting your emotional and material needs (not selfish wants, but legitimate needs). If you are married, then your partner's needs should be more important than your own.
  - 1.7. A time to evaluate or re-evaluate your longer-term goals in life, and whether they are Biblically sound, realistic, and achievable.
2. Begin with mutual prayer: Hold your spouses' hand, close your eyes, and kneel in prayer. Start the session by thanking God for all the blessings he has given, for your spouse and your children, for health and the absence of financial problems. Focus on thankfulness and contentment and ask the Lord to help you understand and document the problems you are having in your life together. Ask him for help in loving your partner and yourself unconditionally by always approaching problems constructively and trying to improve the situation. Focus on how you can help your partner rather than on how they can help you. This will:
  - 2.1. Put the focus on unselfishness and helping each other.
  - 2.2. Reduce anxiety and fear.
  - 2.3. Create hope for improvement.
  - 2.4. Increase trust in the providence of God's will in our lives as we petition him to influence our situation positively.
3. Make a Problem Summary List with your spouse. Another way to look at this is a wellness list. You can ask yourself “What things could I be doing better to increase the happiness and satisfaction of my partner (if married) or my own life (if single).” During your personal “performance review”, make a table with five columns and several rows. The Problem Summary List table is used to define and identify longer-term problems in your life that you can resolve to

work on and correct in the coming weeks and months. You should list the problems or “wellness issues” in order of priority, with the most important problems at the top of the list with the lowest number in the priority column. You might want to do this list on a computer to keep it sorted at all times. Writing your problems down helps you to deal with them logically and objectively. If they just bounce around in your head and never go on paper, you can’t look at them objectively or organize an approach for dealing with them. You can do the four sections as a four column table or you can devote one sheet of paper to each section if there are too many things to put in a table. The column or section headings are:

- 3.1. Priority-Priority or significance of the impact of this problem on your life. The priority should be a reflection of the family priorities identified in section 1.3 of this Family Constitution.
- 3.2. Problem-What personal problem are you having, in high-level terms? A good way to identify problems are those situations or events or processes that create fear and anxiety or anger. You can start by talking about things that make you angry, because fear and anxiety most often express themselves ultimately as anger. However, we must ensure that we aren't angry or upset about the wrong things. For instance, getting angry because we are overmaterialistic and want a brand new car but our spouse doesn't think we need one is probably a wrong reason to get mad, and therefore, we wouldn't list this as a problem that needs to be fixed. We might list the expressions of greed and envy that are behind this anger as a problem that needs to be fixed, though.
- 3.3. Symptom(s) of problem-Emotional and practical symptoms of the problem. How is the problem impacting your life? What is wrong with your life right now that needs to be fixed?
- 3.4. Cause(s)-Behavioral factors that you and the people you know are exercising that are causing this problem. Don't list people's names here, because anger and blaming will only discourage spouses from participating in the process.
- 3.5. Solution candidate(s)-Possible ways to correct the problem. The solutions should be focused on detailed and practical behaviors we can do to eliminate the causes that are expressing themselves as problems in our lives. We should never list as a solution a behavior that would be a sin as described in chapter 7 of this document.

Below is an example of one of my own Problem Summary Lists so you can see how this is done.

**Table 3-1: Sample Problem Summary List**

<i>Pri- ority</i>	<i>Problem</i>	<i>Symptom(s)</i>	<i>Cause(s)</i>	<i>Solution(s)</i>
1	Marriage is falling apart	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. No communication.</li> <li>2. Frequent arguments.</li> <li>3. No sex.</li> <li>4. Unhappiness.</li> <li>5. Mistrust and/or suspicion.</li> <li>6. Frequent criticism</li> <li>7. Spending too much time at work to escape family involvement.</li> <li>8. Kids are rebelling and critical of parents.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Selfishness.</li> <li>2. Bad priorities: God first, spouse second, children third.</li> <li>3. No spiritual life.</li> <li>4. Not helping or encouraging other family members enough.</li> <li>5. Negativity.</li> <li>6. Lack of thankfulness, appreciation, and encouragement.</li> <li>7. No sexual submission to</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Focus on God with prayer and Bible study regularly.</li> <li>2. Spend less time at work.</li> <li>3. Submit yourself sexually to your spouse as God commands, whether you feel like it or not.</li> <li>4. Communicate more.</li> <li>5. Have regular family meetings to deal with emotional problems.</li> <li>6. Do more family</li> </ol>

Pri- ority	Problem	Symptom(s)	Cause(s)	Solution(s)
			<p>spouse as Bible commands us.</p>	<p>events together.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>7. Reward and encourage family members for expressing their feelings and needs.</li> <li>8. Show more empathy.</li> <li>9. Be unselfish.</li> <li>10. Work on trust and love.</li> <li>11. Read books on parenting and relationships to give you ideas on how to deal constructively with your marriage/family problem.</li> <li>12. Write a Family Constitution of your own, like this one!</li> </ol>
2	Family money situation is tight	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Frequent arguments with wife over money.</li> <li>2. Large credit card debt.</li> <li>3. Bad credit rating.</li> <li>4. Paying bills late</li> <li>5. Poor sex life, because of worries over family finances.</li> <li>6. Spouses working overtime or two jobs to make ends meet.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. No family budget.</li> <li>2. Poor priorities: God should be first!</li> <li>3. Family members too selfish. Need to focus on contentment and thankfulness.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Pay off debt.</li> <li>2. Make a family budget.</li> <li>3. Involve everyone in making the budget.</li> <li>4. Review the budget monthly and stick to it.</li> <li>5. Start having Family meetings regularly. Start them with prayer and focus on thankfulness and people, rather than things. Review progress on the budget so far with the family.</li> <li>6. Tell the children they have to give up all but 10 of their toys to Goodwill. This will help them learn contentment.</li> <li>7. Start serving the</li> </ol>

Pri- ority	Problem	Symptom(s)	Cause(s)	Solution(s)
				needs of underprivileged others as a family to help learn contentment.
3	Feel lonely	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. No activities with friends on weekends.</li> <li>2. No one over for dinner.</li> <li>3. No relatives living in the area.</li> <li>4. Selfish focus on personal gratification.</li> <li>5. Don't serve God and help other people enough.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Too focused on self.</li> <li>2. No spiritual life.</li> <li>3. Lack of contentment.</li> <li>4. No daily prayer.</li> <li>5. No Bible study.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Go to church regularly.</li> <li>2. Pray at least daily.</li> <li>3. Study the Bible at least daily.</li> <li>4. Plan more activities as a family.</li> <li>5. Join social organizations, like clubs, toastmasters.</li> <li>6. Make more friends.</li> <li>7. Do more activities with friends.</li> <li>8. Be a volunteer at the church.</li> <li>9. Focus more on helping others.</li> </ol>

4. Spend at least one half hour filling in the table or sheets of paper with as much information as you can about your personal and collective family problems. Spend more time on the more important things. Frequently sort the list on the computer to keep it in priority order as you work so that you can focus on the more important things most. If you are married, the list should contain inputs from both spouses. Spouses can make their own lists before the "wellness session", but the output of the session should be a consolidated list that contains inputs from both spouses. This will emphasize teamwork, build communication and coping skills, and also serve as a way to inform your spouse about expectations that your partner has which you were not aware of. Being informed about these expectations regularly will help develop trust and empathy. Don't bitch or criticize or blame your partner, because this will just alienate them. Don't put names of people on the list who are to blame. Focus on behaviors and not people as much as you can. Emphasize to your spouse that mature love is about hope and improvement and a positive focus on doing things to help and give to your spouse rather than selfishly doing what benefits oneself only.
5. Select at least one solution for each of the individual problems you have from the Problem Summary List. The solution(s) you select should be specific, detailed, measurable things you can do to help eliminate the problem. These solutions will become part of your ongoing goals and objectives subject to periodic review. You will add these solutions later to your "To do" list and prioritize them. *Each spouse must pick at least one thing (solution) off the list that they personally can do to improve the situation and help their spouse.* This is their way of demonstrating commitment, unselfishness, teamwork, and love towards their partner.
6. Create a specific task list of measurable goals and progress indicators to deal with the problems based on the solutions you have selected in step 6 above. List them in order of decreasing priority.

The higher priority items should be at the top of the list and have the lowest number. They must be time-specific and detailed in nature. Some examples:

- 6.1. If the solution selected from your Problem Summary List in step 6 above is to attend more social functions, then select specific functions to attend and put them on your calendar or task list.
- 6.2. If the solution selected from your Problem Summary List in step 6 above is to attend family counseling, then select a counselor and schedule appointments with the counselor.
7. Enter the goals and objectives in your organizer program or Day-Timer. This will force you to look at the goals frequently and get them done in a timely manner.
8. Conclude in prayer.
9. At the end of the meeting, put the date on the working papers and then file them in a "wellness binder" that you can refer to during the next "performance review".
10. Track your progress until the next "personal performance review". Hold yourself accountable for your own happiness (if you are single) or your spouse's happiness (if you are married). Evaluate frequently whether the solutions you are attempting are working. Seek feedback from your spouse throughout the week on the effectiveness of the solution(s). Focus on the problem you are working on in your daily prayers up until the next meeting. If the solutions aren't working, write this down and use it as input for your next "personal performance review".
11. The next time you meet with your spouse for your "personal performance review":
  - 11.1. Retrieve the "wellness binder" for the session and look at the list from last week or the last time you had a "performance review".
  - 11.2. Go over the measurable goals you set for last time. Each spouse should provide a self-assessment to their partner of what they did to ensure that they met their responsibilities for relationships improvement during the past week. Don't criticize them if they didn't meet all their responsibilities, but ensure that they know they are accountable for their responsibilities and that behaving responsibly is the most important way that they can demonstrate the love they have for their spouse.
  - 11.3. After both spouses have completed their personal progress assessment, then they should take turns asking their spouse: "How do you think I did and what could I do better next time." They should then listen patiently for feedback from their spouse on how they could do it better. There should be no anger or resentment expressed, because this will only interfere with progress. The person who is listening should not interrupt their spouse, but wait until their spouse is finished talking. They should write the spouse's comments on a notepad to ensure they understand what is being said and can remember it. Good listening skills are every bit as important to empathetic communication as speaking skills.
  - 11.4. After reviewing progress during the past week, then go back to step 2 above and address new business for that week.

### **3.3 Rules of the House**

1. We obey our Lord Jesus Christ and what he commands us to do in the owner's manual he gave us for our life on earth called the Bible.
2. We love, honor and pray for one another.
3. We tell the truth, ALWAYS.
4. When we make a commitment or a promise, and especially a marriage commitment, we ALWAYS try to live up to everything we promised because we are concerned about our credibility and integrity and made that promise in front of God, our family, and all our collective friends.

5. We always try to give to people that what they need and expect most from their family and their relationships:
  - 5.1. Acceptance
  - 5.2. Affirmation/appreciation/encouragement
  - 5.3. Empathy
6. We unselfishly consider one another's interests ahead of our own.
7. We speak quietly and respectfully with one another.
8. We do not hurt one another with unkind words or deeds, but we always tell the truth in love, especially if they are acting arrogantly and selfishly.
9. When someone needs correction, we correct him in LOVE and using TRUTH, not angry words, lies, or vain retribution.
10. When someone is sorry, we forgive him/her.
11. When we have done something wrong, we apologize to the people we have hurt immediately as soon as we realize it, and because others forgive us, then anger and resentment never accumulate and the family is always peaceful.
12. When someone is sad, we comfort him.
13. When someone is happy, we rejoice with him.
14. When we have something nice to share, we share it.
15. Personal responsibility:
  - 15.1. When we have work to do, we do it without complaining.
  - 15.2. We take good care of everything God has given us. It is only a gift that we have TEMPORARY STEWARDSHIP over during our short time here on earth.
  - 15.3. We do not create unnecessary work for others.
  - 15.4. When we open something, we close it.
  - 15.5. When we turn something on, we turn it off.
  - 15.6. When we take something out, we put it away.
  - 15.7. When we make a mess, we clean it up.
  - 15.8. When we do not know what to do, we ask.
16. When we go out, we act just as if we were in this house.

### 3.4 Family Event Schedule

The following schedule of events shall apply within the family, subject to change by written consent of both parents.

**Table 3-2: Family Event Schedule**

<i>Event</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>When</i>
Family meeting	Weekly	Sunday 2p.m.-4p.m.
Family Bible Study	Weekly	Sunday 1p.m.-2p.m.
Husband's Birthday	Annually	September 7
Wife's Birthday	Annually	October 25
Child's birthday	Annually	December 30
Family Week	Annually	

### 3.5 Importance of Unity within the Family

### 3.5.1 What is unity?

Like all of God's precepts, His commandments regarding marriage and family are intended to reflect a universal eternal principle. The principle behind God's commands for marriage and family is unity. God's design for a husband and a wife is evident in the words of Genesis 2:24: "a man will...be *united* to his wife, and they will become *one* flesh." God did not come up with that idea just to make for nice wedding ceremonies; in God's eyes, unity is the central element of the marriage and family relationships.

Similarly, God designed the family as a unity; an unbroken circle of strong, loving, lasting relationships; the primary unit of human society (Num. 1, e.g.); a hedge against loneliness (Ps. 68:6); a defense against poverty and affliction (1 Tim. 5:4-8); and an environment for child-rearing and education (1 Tim. 5:4-8).

God values unity. "*How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in **unity!***" the Bible says (Ps. 133:1). Jesus reminded His disciples of His desire to bring all people --not only the Jews--into His kingdom, so that there would be "***one flock and one shepherd***" (John 10:16). Scripture records Jesus' prayer that His disciples "may be one" (John 17:21), and God's Word advises His children to "*Make every effort to keep the **unity** of the Spirit*" (Eph. 4:3).

God's precepts concerning marriage and family are not thrown out willy-nilly, like a child creating a spatter-painting on a spinning wheel at the county fair; they are part of a positive purposeful design, a design that is meant to reflect a principle: unity.

### 3.5.2 Example

For century upon century, faithful Jews have begun their daily prayers by reciting the *shema*, the phrase Moses spoke to the Israelites after delivering the Ten Commandments to them:

*Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one* (Deut. 6:4).

Those words are sacred to a Jew. Those are the words, written in Hebrew on tiny slips of paper, that orthodox Jews bind to their arms and foreheads in phylacteries, and attach outside the doors of their homes in a little box or cylinder called a *mezuzah* (in literal obedience to Deut. 6:8-9).

The *shema* reveals the singularity of God. There is no other God. "See now," God says in his Word, "there is no god besides me" (Deut. 32:39). "Before me no god was formed," He declares, "nor will there be one after me" (Is. 43:10).

But the *shema* does not only refer to the singularity of God; it also testifies to His unity. Long before Jesus Christ was revealed to men and women as the Son of God, long before the Holy Spirit was given to the Church of the Pentecost, God revealed Himself as a mysterious unity. Even the Hebrew Scriptures intimate the concept of a plural Godhead--yet within the Godhead existed also perfect unity. The Christian Scriptures reveal that God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (2 Cor. 13:14). Yet the *shema* makes it clear that God is not partnerships. He is not a conglomeration. He is not a committee. He is a *unity*: "Hear O Israel: The Lord our God, *the Lord is one*" (Deut. 6:4).

He cannot be separated. He cannot be divided. Unity is not something He strives for; it is not even something He achieves. It is something He *is*. "I and the Father are one." Jesus said. "Understand that the Father is in me, and I in the Father" (John 10:30, 38).

Unity is part of God's nature and character. He is one. And it is that unity that He wishes us to reflect in our marriages and family relationships. When the Bible says that a man and woman shall "be united...and...become one flesh" (Gen. 2:24), it is saying that marriage should reflect God's nature. When parents obey the divine command to "be fruitful and increase in number" (Gen. 1:28), that family should also reflect the unity that God values.

The test of truth grounds "family values" in the nature and character of God. Because God is one, disunity in a marriage or family is displeasing to Him. Because God is one, broken marriages and families do not reflect His standards. Because God is one, His nature defines marriage and family in lasting, lifelong terms. We can then say that unity in marriage and family is right for all people, for all times, and for all places.

### 3.5.3 Evidence

God ordained the institutions of marriage and family not only to reflect His unity, but also because He knew some things we didn't; He wanted to protect and provide for us.

The research shows that less than half of our kids (48 percent) can say that they want "a marriage like that of my parents," and eight in ten (79 percent) see divorce as a viable solution to marital problems, regardless of whether children are involved. Less than half (47 percent) see the family as a crucial element of American society.

Yet, at the same time, 90 percent of our young people avow that "God intended marriage to last a lifetime." These numbers suggest that most of our children desperately need to understand how the evidence supports God's standards for marriage and the family.

#### 3.5.3.1 Protect from Disillusionment and provide for fulfillment

*God's standards for marriage and family protect from disillusionment.* Brokenness and disappointment invariably result from attempts to short-cut biblical standards of marriage and family. Our youth who live together outside of marriage are setting themselves up to be disappointed--even if they "intend" to marry later.

One woman wrote:

*I wish I could tell every young adult in American that you truly will reap what you sow. Cohabitation may seem wonderful initially (sin is so deceiving!), but eventually it creates more problems than you can imagine.*

*I lived with my boyfriend for two years before we got married. I knew I was breaking my parents' hearts, as well as my Heavenly Father's heart! My boyfriend was not a Christian, but I figured I could change him if we moved in together.*

*The "this-is-yours, that-is-mine" mentality that enabled us to "successfully" live together completely unraveled once we got married. We had become too separate and too selfish,*

*making it nearly impossible to become "one flesh." The honeymoon was over before the wedding day ever arrived.*<sup>10</sup>

Notice that the author of that letter was a professing Christian when she moved in with her boyfriend! She hoped to evangelize him by living with him outside of marriage. Like too many of our children, she accepted a counterfeit (cohabitation) for the real thing (marriage).

In his 1993 book, *The Future of the American Family*, George Barna says, "Cohabiting has increased 1888 percent among eighteen-to-twenty-four-year-olds in the last three years." Many of those cohabiting couples see living together as a sort of "trial marriage." But they are deceived.

"The National Survey of Families and Households," conducted by University of Wisconsin researchers, reveals that two-fifths of couples who live together break up within 1.3 years--before they get married. Those who *do* marry after cohabiting are 50 percent more likely to divorce than those who don't cohabit before marriage. In other words, the "conventional wisdom" that views cohabitation as a trial marriage is flat-out wrong; living together does not prevent mistakes nor increase one's chances of building a successful marriage. Quite the opposite.

Moreover, compromising biblical standards can be physically dangerous--especially to women. A Justice Department study reported that cohabiting women are sixty-two times (520 percent) more likely to suffer from assault as wives. Apparently, says religion columnist Michael McManus, "Men respect wives [more than they do] live-in lovers."

*God's standards for marriage and family provide for fulfillment.* Married life is not necessarily easy. Husbands and wives argue, dishes get dirty, laundry piles up, children struggle at school--family life can be complex and exhausting. But when a man and woman are "united...and...become one flesh" (Gen. 2:24), they can experience a unity that can weather the storms and bring intimacy and fulfillment in their relationship.

### **3.5.3.2 Protect from parental inattention and provide for parental involvement**

*God's standards for marriage and family protect from parental inattention.* I do most of the traveling in my family. I fly off to distant cities and foreign lands, while my wife keeps the home and family running smoothly. Not long ago, however, the tables were turned; my wife went on an extended trip and I was left at home. It was my responsibility to not only keep up with my work, but to make sure my children go to school on time, to ferry them to sports events, to make sure they were fed, had clean clothes, and had their homework done. Some days, it seemed I had forty children (instead of four) and that I would never have enough time for them all.

That is the very situation many single parents must deal with daily. They strive not only to provide economically for their children, but to run a home, attend parent-teacher meetings, and, if any time is left, to read their little ones a story at the end of the day. Divorced parents who are remarried face incredible obstacles as well; some must squeeze all their parenting into weekends, or a few months out of the year. Ultimately, no matter how hard a parent tries, the child of a broken family usually gets less of his parents' attention and affection, simply because there are not enough hours in the day for one parent to be both mother and father. Nor can one parent be two places at once, giving attention to more than one household of children or step-children.

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<sup>10</sup> Barbara Dafoe Whitehead, "Dan Quayle Was Right," *The Atlantic Monthly*, April, 1993, p. 65.

Children of broken families suffer various ways from this inattention. Barbara Dafoe Whitehead writes:

*Not only do children experience a loss of parental attention at the onset of divorce, but they soon find that at every stage of their development their parents are not available in the same way they once were. "In a reasonably happy family," [Judith] Wallerstein observes, "the child gravitates first to one parent and then to the other, using skills and attributes from each in climbing the developmental ladder." In a divorced family, children find it "harder to find the needed parent at needed times."<sup>11</sup>*

As much as a parent may strive to overcome such effects of family disruption, they cannot completely negate them. As I have stated before, God's standards are like an umbrella, and when--for whatever reason--we move out from under that umbrella, we no longer benefit from its protection. The more we can help our youth understand the evidence presented here, therefore, the more they will understand why a lifetime commitment of marriage is in the best interests of parents and children.

*God's standards for marriage and family provide for greater parental involvement.* Those ten or twelve days in which I had to manage my home and family while my wife was away not only renewed my appreciation for her, but revived my gratitude for God's wisdom in providing "a helper suitable for [each of us]" (Gen. 2:18).

My wife's contribution to our family does not only provide two more hands, making it possible for me to take our son to a concert while she helps our other child with her homework; she can answer questions that I cannot, and offer a perspective that I lack. That is part of God's wise plan. Our union enables us to be much more involved with our children--what they're planning--than either of us could manage alone. When we help our kids see the specific roles that each parent plays in their lives, they can better understand why God intended married partners to remain married.

### **3.5.3.3 Protect from emotional insecurity and provide for emotional stability**

*God's standard for marriage and family protect from emotional insecurity.* A 1988 study by the National center for Health Statistics revealed that children in single-parent families are two to three times as likely to experience emotional and behavioral problems than children of two-parent families. They are more likely to drop out of high school, to use drugs, and to get in trouble with the law. Girls in single-parent families are more likely to be sexually active, and are more likely to become pregnant as teens, and to give birth outside of marriage.

Judith Wallerstein, director of the California Children of Divorce Study, reported that children whose parents have divorced suffer the emotional effects for years after the event. More than a third still experience moderate or severe depression five years after the breakup. ten years later, many continued to struggle, wander, or falter through life. Even fifteen years later, many of the subjects of Wallerstein's study exhibited the effects of the childhood trauma of divorce.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Judith Wallerstein and Sandra Blakeese, *Second Chances: Men, Woman and Children a Decade After Divorce* (New York: Ticknor & Fields, 1990).

<sup>12</sup> As quoted by Barbara Dafoe Whithead, "Dan Quayle Was Right," *The Atlantic Monthly*, April 1993, p. 82.

Novelist Pat Conroy has said that "each divorce is the death of a small civilization." No one feels that loss more keenly than children. God wanted to protect our children from the emotional insecurity that results from divorce when he said, "What God has joined together, let man not separate" (Mark 10:9).

*God's standards for marriage and family provide for emotional stability.* Children need to know there are certain things they can always count on. They need stable and constant patterns in their lives. They need that sense of security that says "God's in His heaven, all's right with the world."

Adherence to God's standard for marriage and family provides that kind of stability. It fosters feelings of consistency and permanence. It helps them to know who they belong to, who belongs to them, who they can trust, and what their lives will be like tomorrow. That sense of being part of a relationship, the realization of being loved for who we are--is among the most basic human needs. A marriage and a family that are founded on God's standard of unity provide for the emotional stability of children *and* adults, a blessing longed for by many of our friends and loved ones, in our society--and in our churches.

#### **3.5.3.4 Protect from relational problems and provide for healthy role models**

*God's standards for marriage and family protect from relational problems.* Research reveals that many children of broken marriages and disrupted families face severe relational problems, not only as children, but throughout their lives. Many find it difficult to achieve intimacy in a relationship, to build long-lasting relationships, or to form a solid marriage. Some even find it hard to hold a steady job. Most of these studies invariably conclude that these children suffer from "adolescent alienation"--a relational disconnectedness from adults.

Such difficulties are not due only to marital separation and divorce, but also to the events that led to and followed the break-up. Divorce is not an isolated event; it is generally preceded by disagreements, arguments, even unfaithfulness. And it is often followed by new boyfriends or girlfriends, live-in partners, step-parents, and new "siblings." All of these, combined with the absence of one natural parent from the household, can create a breeding ground for a child to feel alienated that results in relational confusion and distress. Many children carry such scars well into their adulthood.

*God's standards for marriage and family provide for healthy role models.* An intact family of a husband and wife who display a loving, giving, respectful relationship provides an invaluable resource for children. When my daughter was much younger, I said to her "\_\_\_\_\_, do you know that I love your mother?"

"Yeah," she answered. "I know it."

"How do you know?"

"Because you always tell her."

"What if I lost my voice and couldn't tell her? How would you know then?"

"Because you always kiss her."

"What if I got chapped lips and couldn't kiss her? Then how would you know?"

She thought for a moment. "Because of the way you treat her," she answered.

That's the answer I was looking for, because it told me that I was modeling a loving relationship between a man and a woman. My children will benefit for the rest of their lives from my wife's model of womanhood; she has given my daughters a model to strive for, and my son a model to look for in a woman. My wife and I together have modeled what a loving, respectful male-female relationship should look like.

God's standard of unity in marriage and family relationships extends His gracious protection and provision to those who heed it. The evidence of God's truth is therefore shown below:

<i>God's Protection and Provision</i>	
<i>PROTECTS from:</i>	<i>Provides for:</i>
Disillusionment	Fulfillment
Parental inattention	Parental involvement
Emotional insecurity	Emotional stability
Relational problems	Healthy role models

### 3.5.4 How to Encourage Unity in the Family

Our children desperately need to see the values of marriage and family in terms of the precepts we described earlier (which grounds the virtue of unity in the nature and character of God) and in light of the Evidence presented (which conforms that marital and familial unity and stability is the safest and surest route to happiness and fulfillment for parents and children alike). But how do we apply the truth to our youth? What can we do to get the message across?

1. **Encourage your youth's involvement in a youth group.** A healthy and vibrant youth group is an important part of a young person's life--especially for a child from a single-parent home. Meet with your church youth worker and share the progress of your child's spiritual and emotional growth. Ask your youth worker what you can do to better support your child and the entire youth group. Youth workers need you and you need them. Let them know of good programs and resources that are available.
2. **Take advantage of adult small group studies and meetings.** Join a small group that is biblically based, one that focuses on helping you in your parenting responsibilities. Some churches have single-parent small groups. Ask your group leader what programs and courses will be covered over the next twelve months. Make them aware of the excellent parenting studies that are available. Of course, this book is an excellent resource to begin a church-wide emphasis on instilling biblical values within our youth.
3. **Pull out your wedding albums.** You may be surprised at how fascinated your children are--even teenagers--by the story (and pictures) of your wedding. Pull out the wedding photos and use them as a way to share your deep convictions about marriage, the vows you made to your spouse, and how that commitment stands today. Sharing stories of your courtship and marriage--and how honoring marriage has resulted in God's protection and provision in your life--will reinforce your child's convictions on marriage and family.
4. **Talk of your children's births.** Whether you are five, fifteen, or fifty, hearing about the details of the day you were born is always fascinating. Use that fascination to provide your child a greater sense of belonging. Emphasize to your children the fact that they came from the union of your

love for your mate. Explain how they have inherited distinct characteristics and features from each of you. The more they have a sense of their heritage, the more connected they will feel to the unity of the family.

5. **Openly communicate your love to your spouse.** Take advantage of every opportunity to let your children know how much you love your mate. Be affectionate with each other around them. The more you show them how much you are devoted to your mate, the more secure they will feel. Kisses, roses, special dates, favorite meals--there are a hundred and one ways to openly demonstrate before your children how you love each other. My kids love it when I involve them in helping me plan a special meal or surprise that demonstrates my love and appreciation for my wife; their participation also increases their awareness of--and confidence in--our loving commitment to each other.
6. **Use opportunities presented by television, news, and current events.** Use movies or news events of divorces or pending marriages as topics of discussion. Rather than condemning a person who has suffered a divorce, talk about the protection and provision they will be missing. If you know the person, discuss how you and your children can be supportive and helpful. Using current events can be an ideal way to discuss the negative consequences of violating God's standard of unity in marriage and family and a good way to point out the positive rewards of living in obedience to that standard.

God's truth about marriage and family is absolute--it is for all people, for all times, and for all places. Take the time to diligently teach the evidence presented here about marriage and family "to your sons (and daughters) and 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...And you shall do what is right and good in the sight of the Lord, that it may be well with you..." (Deut. 6:7,18, NASB). Instill God's value of the unity of marriage and family in your children and they will reap rewards for generations to come.

### 3.6 **Family Meetings**

Back before man had convenient transportation and communication systems, families were more stable and less busy. They lived on farms and did everything together. Dinner was the time in this environment when most families had the equivalent of family meetings to resolve issues, encourage each other, and keep informed about what was happening. However, since the advent of TV, the Internet, and all the many distractions of modern life, that method of communication has been severely undermined. The result is that unless families make a conscious decision to spend time communicating and cooperating in the form of family meetings, then in most cases:

1. A team spirit won't develop.
2. Communication and cooperation skills won't develop.
3. Family members may become selfish and rebellious.

The concept of family meetings is not new. For instance, the Mormon church has used this concept for many years and called it "Family Home Evening", which they do on Monday nights. The Family Home Evening is normally a time to study scriptures, but it can and should be a time to collectively solve family problems as well. Therefore, regular weekly family meetings will be the norm within the Hansen Family.

### 3.6.1 Purpose of Family Meetings

Periodic and regular family meetings help provide an important way to do all of the following within the family:

1. Demonstrate love.
2. Resolve problems.
3. Communicate.
4. Improve communication skills.
5. Developing common goals.
6. Demonstrate and model respect towards other family members. This teaches children about respect and problem solving.
7. Develop a democratic “team” mentality.
8. Developing cooperation and common goals.
9. Emphasize personal responsibility and accountability to other members of the team.
10. Learning more about other family members.
11. Help and encourage other family members when they need it.
12. Help families have more fun together.

### 3.6.2 Meeting Schedule

Your family is busy. Find the time to meet by making a chart of everyone’s activities. Fill in the children’s and your own schedule for the week. This will help you find or make time when all family members are free.

Family meetings shall be held on a weekly basis at a time agreed to by all family members. This time shall be on Sunday afternoons following church around lunch time, if the members of the family are not able to otherwise agree to a time. All family members are expected to set aside at least one and one-half hours for this meeting.

### 3.6.3 Meeting Sequence

The following sequence shall be followed at every family meeting:

1. Pray together at the start of the meeting.
2. Have a short devotional. You might want to read a scripture or a passage of scripture.
3. Share good things that have happened since the last meeting.
4. Read the notes from the last meeting.
5. Talk about “old business”—things from the last meeting that still need to be resolved. Such things might include making a decision to commit to an approach that previously was only being tested and was temporary.
6. Talk about “new business”—things people want to talk about at this meeting.
7. Plan something fun to do before the next meeting or at the conclusion of the meeting. You might want to conclude the meeting with a fun activity, like going bowling, going to a sporting event, or having ice cream. Or you might want to plan for the activity later in the week.
8. Summarize. Say what people have agreed to. This is the equivalent of reviewing the action items.

### 3.6.4 Things to Talk About at Family Meetings

Here are some sample things to talk about in family meetings:

1. Share good feelings.
2. Kid's activities.
3. Allowances.
4. Errands.
5. Chores.
6. Rules when friends visit.
7. Weekend plans.
8. Using the phone.
9. Using the TV and VCR.
10. Homework.
11. Church involvement and activities.

### 3.6.5 Guidelines for Family Meetings

1. Meet at a regular time. The regular time might be once a week. Plan to have the meeting last from twenty to thirty minutes. How often and how long you meet depends on children's ages. Younger children need shorter or more frequent meetings.
2. Make a list of topics. Some people call their list of topics a meeting list or *agenda*. Post it on the refrigerator. The family can add to it during the days before the meeting. This helps keep track of everyone's concerns without much time or wasted effort.
3. Plan the time. At first, you will need to be in charge of this. Look at the meeting list. Decide which topics you can cover at the first meetings. Leave time to explore alternatives and make decisions.
4. Take turns. Take turns with different tasks during the family meeting. The leader reads the meeting list and keeps things on track. Young children will need help to do this. That's okay. It's still important to let each person have a chance to lead. Family members can take turns with taking notes. If a child is too young to write, he or she can get the agenda or minutes.
5. Take notes. Write down, or take the *minutes* of, the agreements and plans made in the meeting. This way no one will forget or be confused. Take turns doing the job of note-taking. Take turns posting the minutes so everyone can read them. A good job for older children is to read the minutes to children who can't read. Younger children could post the minutes.
6. Let everyone take part. When talking about something on the list, let your children speak first. This helps them feel responsible.
  - If a child hasn't talked, as the child, "What do you think?"
  - If a child talks too much, stay respectful. You could say, "It sounds like this is important to you. We need to hear how everybody else feels about it."
  - If someone is not showing respect, use an I-message: "When I hear name-calling, I worry that we won't be able to cooperate."
7. Limit complaining. Lots of complaining can turn meetings into gripe sessions. This won't solve problems or help families enjoy each other. If complaining is a problem, ask, "What can we do about it? How can we solve the problem?"
8. Cooperate to choose chores. To start choosing chores, you might want to volunteer for some of the chores no one likes. You might say: "I'll clean the cat box and the bathroom. Who will vacuum and dust?" As time goes on, expect others to do some of the "icky" chores too.

9. Use a job jar. One way to take turns is by using a job jar:
- Talk together about all the jobs that need to be done each week.
  - Write them on slips of paper and put them in a jar.
  - Each week, draw jobs out of the jar.
10. Do what you agree to do. Stick to agreements until the next meeting. If people want to change the agreement, they can do it then. Children *and* parents are expected to do what they agree to. What if you forget and break an agreement? What if one day you don't have time to do something you agreed to? Tell your family you are sorry. Say you will work to do a better job. A child might sometimes forget or not have time too. No one is perfect. If broken agreements continue, make a "work before fun" rule: before people do fun activities, their chores need to be done. The rule applies to parents as well as children.
11. Take time for fun. Meetings are a good way to solve problems and choose chores. But that's not all they are for. To add fun to meetings you can:
- 11.1. Talk about good things. You can thank each person for some help given during the week. Then each person can do the same. You can ask people to talk about what is going well for them right now. This sets a positive tone. It also teaches your children to encourage other people. It teaches them to encourage themselves.
- 11.2. Plan family fun. At the meeting, plan together to do something you all enjoy. You might plan to make homemade pizzas together on Friday night. You might plan to watch a TV show you all enjoy. You could even have a "fun jar," with ideas for family fun written on slips and placed inside. This would show that you value fun as much as work.
- 11.3. Have fun after the meeting. Some families spend a little time having fun together right after the meeting. You could play a game. You could go for a walk or bike ride. You could read a story together.

### **3.7 Techniques for Correction and Encouragement**

Before we can correct someone's unrighteous or harmful behavior, we ourselves must first:

1. Be righteous and blameless before God.
2. Practice righteous judgment against the person we are trying to correct.
3. Correct according to God's word, and not our selfish desires.

Therefore, we will first address why it is considered Christian to judge and once we have passed righteous judgment, how we can apply that judgment to correct someone in love.

#### **3.7.1 Should Christians Judge?**

Webster's dictionary defines the word "judge" as follows:

*"To form an opinion about through careful weighing of evidence and testing of premises."<sup>13</sup>*

The book of Leviticus says we should not only judge, but that we should judge righteously:

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<sup>13</sup> *Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary*, Meriam-Webster, Inc., 1983, ISBN 0-87779-510-X, p. 653.

*Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment: thou shalt not respect the person of the poor, nor honor the person of the mighty: but in righteousness shalt thou judge thy neighbor.*  
[Lev. 19:15]

Some people would say that quotes like this from the old testament don't apply, because grace was not operative before Jesus died for our sins. However, Jesus himself said: "*Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill.*" (Matt. 5:17)

Proverbs makes it very clear that we need to judge to survive:

*The lips of the righteous nourish many, but fools die for lack of judgment.*  
[Prov. 10:21, NIV]

*Open your mouth for the speechless, in the cause of all who are appointed to die. Open your mouth, judge righteously, and plead the cause of the poor and the needy.*  
[Prov. 31:8-9]

Jesus also said about judging (Matt. 7:1-7):

*JUDGE not, that you not be judged. For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you. And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother 'Let me remove the speck from your eye'; and look, a plank is in your own eye? Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye. Do not give what is holy to the dogs; nor cast your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn you in pieces.*

What Jesus was saying here is *not* that we shouldn't judge, but rather that we need to exercise *righteous judgment* by continually examining ourselves, our hearts, and be in constant communication with God through prayer. We need the influence of the Holy Spirit in our lives in order to be a righteous judge. Jesus is saying that we need to apply the same standard to ourselves that we apply to others, and we need to do it **BEFORE** others have an opportunity, so we won't look like hypocrites. Only by doing this will we have a basis for judging and correcting others around us in love and grace and without hypocrisy.

The apostle Paul said "*For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged*" (1Corinthians 11:31). Since the very word "judgment" has developed a negative connotation within professed Christianity, is it any wonder that professed Christians do not practice judgment, or realize what it is when they do? "*My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge*" (Hosea 4:6).

*A trick of Satan has been to rob the people of God of righteous judgment in the name of love, i.e., "We ought to be loving and not judgmental." "We are not ignorant of his devices" (2 Corinthians 2:11). By divorcing God's attribute of being the "Righteous Judge" (2 Timothy 4:8) from His attribute of being the "God of Love" (2 Corinthians 13:11), "false teachers" (2 Peter 2:1) have robbed the Church of the Godly conduct of "righteous judgment" (John 7:24). Instead, an anemic form of love is held forth as the correct alternative for Christian conduct, not caring that the LORD Jesus has given the correct view of love and judgment to the Body of Christ in His letters to the Seven Churches of the Book of*

Revelation, i.e., "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent" (Revelation 3:19).

Without the correct conduct of righteous judgment, the professed Church is paving the way for the acceptance of the Antichrist. This will not only result in the Backslidden Foolish Virgins (Matthew 25) being left at the Pre-Tribulational Rapture, but the perishing world will consequently be punished by God by allowing them to be deceived by the Antichrist. *"And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie"* (2 Thessalonians 2:11). What lie? That Antichrist is God. *"Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the Temple of God, showing himself that he is God"* (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4).

And, all of this because the Church has been taught a false standard of not exercising judgment. The church has been sold this lie by the popular liberal media and contemporary culture, which emphasizes diversity and tolerance. Diversity and tolerance *do* have a rightful place within the church, but only insofar as race, religion, national origin, age, sex, and marital status are concerned. Beyond these nondiscretionary characteristics or attributes of people, character and the choices people make *do* matter and the Bible teaches us that we *should* righteously judge how people behave. But, "when the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the LORD shall lift up a standard against him" (Isaiah 59:19).

Some Christians who have been sold the false idea that we shouldn't judge by our popular culture and the media, however, will try to make judgment more politically correct by using such words as "discernment" and "discretion" to describe it, but we need to remember that these words are types of judgment and are synonyms for judgment. Remember that we can lie to ourselves simply by the words we use to communicate or describe things. Our culture has taken this lie one step further by attempting to deglamorize, denigrate, and criticize those who judge or discriminate. They have in effect criminalized the use of the words "judge" and "discriminate". But remember that you can't criticize, deglamorize, or denigrate people without judging them! What they are doing is judging those who judge, and if judging is wrong, then using judgment to fight judgment is just as wrong!

We can use words to hide from the truth, or we can speak the unadulterated truth in love and with mercy. The latter is preferable. Therefore, for occasions where we are dealing with a person who stubbornly refuses to admit that they have a duty to judge righteously, consider the following roles and stewardships that we fulfill every day as members of society and how we can righteously fulfill the stewardship we have without judging:

### 1. Christian

- 1.1 How can you reprove, rebuke, and correct wrongdoers if you can't judge their behavior? (see Leviticus 19:17, Prov. 24:25, Prov. 28:23, and Prov. 8:13)
- 1.2 How can you abstain from sexual immorality and "flee fornication" unless you can judge these behaviors? (see 1 Cor. 6:18, 1 Thess. 4:3-6)
- 1.3 How can you discern right from wrong as a Christian and whether what your pastor or others say or do is consistent with God's word and commands if you can't judge?
- 1.4 How can you determine if a person is Christ or the Anti-Christ if you can't judge righteously?
- 1.5 How can you have the fear of the Lord we are commanded to have and hate evil, pride, arrogance, and the evil way as demonstrated by behaviors of people around you if you can't judge those behaviors? (see Prov. 8:13)

- 1.6 How can we ensure that we are demonstrating our faith with works and glorifying our father and heaven with those works if we can't judge our own behavior and motives?
2. Marriage
- 2.1 How can you decide (judge) if you should get married if you aren't allowed to judge the character or the behavior or your prospective spouse? (see 2 Cor. 6:14)
- 2.2 How can you discern whether you should divorce biblically unless you can judge for yourself whether your spouse has committed adultery?
3. Parenthood
- 3.1 How can you discipline your children if you can't judge their behavior and whether they are telling you the truth?
- 3.2 How can you protect your children from harmful influences if you can't judge those influences? For instance, how can you regulate your child's television viewing habits and prevent them from watching certain harmful shows unless you can judge those shows as morally depraved and defend that judgment in front of your children when they dispute it with you?
4. Management/vocation
- 4.1 How can you trust your employee or your boss if you can't judge their character and whether they are telling the truth?
- 4.2 How can you know what you have been ordered to do by your superior unless you can judge his intent in the absence of feedback from him?
- 4.3 How can you know if you are obeying work rules unless you can judge the intent of those work rules and whether you are complying with both the spirit and the letter of those rules?
- 4.4 How can you know if you are entering into a business relationship with a dishonest client unless you can judge the character of that person?
5. Voting
- 5.1 How can you vote for godly candidates if you can't judge their character or their qualifications?
- 5.2 If you can't judge the character of candidates, then why vote at all because character and behavior in that scenario become completely irrelevant? Is it any wonder then that voters have become politically passive and voter participation is down in an environment where our society criticizes those who judge?
6. Jury Duty
- 6.1 How can you discern guilt or innocence of the defendant as a juror if you can't judge? As a juror, you are not allowed to let others make your decision for you.
- 6.2 How can determine and apply both the facts and the law to a specific case and come to a conclusion if you can't judge?

Can you see how silly it is to say that we can't judge or shouldn't judge based on the above? The Apostle Paul was the most vocal critic in the bible of judging people. But we emphasize that Paul was talking about judging **people**, not **behavior**. We talk more about this in the following section on righteous judgment.

May we therefore, the professed people of God, conduct ourselves as we ought and according to the command of the Lord Jesus. "*Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment*" (John 7:24). After all, it takes love to obey the LORD Jesus' command to "judge righteous judgment". "*He that hath My Commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me: and he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him*" (John 14:21).

Accordingly, may the LORD Jesus Christ, Who is the Judge of All the Earth, be able to manifest Himself to us.

### 3.7.2 What is Righteous Judgment?<sup>14</sup>

Jesus said of righteous judgment in John 5:30:

*"I can of Myself do nothing. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is righteous, because I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father."*

Therefore, righteous judgment is judgment which glorifies God and not man or us personally. In order for us to know that this is the case, we have to begin each judgment by letting God judge us first through His Holy Spirit to ensure that our motives conform to His will before we can judge people or circumstances outside of ourselves. The *Righteous* judgment described by Jesus in John 7:14-24 therefore begins with *self*-judgment. Righteous judgment is also "unselfish" judgment. When we call someone self-righteous, what we really mean is that they are practicing selfish judgment or unrighteous judgment, or judgment that benefits or glorifies mainly them rather than God.

An extremely important element of righteous judgment is that we must be free of hypocrisy when we perform it:

*"And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?"*  
[Matt. 7:3]

*"But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves."*  
[James 1:22]

*"And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God."*  
[Rom. 2:3.]

*"For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified."*  
[Rom. 2:13.]

The bible says there is only one situation when we are justified in judging:

*"Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling block or an occasion to fall in his brother's way."*  
[Rom. 14:13]

Did you notice that what we are judging righteously above is wrong *behavior* that hurts others, and not the *people* who are committing the sin that is hurting others. There is a very important lesson to be learned from this analysis. That lesson is that it is righteous to judge bad *behavior*, but it is unrighteous to judge *people*. Judging *people* usually tends to devalue them and make them feel inferior. Judging *behavior* with mercy and truth and love toward the person maintains the value of the person while denigrating and discouraging the sinful behavior. Another way of saying this is that judging behavior convicts, but judging people condemns, and no one wants to be condemned because they will typically rebel and want to take revenge when this happens. Condemnation alienates people

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.whatsaiththescriture.com/Fellowship/Judge.Righteous.text.html>.

and makes them angry. How can we tell whether we are judging the *behavior* and not the *person*? Here are some comparisons of words and language that distinguish the two. Note that the elements on the left in the field of psychology are classified as forms of "verbal abuse":

**Table 3-3: Judging people vs. behavior**

<i>Judging the "person"</i>	<i>Judging the "behavior"</i>
Focusing on the person	Focusing on the behavior
Being more interested in "who is to blame" than in how to prevent the problem in the future. Not caring whether the problem gets solved, but rather who is better and more righteous and has the least faults.	Being more interested in preventing the problem than in who is to blame for it. Trying to ensure that every discussion of a problem ends with an agreement on ways of changing behavior that will help everyone and improve the situation.
Using the word "you", or the person's name rather than referring to the behavior or sin	Using the words "that behavior" or "what you did"
Using adjectives or stereotypes to describe the person and not the behavior. For example: " <i>You are stupid and you will always be stupid.</i> "	Using adjectives that describe the behavior but not the person. For example: " <i>What you did was unwise and I hope you'll appreciate that I'm trying to help you by pointing this out. If you don't listen to me, you'll continue hurting yourself and others around you and I hope you don't want to do that.</i> "
Performing a rebuke or censure in public, behind their back or without their knowledge, or in front of their associates, such that they feel defamed or slandered.	Performing the censure in private initially, so they have a chance to remedy the problem before it becomes slander.
<u>Comparing people and failures and assigning worth to people.</u> For instance: " <i>You're just like your father and you will never change because you're such a loser. This situation is hopeless and I'm so angry and offended that I don't have the patience and self-control to explore ways to solve the problem. I'm so mad and so arrogant that I'm not able to reveal the needs and expectations I have that aren't being recognized because I'm afraid of being rejected.</i> "	<u>Comparing behaviors and progress.</u> For instance: " <i>You're getting better every time you do this. I have confidence that you'll eventually lick this bad habit.</i> "

When you conclude a conversation with someone who talks about and judges only behavior, you walk away feeling like:

*"That guy is smart and he really understands me. I learn something from him every time I talk to him. He has helped me understand the problem better and develop empathy for people, and I feel appreciated and loved and he taught me how to love. I feel like I have new tools and solutions for improving the relationships I have with others now, and the space to try out a new approach without being put into a box with labels and stereotypes, and I'm thankful for that. That's the kind of person I want to have as a personal friend because they solve more problems than they make."*

On the other hand, when we are interacting with people who judge people instead of behavior, we feel:

*"That guy is arrogant and angry and selfish every time I talk to him.. I didn't learn anything from that conversation except how much of a jerk he is. He's so full of himself that there's not space left for anyone else when he walks into the room. Every time I talk with him, I feel criticized, blamed, and slandered. I feel immobilized from accomplishing anything to improve the situation or lessen the anger and frustration of others with any situation because we never arrive at the point of focusing on solutions, compromising, or problem solving. Instead, I feel frustrated, disrespected, and annoyed, and have been deprived of any hope for improvement because instead of understanding things better, I have usually been told that I am too stupid to understand. The goal of every conversation is "competition" and who is better than who. All he ever does is use criticism and slander to alienate me from people around me. He creates more problems and trouble in*

*every interpersonal situation than he solves. I'm going to avoid him to save myself the heartache in the future."*

Can you see that the effect of unrighteous judgment is alienation and disunity, while the product of righteous judgment is unity, love, and growing respect? That's why we'd like to emphasize that when the bible, and especially the Apostle Paul, criticizes or prohibits judging, it is almost always talking about judging *people* instead of *behavior*.

Furthermore, God's people are not afraid of God's judgment. How can we pray for the fulfillment of God's judgments, if we are not willing for God to judge us first? "Judge me, O LORD; for I have walked in mine integrity: I have trusted also in the LORD; therefore I shall not slide" (Psalm 26:1).

How are we to practice self-judgment *before* we judge others righteously? "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (Psalm 139:23-24). God's thoughts-- as revealed in His Word-- are the precious means by which we judge ourselves. "How precious also are Thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them!" (Psalm 139:17). The Holy Spirit searches us with His Word. "For the Word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is A Discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in His sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with Whom we have to do" (Hebrews 4:12-13).

Self-judgment implies that we must willingly seek out God's Word regularly to search out our motives and ultimate purpose. "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to Thy Word. With my whole heart have I sought Thee: O let me not wander from Thy Commandments. Thy Word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against Thee" (Psalm 119:9-11). Self-judgment aids us in seeking God's cleansing from sin as well as keeping us from wandering into sin. It may be added that prayer, i.e., specific petition to God to keep us from sin and sinning, is essential to keep us from falling into sin. "And when He was at the place, He said unto them, Pray that ye enter not into temptation" (Luke 22:40).

"For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil" (Ecclesiastes 12:14). No threat of future judgment should be necessary to induce the professed Saints to thoroughly judge ourselves. However, the very idea that our God is completely able to review all of the Believers' conduct-- in particular, all conduct since we came to Christ-- and pronounce it "gold, silver, precious stones" (1 Corinthians 3:12) to be rewarded (3:14), or "wood, hay, stubble" (3:12) to "be burned" and "suffer loss" (3:15)-- "Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward" (2 John 8)-- should encourage us to "walk circumspectly [literally, carefully], not as fools, but as wise" (Ephesians 5:15). We need to be knowingly seeking to abide in Christ (John 15:4; 1 John 2:28), i.e., practicing such admonitions as: "Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath" (Ephesians 4:26).

A righteous judge must have a servant's heart as King Solomon originally did, i.e., "Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge Thy people, that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to judge this Thy so great a people?" (1 Kings 3:9). That heart will be a discerning heart. *God is much more willing to answer an unselfish request for wisdom and understanding to make judgment for Him than to satisfy a simply material personal need.* "And God said to Solomon, "Because this was in thine heart, and thou hast not asked riches, wealth, or honour, nor the life of thine enemies, neither yet hast asked long life; but hast asked wisdom and knowledge for thyself, that thou mayest judge My

people, over whom I have made thee king: Wisdom and knowledge is granted unto thee; and I will give thee riches, and wealth, and honour, such as none of the kings have had that have been before thee, neither shall there any after thee have the like" (2 Chronicles 1:11-12).

Misguided judgment is as undesirable as the lack of judgment, i.e., "And it came to pass, when the time was come that He should be received up, He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem, And sent messengers before His face: and they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for Him. And they did not receive Him, because His face was as though He would go to Jerusalem. And when His disciples James and John saw this, they said, LORD, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did? But He turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them. And they went to another village" (Luke 9:51-56). A righteous judge has "the mind of Christ" (1 Corinthians 2:16). The Samaritans would not receive the LORD Jesus. But James and John were not just angry for this callous treatment of the LORD. They were rebuked by the LORD Jesus because they sought judgment to fulfill their OWN purposes-- not His. A righteous judge, like Elijah, could not "command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them", unless the action justified God's judgment. James and John disliked the Samaritans, as most Jews did. They wanted judgment to satisfy their OWN anger, insomuch, so as to cause the Samaritans death by fire. The LORD Jesus "rebuked them" because they abused judgment. "Ye know not what manner of Spirit ye are of." Misguided judgment seeks selfish justification-- or personal revenge. Righteous judgment justifies God only. For it is only God that deserves to be justified. "Great and marvelous are Thy works, LORD God Almighty; just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of saints. Who shall not fear Thee, O LORD, and glorify Thy Name? for Thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before Thee; for Thy judgments are made manifest" (Revelation 15:3,4).

The concept of righteous judgment is not unlike the concept of justice in the realm of law. Everyone instinctively knows that it is impossible for a judge or a jury to be objective about a judgment if they have their own self-interest at stake, because we would then say that they have a conflict of interest and we would want them removed from the case. Likewise, the same principle applies in our personal lives. We can't be objective in judging others if we are making the judgment in order to benefit ourselves only rather than the other person. However, if we pray about it, examine our hearts, and ensure that we are pursuing the judgment with the motive of helping the other person in love and glorifying God and not ourselves, then we are exercising righteous judgment. That is why couples who are having problems will often seek counseling..because they need objective, experienced third-party advice and judgment from counselors and church clergy on their interpersonal situation.

When we judge, God therefore commands us to be impartial and to view all persons equally: "Ye shall not respect persons in judgment; but ye shall hear the small as well as the great; ye shall not be afraid of the face of man; for the judgment is God's: and the cause that is too hard for you, bring it unto me, and I will hear it" (Deut. 1:17). God also says we should not accept a gift if we are passing judgment: "You shall not pervert justice; you shall not show partiality, nor take a bribe, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and twists the words of the righteous" (Deut. 16:19).

Unrighteous judgment of our neighbor is avoidable and forbidden to the people of God, i.e., "Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment: thou shalt not respect the person of the poor, nor honor the person of the mighty: but in righteousness shalt thou judge thy neighbor" (Leviticus 19:15).

How do we become righteous judges? Prov. 2:1-9 teaches us about this:

*1 My son, if you receive my words, and treasure my commands within you, 2 so that you incline your ear to wisdom, and apply your heart to understanding; 3 yes, if you cry out for discernment, understanding, 4 if you seek her as silver, and search for her as for hidden treasures; then you will understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God. 6 For the Lord gives wisdom; from His mouth come knowledge and understanding; 7 He stores up sound wisdom for the upright; he is a shield to those who walk uprightly; 8 he guards the paths of justice, and preserves the way of His saints. 9 Then you will understand righteousness and justice, equity and every good path.*

One of the best ways to ensure that we are judging righteously is to work hard to be contented and satisfied with our lives and to ensure that we have no needs, passions, or desires that might influence or skew our judgment. That is because people who are completely contented with whatever life hands them can view their situation and that of others much more impartially than most. Jesus was the best example of someone who was very contented and unselfish. Whatever life hands us, we should learn to be happy with our situation. There should be nothing we expect or need from others that should influence our emotional state or happiness or sense of well-being. We talk about contentment further and how to develop it in section 2.3.2.

### **3.7.3 The Types of Sin and Correction**

After we have righteously judged someone, we must then apply one of three types of correction: rebuke, reproof, and exhortation. What is the difference between these words? These words are listed in decreasing order of their firmness or strongness, starting with the most strong.

Rebuke: To criticize sharply: reprimand. Rebuke is administered immediately and strongly and is reserved for *serious sin* that has disastrous consequences or which affects several people very negatively as described below. Leviticus 19:17 says of rebuke: “*You shall surely rebuke your neighbor, and not bear sin because of him.*” Also, Luke 17:3 says on rebuke: “*Take heed to yourselves. If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him.*”

Reprove: To scold or correct, usually gently or with kindly intent. To express disapproval: CENSURE. The goal is to give unselfish, positive guidance for situations that are not dangerous or very serious. This type of correction is reserved for *intermediate sin*, which is much more common place and serious in its affect than *serious sin*. Eph. 5:11 says about reproof: “*And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.*”

Exhort: To incite by *arguing*: urge strongly. To give warnings or teachings or advice. Exhortation involves teaching, feedback, response, and debate and is less strong or immediate than rebuke. This type of correction is reserved for *everyday sin* that has less immediate effects than serious or intermediate sin. 2 Tim. 4:2 says of exhortation: “*Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.*”

As we have already said, judgment must occur before any of these three types of correction can be applied. When correction has been applied, then one outcome of that correction is *reproach* as defined below:

*Reproach:* A cause or occasion of blame, discredit, or disgrace. To discredit or disgrace a person.

It is important to consider that reproach in and of itself is not necessarily a bad thing if it is an outcome of correction that was based on righteous judgment. Reproach can be a very strong motivating factor to keep people from transgressing further. However, a perverted form of reproach is called slander, where one of the following occurred:

1. The judgment was unrighteous because it was based on either false information or selfish desires.
2. The judgment was publicized rather than kept private, causing shame or blame to spread beyond the circle of people who were hurt by the sin or transgression.

Slander is something that we as Christians should avoid because it is self-serving, deceitful, and does not glorify God or help win other souls over the Christ. The most frequent way that slander occurs is through gossip, and the Bible forbids us to gossip in Lev. 19:16.

For the purposes of the three types of correction described above, we define three classes of sinful behavior:

1. *Serious sin.* This type of sin constitutes a grave and long-term detriment to society and usually threatens either a life or a family or several families or people. It includes:
  - 1.1. Life-threatening behaviors (see murder)
  - 1.2. Murder (Exodus 20:13)
  - 1.3. Abortion (see murder)
  - 1.4. Euthanasia (mercy killing; see murder)
  - 1.5. Adultery (Exodus 20:14)
  - 1.6. Divorce or requesting divorce (Mal. 2:16; Mark 10:2-9)
  - 1.7. Kidnapping
  - 1.8. Moral infractions of church officials (1 Tim. 5:19-20)
  - 1.9. Idolatry (Ex. 20:4-6)
  - 1.10. Conspiracy to do evil (Prov. 6:18)
2. *Intermediate sin.* This type of sin has less serious consequences and is less immediate in its effect than serious sin. This type of sin is also illegal in most societies and affects fewer people than serious sin. This type of sin includes:
  - 2.1. Pride (Prov. 6:16-17; 8:13; 16:18)
  - 2.2. Disdain for correction (Prov. 10:7, 13:18, 29:1)
  - 2.3. Disrespect
  - 2.4. Lying (Exodus 20:16)
  - 2.5. Fraud/deception (Prov. 6:16-17)
  - 2.6. Cheating
  - 2.7. Drug dealing/drug abuse (Prov. 20:1; 21:17)
  - 2.8. Prostitution (Prov. 6:24-29; Hosea 4:11)
  - 2.9. Homosexuality (Lev. 18:22, 1 Cor. 6:18)
  - 2.10. Fornication/sex outside of marriage (Eph. 5:5, 1 Cor. 6:18)
  - 2.11. Stealing (Exodus 20:15)
3. *Everyday sin.* This includes:
  - 3.1. Flattery for personal gain (Prov. 26:28)
  - 3.2. Covetousness/envy (Exodus 20:17)
  - 3.3. Slothfulness or laziness (Prov. 6:6-11)

- 3.4. Lust and viewing pornography (1 Cor. 6:18; Matt 5:27-28)
- 3.5. Damaging or destroying personal property (1 John 2:11)
- 3.6. Gossip (Lev. 19:16)
- 3.7. White lying

The table below illustrates how to apply each of the three types of correction to the various degrees or types of sin described above.

**Table 3-4: How To Apply Correction To Various Types of Sin**

<i>Class of sin</i>	<i>Example behaviors</i>	<i>Correction to apply</i>
Serious	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Life threatening behaviors (see murder)</li> <li>2. Murder (Exodus 20:13)</li> <li>3. Abortion (see murder)</li> <li>4. Euthanasia (mercy killing; see murder)</li> <li>5. Adultery (Exodus 20:14)</li> <li>6. Divorce or requesting divorce (Mal. 2:16; Mark 10:2-9)</li> <li>7. Kidnapping</li> <li>8. Moral infractions of church officials (1 Tim. 5:19-20)</li> <li>9. Conspiracy to do evil (Prov. 6:18)</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Rebuke publicly</li> <li>2. Report to the police if a violation of law.</li> </ol>
Intermediate	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Pride (Prov. 6:16-17; 8:13; 16:18)</li> <li>2. Disdain for correction (Prov. 10:7, 13:18, 29:1)</li> <li>3. Disrespect</li> <li>4. Lying (Exodus 20:16)</li> <li>5. Fraud/deception (Prov. 6:16-17)</li> <li>6. Cheating</li> <li>7. Drug dealing/drug abuse (Prov. 20:1;21:17)</li> <li>8. Prostitution (Prov. 6:24-29; Hosea 4:11)</li> <li>9. Homosexuality (Lev. 18:22, 1 Cor. 6:18)</li> <li>10. Fornication/sex outside of marriage (Eph. 5:5, 1 Cor. 6:18)</li> <li>11. Stealing (Exodus 20:15)</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Reproof privately</li> <li>2. Report to the police if a violation of law.</li> </ol>
Everyday	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Flattery for personal gain (Prov. 26:28)</li> <li>2. Covetousness/envy (Exodus 20:17)</li> <li>3. Slothfulness or laziness (Prov. 6:6-11)</li> <li>4. Argument or differences of opinion</li> <li>5. Lust or viewing pornography (1 Cor. 6:18; Matt 5:27-28)</li> <li>6. Damaging or destroying personal</li> </ol>	Exhortation privately

<i>Class of sin</i>	<i>Example behaviors</i>	<i>Correction to apply</i>
	property (1 John 2:11). 7. Gossip (Lev. 19:16) 8. White lying	

Note that there are two primary ways to apply correction to a sinning person and change their behavior:

1. ***Verbal influence:*** Admonishing, rebuking, reproof, or exhorting are verbal exercises intended to influence a person to change their behavior. This type of behavior is always appropriate if it is based on righteous judgment. However, wicked people who don't want to be accountable or responsible for their bad behavior often use a victim mentality to inappropriately label legitimate correction based on righteous judgment as "emotional abuse" or "verbal abuse." This is a common and unethical tactic used by spouses in divorce cases, for instance, as a way to evade responsibility for the causes of divorce by one or both spouses.
2. ***Punishment techniques:*** Applying punishment techniques to get members of the family to change their behavior implies hurting them or conditioning them to feel hurt every time they demonstrate some kind of undesired (in the eye of the beholder) behavior. Some psychological texts call this approach "behavior modification". Punishments for the misbehavior might include:
  - 2.1. ***Emotional blackmail:***
    - 2.1.1. Refusing to communicate or being indifferent about or disinterested in other family members.
    - 2.1.2. Threatening bodily harm to the other person.
    - 2.1.3. Applying verbal violence or verbal abuse against the offending party.
    - 2.1.4. Getting angry to intimidate the other party.
    - 2.1.5. Being chronically critical or hypercritical.
    - 2.1.6. Lying about the application of behavioral blackmail.
    - 2.1.7. Refusing to disclose motives for behavior, and especially bad behavior.
    - 2.1.8. Being controlling or expecting things from the other person that are not allowed in this constitution.
    - 2.1.9. Being unforgiving even when one's spouse repents. Criticizing and belittling one's repentant spouse as a way to belittle, discourage, and hurt one's spouse.
  - 2.2. ***Behavioral blackmail:***
    - 2.2.1. Drugging the other person to get them to comply or relent.
    - 2.2.2. Making them hurt physically through domestic violence.
    - 2.2.3. Withdrawing affection or sex.
    - 2.2.4. Refusing to cook or clean.
    - 2.2.5. Refusing to do assigned chores.
    - 2.2.6. Taking or wasting all the family's money.
    - 2.2.7. Murder.
    - 2.2.8. Theft of some important thing belonging to the party being pressured.
    - 2.2.9. Quitting one's job and forcing the other spouse to support the household.
    - 2.2.10. Hiding or destroying financial records or information about income or expenses from one's spouse.

Applying punishment techniques is strictly not permitted or allowed for any type of sin because they demonstrate a blatant lack of respect for people and is completely unloving. There are two exceptions to this rule:

1. Parenting. Parents need to be able to spank or discipline their children physically or to apply punishments to their children, but that is the only type of behavioral punishment allowed. Parenting should always be done with empathy and love with the goal of discipline and teaching the child. This is permitted and encouraged by God. See Prov. 23:13 for more details.
2. Adultery, sexual immorality, or physical abuse by a spouse. When a married spouse has committed adultery, Jesus says in Matt. 5:31-32 that it is acceptable to divorce. The least judgmental way to approach adultery for spouses who want to reconcile is at least for a temporary separation awaiting repentance from the offending spouse. Although the Bible doesn't mention physical abuse, this situation also seems to warrant temporary abandonment from the home by the abused spouse awaiting repentance by the abuser. Therefore abandoning the home temporarily to encourage repentance for adultery or physical abuse by the offending spouse is the only permissible use of punishment techniques between adults within the context of a marriage. A good book that talks about how to properly apply this disciplinary approach to a spouse is Love Must Be Tough, by Dr. James Dobson, 1983, Word Inc., ISBN 0-8499-0348-3.

### 3.7.4 Why Should We Correct?

Leviticus 19:17: *"You shall not hate your brother in your heart. You shall surely rebuke your neighbor, and not bear sin because of him."*

Prov. 24:25: *"But those who rebuke the wicked will have delight, and a good blessing will come upon them."*

Prov. 28:23: *"He who rebukes a man will find more favor afterward than he who flatters with the tongue."*

Therefore, God expects us to:

1. Correct other people if they are causing us to sin. Hating your neighbor is a type of sin we should avoid by rebuking our neighbor when he/she is sinning against us.
2. Correct the wicked because we will be blessed.
3. Correct people who are receptive in order to find their favor.

### 3.7.5 Who Should Do the Correcting?

Prov. 9:10: *"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom."*

Prov. 8:13: *"The fear of the Lord is to hate evil; pride and arrogance and the evil way and the perverse mouth I hate."*

Prov. 10:14: *"Wise people store up knowledge, but the mouth of the foolish is near destruction."*

Therefore, God expects us to do the following in order to be effective at correction:

1. Fear the Lord.
2. Despise or hate evil behavior but love the people who do these bad things the same way God loves them.

3. Seek to be wise.
4. People should correct who have strong evidence and first-hand, eyewitness, personal knowledge of the sin that was committed.

### **3.7.6 Who Should Be Corrected?**

Prov. 9:7-9: *“He who corrects a scoffer gets shame for himself, and he who rebukes a wicked man only harms himself. Do not correct a scoffer, lest he hate you; rebuke a wise man, and he will love you. Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be still wiser; teach a just man, and he will increase in learning.”*

Prov. 13:5: *“A righteous man hates lying, but a wicked man is loathsome and comes to shame.”*

Prov. 14:9: *“Fools mock at guilt, but among the upright there is favor.”*

Prov. 24:12: *“Like an earring of gold and an ornament of fine gold is a wise rebuker to an obedient ear.”*

Prov. 27:5: *“Open rebuke is better than love carefully concealed.”*

Titus 3:9: *“But avoid foolish disputes, genealogies, contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and useless.”*

1 Tim. 5:1: *“Do not rebuke an older man, but exhort him as a father, younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, younger women as sisters, with all purity.”*

Therefore, God expects us to:

1. Not rebuke proud or self-righteous people (scoffers).
2. Exhort fools, but not rebuke them, because they will scorn us publicly for the private exhortation we give them, making the punishment worse than the crime.
3. Correct only wise and/or humble people who are receptive to the rebuke. By doing this, they will get learning and understanding and become more wise. However, in order to prepare them to be most receptive to the correction, we should first have a personal relationship with them.
4. Correct those people who have not repented of their sin if it is a serious sin whether they accept it or not.
5. Correct liars whether they want to be corrected or not, because God says in Prov. 13:5 that we should hate lying.
6. Correct people we have a relationship with who are hurting others physically or emotionally and who we have personal, eye-witness information about (domestic violence or verbal abuse).
7. Not argue with persons we have corrected if the issues are questions of law.

### **3.7.7 How Should We Correct?**

Deut. 17:6: *“Whoever is deserving of death shall be put to death on the testimony of two or three witnesses; he shall not be put to death on the testimony of one witness.”*

Prov. 10:12: *“Hatred stirs up strife, but love covers all sins.”*

Prov. 10:18: *“Whoever hides hatred has lying lips, and whoever spreads slander is a fool.”*

Prov. 10:19: *“In a multitude of words sin is not lacking, but he who restrains his lips is wise.”*

Prov. 11:2: *“When pride comes, then comes shame; but with the humble is wisdom.”*

Prov. 12:5: *“The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but he who heeds counsel is wise.”*

Prov. 15:1: *“A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger. The tongue of the wise uses knowledge rightly, but the mouth of fools pours forth foolishness.”*

Prov. 16:6: *“By mercy and truth iniquity is purged: and by the fear of the LORD men depart from evil.”*

Prov. 17:9: *“He who covers a transgression seeks love, but he who repeats a matter separates friends.”*

Prov. 18:13: *“He who answers a matter before he hears it, it is folly and shame to him.”*

Prov. 29:11: *“A fool vents all his feelings. But a wise man holds them back.”*

Prov. 29:20: *“Do you see a man hasty in his words? There is more hope for a fool than for him.”*

Matt. 18:16: *“Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he refuses them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax-collector.”*

2 Tim. 2:24-26: *“And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will.”*

Therefore, God expects us to approach correction as follows:

1. Correct with mercy and truth. While correcting, it is important to keep in mind that *iniquity is purged by mercy and truth*. Correction and truth without mercy demonstrates an unloving heart and disrespect towards the behavior being corrected. The application of truth and correction will therefore be ineffective if we don't show some mercy for the person we are correcting.
2. Settle sins privately with our brother first before litigating them. The motivation for doing this is that we should love our neighbor as ourselves and show mercy by trying to hide their sins. If our neighbor will not listen, then we are expected to go back and correct him in the presence of two or

- three witnesses. If he still won't repent, then we are to take up the matter with his church. If he refuses to listen even to the church, then you should treat him as a heathen or tax collector.
3. Correct in love. Note that you can and should love the person but you aren't obligated to love the bad behavior. God hates sin but he loves everyone equally, including the sinner.
  4. Correct with a complete understanding of ALL the facts. This means being willing to seek out the facts and be a good listener in gathering all the facts and identifying the eyewitnesses.
  5. Have witnesses. More serious sins need to have more witnesses. Sins requiring death require two or three eye witnesses.
  6. Seek counsel and advice from those more wise than us when we correct.
  7. Correct strongly for more serious sins where we have indisputable knowledge and multiple witnesses of the act which accomplished the hurt.
  8. Correct unemotionally, unselfishly, and dispassionately.
  9. Be brief, concise, and sparing with our words during the correction so we don't commit sin in describing the sin.
  10. Correct respectfully.
  11. Correct patiently.
  12. Correct in humility.
  13. Try to teach people when we correct them, rather than just criticizing them. Help them to understand why their behavior is sinful or harmful, not just the fact that it is wrong. Show them what they need to repent for, but remind them that it is the behavior you have a problem with and not the person. Emphasize that you love them just as God loves them.
  14. Do not correct with the motive of benefiting self. This means avoiding correction in situations where you might benefit personally from the person correcting the situation. Eliminate any possibility that you might benefit from the person's changed behavior after you have corrected them. This will create the appearance that you are acting in their, not your, best interests in pursuing correction, which will create a bond of trust between the two of you.

### **3.7.8 Under What Circumstances Should We Correct?**

Deut. 19:15: *“One witness shall not rise up against a man for any iniquity, or for any sin, in any sin that he sinneth: at the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses, shall the matter be established.”*

Prov. 17:13: *“Whoever rewards evil for good, evil will not depart from his house.”*

1 Tim. 5:19-20: *“Do not receive an accusation against an elder except from two or three witnesses. Those who are sinning rebuke in the presence of all, that the rest also may fear.”*

Therefore, we God expects us to:

1. Correct only when we have more than one witness for the offense or iniquity.
2. Correct in private for intermediate or everyday sins. This will help us build a relationship with the person we are correcting and prevent them from being gossiped about or slandered by people who overhear the correction.
3. Correct in public if we are dealing with elders or officials of the church or with serious sins, and then only when there are two or three witnesses to the offense.

### 3.7.9 What Happens When We Don't Accept Correction?

Prov. 10:17: *“He who keeps instruction is in the way of life, but he who refuses correction goes astray.”*

Prov. 13:18: *“Poverty and shame will come to him who disdains correction, but he who regards a rebuke will be honored.”*

Prov. 29:1: *“He who is often rebuked, and hardens his neck, will suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.”*

Therefore, people who don't accept exhortation and rebuke:

1. Are going astray.
2. Will experience poverty and shame.
3. Will suddenly be destroyed.

### 3.8 How To Communicate and Release Difficult Feelings<sup>15</sup>

When we are upset, disappointed, frustrated, or angry it is difficult to communicate lovingly. When negative emotions come up, we tend momentarily to lose our loving feelings of trust, caring, understanding, acceptance, appreciation, and respect. At such times, even with the best intentions, talking turns into fighting. In the heat of the moment, we do not remember how to communicate in a way that works for our partner or for us.

At times like these, women unknowingly tend to blame men and make them feel guilty for their actions. Instead of remembering that her partner is doing the best he can, a woman could assume the worst and sound critical and resentful. When she feels a surge of negative feelings, it is especially difficult for a woman to speak in a trusting, accepting, and appreciative way. She doesn't realize how negative and hurtful her attitude is to her partner.

When men become upset, they tend to become judgmental of women and women's feelings. Instead of remembering that his partner is vulnerable and sensitive, a man may forget her needs and sound mean and uncaring. When he feels a surge of negative feelings, it is especially difficult for him to speak in a caring, understanding, and respectful way. He doesn't realize how hurtful his negative attitude is to her.

These are the times when talking with your partner does not work. Fortunately, there are other alternatives. Instead of verbally sharing your feelings with your partner, you can:

1. Pray to God quietly and privately for your partner and to guide you in solving the problem.
2. Pray to God together with your partner. Be reverent, respectful, and talk about your feelings and how to deal with them instead of judging the other person. Focus on forgiveness.
3. Write a Love Letter
4. Write in your journal about the problem

<sup>15</sup> Portions from *Men are From Mars, Women are From Venus*, John Gray, PhD., 1992, HarperPerennial, pp-207-244. ISBN 0-06-016848

Praying and writing letters and journaling allow you to listen to your own feelings without worrying about hurting your partner. By freely expressing and listening to your own feelings, you automatically become more centered and loving. As men write letters they become more caring, understanding, and respectful; as women write letters they become more trusting, accepting, and appreciative.

Writing out or praying about your negative feelings is an excellent way to become aware of how unloving you may sound. With this greater awareness you can adjust your approach. In addition, by praying or writing about your negative emotions their intensity can be released, making room for positive feelings to be felt again. Having become more centered, you can then go to your partner and speak to him or her in a more loving way—a way that is less judgmental or blaming. As a result, your chances of being understood and accepted are much greater.

After praying or writing your letter you may no longer feel a need to talk. Instead you could become inspired to do something loving for your partner. Whether you share the feelings in your letter or you just write a letter to feel better, writing down your feelings is an important tool.

Instead of writing down your feelings or praying, you may also choose to do the same process in your mind. Simply refrain from talking and review what happened in your mind. In your imagination imagine you are saying what you feel, think, and want—without editing yourself in any way. By carrying on an inner dialogue expressing the complete truth about your inner feelings, you will suddenly become free from their negative grip. Whether you write down your feelings or do it mentally, by exploring, feeling, and expressing your negative feelings they lose their power and positive feelings reemerge. The Love Letter Technique increases the power and effectiveness of this process tremendously. Although it is a writing technique, it can also be done mentally as well.

### **3.8.1 Why We Need Constructive Ways to Release Our Feelings**

As we have explored throughout this constitution, it is vastly important for women to share their feelings and feel cared for, understood, and respected. It is equally important for men to feel appreciated, accepted, and trusted. The biggest problem in relationships occurs when a woman shares her upset feelings and, as a result, a man feels unloved.

To him, her negative feelings may sound critical, blaming, demanding, and resentful. When he rejects her feelings, she then feels unloved. The success of a relationship is solely dependent on two factors: a man's ability to listen lovingly and respectfully to a woman's feelings, and a woman's ability to share her feelings in a loving and respectful way.

A relationship requires that partners communicate their changing feelings and needs. To expect perfect communication is certainly too idealistic. Fortunately, between here and perfection there is a lot of room for growth.

### **3.8.2 Effective Listening**

Effective listening is an important key to communicating and releasing difficult feelings. It is the way that we can express and demonstrate empathy for our loved ones and it has the affect of strengthening our relationships with them. Effective listening is also called reflective listening. Effective listening treats human interaction as a kind of “ping-pong” match that keeps the “game” of communicating

going and validates the positive or negative feelings of people without necessarily giving them what they want or are asking for. Effective/reflective listening is an important way to show respect that allows members of the family to get their way with angry or upset people without looking too controlling or selfish. The key to effective listening is to respond in an *open* rather than *closed* way to comments or questions from a spouse or child. Open responses validate people's feelings and encourage them to further express themselves while closed responses deny people their right to have certain feelings and end the conversation. Below are some examples of Open vs. Closed responses:

**Table 3-5: Effective Listening: Closed vs. Open responses**

<i>Offended person</i>	<i>Offended person's remark</i>	<i>Closed Response</i>	<i>Open Response</i>
Child	I'm never going to play with her again!	Why don't you forget it; she probably didn't mean it.	You're really angry with her.
Child	I can't do it!	Now, don't talk like that! You just got started!	It seems very difficult to you.
Child	I wish I could go along. He always gets to go everywhere.	We've discussed this before—so, stop fussing.	It seems unfair to you.
Child	Look at my new model!	That's nice...now will you please go...	You're pleased with your work on it.
Child	I don't want to go to school today. Billy is mean!	Everyone has to go to school. It's the law.	You're afraid Billy will pick on you.
Child	You're the meanest mother in the whole world!	Don't you <i>ever</i> talk to me that way!	You're very angry with me.

### 3.8.3 Disallowed Modes of Communication

The following dogmatic, bossy, and/or offensive words, phrases, and modes of communication shall NOT be used and will be avoided in any communication among or in front of other family members because they alienate the hearers and undermine and destroy communication:

*non-communication*: Refusing to talk with any member of the family, and especially if they want to find out how you are feeling or what you want or need.

*cuss words*: four letter or vulgar words, including but not limited to fuck, shit, bitch, asshole, shithead, goddam, "jesus christ!"

*"should/ought to/must"*: this type of language seeks to influence the other person to do something. You should consider using phrases like "I would like for you to..." instead.

*always*: Use "frequently" or "most of the time".

*never*: Use "infrequently" instead.

*everyone*: Use "most people" or "the majority of people" instead.

*no one*: Use "few people" instead.

*telling someone they are worthless or denigrating their intrinsic value*: This kind of communication takes many forms and is strongly discouraged. The value of the individual must never be questioned or denigrated. If you dislike anything about an individual, it should be the *behavior* and not the *person*. Jesus commands us to always love the person but hate the bad behavior.

*you-messages*: You messages are accusatory statements primarily intended to blame the other individual for doing something. Replace these with I-messages.

Members of the family found using these modes of communication may be sanctioned upon motion or request of any other family member who hears them or is offended by them. Sanctioned family

members should be exhorted to go to their room and not eat with the rest of the family or watch the television. The leader of the family should approach the sanctioned family member and say “We are hurt emotionally when you say \_\_\_\_\_ because we feel it is disrespectful. We would like for you to apologize for offending \_\_\_\_\_ or continue to eat in your room. It is your choice.”

### **3.8.4 Why Love Letters, Prayer, and Journaling Can Help**

Love Letters, prayer, and journaling work because they assist you in telling the complete truth. Merely to explore a part of your feelings does not bring about the desired healing. For example:

1. Feeling your anger may not help you at all. It may just make you more angry. The more you dwell on just your anger, the more upset you will become.
2. Crying for hours may leave you feeling empty and spent, if you never move past the sadness.
3. To feel only your fears may make you even more fearful.
4. To feel sorry, without moving through it, may just make you feel guilty and ashamed and may even be harmful to your self-esteem.
5. Trying to feel loving all the time will force you to suppress all your negative emotions, and after a few years, you will become numb and unfeeling.

By expressing each of the four levels of emotional pain, our pain is released. Writing only one or two negative feelings does not work as well. This is because many of our negative emotional reactions are not real feelings but defense mechanisms we unconsciously use to avoid our true feelings.

For example:

1. People who get angry easily generally are trying to hide from their hurt, sadness, fear, or regret. When they feel their more vulnerable feelings, the anger goes away and they become more loving.
2. People who cry easily generally have a hard time getting angry, but when they are helped to express anger they feel much better and more loving.
3. People who are fearful generally need to feel and express their anger; the fear then goes away.
4. People who often feel sorry and guilty generally need to feel and express their hurt and anger before they can feel the self-love they deserve.
5. People who always feel loving but wonder why they are depressed or numb generally need to ask themselves this question: “If I were angry and upset about something, what would it be?” and write out the answers. This will help them get in touch with the feelings hidden behind the depression and numbness. Love Letters can be used in this fashion.

#### **3.8.4.1 Realistic Expectations**

To expect communication always to be easy is unrealistic. Some feelings are very difficult to communicate without hurting the listener. Couples who have wonderful and loving relationships will sometimes agonize over how to communicate in a way that works for both people. It is difficult truly to understand another person’s point of view, especially when he or she is not saying what you want to hear. It is also hard to be respectful of another when your own feelings have been hurt.

Many couples mistakenly think that their inability to communicate successfully and lovingly means they don't love each other enough. Certainly love has a lot to do with it, but communication *skill* is a much more important ingredient. Fortunately, it's a learnable skill.

### **3.8.4.2 How We Learn to Communicate**

Successful communication would be second nature if we grew up in families that were already capable of honest and loving communication. But in previous generations, so-called loving communication generally meant avoiding negative feelings. It was often as if negative feelings were a shameful sickness and something to be locked away in a closet.

In less "civilized" families what was considered loving communication might include reacting out or rationalizing negative feelings through physical punishment, yelling, spanking, whipping, and all kinds of verbal abuse—all in the name of trying to help the children learn right from wrong.

Had our parents learned to communicate lovingly, without suppressing negative feelings, we as children would have been safe to discover and explore our own negative reactions and feelings through trial and error. Through positive role models we would have learned successfully how to communicate—especially our difficult feelings. As a result of eighteen years of trial and error in expressing our feelings, we would have gradually learned to express our feelings respectfully and appropriately. If this had been the case, we would not need the Love Letter Technique.

### **3.8.4.3 If Our Past Were Different**

Had our past been different, we would have watched our father successfully and lovingly listen to our mother expand and express her frustrations and disappointments. Daily we would have experienced our father giving our mother the loving caring and understanding that she needed from her loving husband.

We would have watched our mother trusting our father and sharing her feelings openly, without disapproving or blaming him. We would have experienced how a person could be upset without pushing someone away with mistrust, emotional manipulation, avoidance, disapproval, condescension, or coldness.

Throughout our eighteen years of growing up we would gradually be able to master our own emotions just as we have mastered walking or math. It would be a learned skill, like walking, jumping, singing, reading, and balancing a checkbook.

But it didn't happen that way for most of us. Instead we spent eighteen years learning unsuccessful communication skills. Because we lack education on how to communicate feelings, it is a difficult and seemingly insurmountable task to communicate lovingly when we are having negative feelings.

To come to understand how difficult this is, consider your answers to the following questions:

1. When you are feeling angry or resentful, how do you express love if, while you were growing up, your parents either argued or conspired to avoid arguing?
2. How do you get our kids to listen to you without yelling or punishing them if your parents yelled and punished you to maintain control?

3. How do you ask for more support if, even as a child, you felt repeatedly neglected and disappointed?
4. How do you open up and share your feelings if you are afraid of being rejected?
5. How do you talk to your partner if your feelings say “I hate you”?
6. How do you say “I am sorry” if, as a child, you were punished for making mistakes.
7. How can you admit your mistakes if you are afraid of punishment or rejection?
8. How can you show your feelings if, as a child, you were repeatedly rejected or judged for being upset and crying?
9. How are you supposed to ask for what you want if, as a child, you were repeatedly made to feel wrong for wanting more?
10. How are you even supposed to know what you are feeling if your parents didn’t have the time, patience, or awareness to ask you how you were feeling or what was bothering you?
11. How can you accept your partner’s imperfections if, as a child, you felt you had to be perfect to be worthy of love?
12. How can you listen to your partner’s painful feelings if no one listened to yours?
13. How can you forgive if you were not forgiven?
14. How are you supposed to cry and heal your pain and grief if, as a child, you were repeatedly told “Don’t cry” or “When are you going to grow up?” or “Only babies cry”?
15. How can you hear your partner’s disappointment if, as a child, you were made to feel responsible for your mother’s pain long before you could understand that you were *not* responsible?
16. How can you hear your partner’s anger if, as a child, your mother or father took their frustrations out on you through yelling and being demanding?
17. How do you open up and trust your partner if the first people you trusted with your innocence betrayed you in some way?
18. How are you supposed to communicate your feelings lovingly and respectfully if you haven’t had eighteen years of practice without the threat of being rejected or abandoned?

The answer to all of these eighteen questions is the same: it is possible to learn loving communication, but we need to work at it. We have to make up for the eighteen years of neglect. No matter how perfect our parents were, nobody is really perfect. If you have problems communicating, it is neither a curse nor all your partner’s fault. It is simply a lack of having the correct training and the safety to practice.

In reading the above questions, you may have had some feelings come up. Don’t waste this special opportunity to heal yourself. Take twenty minutes right now and write one of your parents a Love Letter. Simply get a pen and some paper and begin expressing your feelings, using the Love Letter format. Try it now, and you will be amazed at the outcome.

### **3.8.5 The Love Letter Technique**

One of the best ways to release negativity and then communicate in a more loving fashion is to use the Love Letter Technique. Through writing out your feelings in a particular manner, the negative emotions automatically lessen and the positive feelings increase. The Love Letter Technique enhances the letter writing process. There are three aspects or parts to the Love Letter Technique.

1. Write a Love Letter expressing your feelings of anger, sadness, fear, regret, and love.
2. Write a Response Letter expressing what you want to hear from your partner.
3. Share your Love Letter and Response Letter with your partner.

The Love Letter Technique is quite flexible. You may choose to do all three steps, or you may only need to do one or two of them. For example, you might practice steps one and two in order to feel more centered and loving and then have a verbal conversation with your partner without being overwhelmed with resentment or blame. At other times you may choose to do all three steps and share your Love Letter and Response Letter with your partner.

To do all three steps is a powerful and healing experience for both of you. However sometimes doing all three steps is too time consuming or inappropriate. In some situations, the most powerful technique is to do just step one and write a Love Letter. Let's explore a few examples of how to write a Love Letter.

The Love Letter Technique is really about patiently and teaching your partner about empathizing with your feelings and about developing skills in communicating in a loving way. It develops these areas of the relationship:

1. Teaching empathy.
2. Helping couples to understand each other better.
3. Develops communication skills.
4. Helps release frustrations.
5. Uses the I-message technique already discussed in section 5.9.6 of this document in the context of parenting.
6. Encourages couples to focus on solutions and each others' needs.
7. Encourages couples to communicate and problem-solve together.

### **3.8.5.1 STEP 1: Writing a Love Letter**

To write a Love Letter, find a private spot and write a letter to your partner. In each Love Letter express your feelings of anger, sadness, fear, regret, and then love. This format allows you to fully express and understand all your feelings. As a result of understanding all your feelings you will then be able to communicate to your partner in a more loving and centered way.

When we are upset we generally have many feelings at once. For example, when your partner disappoints you, you may feel *angry* that he is being insensitive, angry that she is being unappreciative; *sad* that he is so preoccupied with his work, sad she doesn't seem to trust you; *afraid* that she will never forgive you, afraid that he doesn't care as much about you; *sorry* that you are secretly withholding your love from him or her. But at the same time you *love* that he or she is your partner and you want his or her love and attention.

To find our loving feelings, many times we need first to feel all our negative feelings. After expressing these four levels of negative feelings (anger, sadness, fear, and regret), we can fully feel and express our loving feelings. Writing Love Letters automatically lessens the intensity of our negative feelings and allows us to experience more fully our positive feelings. Here are some guidelines for writing a basic Love Letter:

1. Address the letter to your partner. Pretend that he or she is listening to you with love and understanding.
2. Start with anger, then sadness, then fear, then regret, and then love. Include all five sections in each letter.

3. Write a few sentences about each feeling; keep each section approximately the same length. Speak in simple terms.
4. After each section, pause and notice the next feeling coming up. Write about that feeling.
5. Do not stop your letter until you get to the love. Be patient and wait for the love to come out.
6. Sign your name at the end. Take a few moments to think about what you need or want. Write it in a P.S.

To simplify writing your letters you may wish to make copies of the following chart to use as a guide in writing your own Love Letters. In each of the five sections, a few helpful lead-in phrases are included to help you express your feelings. You may use just a few of these phrases or all of them. Generally the most releasing expressions are: “I am angry,” “I am sad,” “I am afraid,” “I am sorry,” “I want,” and “I love.” However, any phrases that assist you in expressing your feelings will work. IT usually takes about twenty minutes to complete a Love Letter.

## SAMPLE LOVE LETTER

Dear \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

I am writing this letter to share my feelings with you.

1. For Anger.

- I don't like it...
- I feel frustrated...
- I am angry that...
- I feel annoyed...
- I want...

2. For Sadness

- I feel disappointed...
- I am sad that...
- I feel hurt...
- I wanted...
- I want...

3. For Fear

- I feel worried...
- I am afraid...
- I feel scared...
- I do not want...
- I need...
- I want...

4. For Regret

- I feel embarrassed...
- I am sorry...
- I feel ashamed...
- I didn't want...
- I want...

5. For Love

- I love...
- I want...
- I understand...
- I forgive...
- I appreciate...
- I thank you for...
- I know.....

P.S. The response I would like to hear from you:

**SAMPLE LOVE LETTER ABOUT INDIFFERENCE**

Jim was leaving the next morning for a business trip. That evening, his wife, Virginia, attempted to create some intimacy. She brought a mango into their bedroom and offered him some. Him was preoccupied reading a book in bed and briefly commented that he wasn't hungry. Virginia felt rejected and left. Inside she was hurt and angry. Instead of coming back and complaining about his rudeness and insensitivity, she wrote a Love Letter.

After writing this letter, Virginia, feeling more accepting and forgiving, went back into the bedroom and said, "This is our last night before you leave, let's spend some special time together." Jim put down his book and they had a delightful, intimate evening. Writing a Love Letter gave Virginia the strength and love to persist more directly in getting her partner's attention. She did not even need to share her Love Letter with her partner.

This is her letter:

Dear Jim,

1. **Anger:** I am frustrated that you want to read a book and this is our last evening together before you leave. I am angry that you ignore me. I am angry that you do not want to spend this time with me. I am angry that we don't spend more time together. There is always something more important than me. I want to feel you love me.
2. **Sadness:** I am sad that you don't want to be with me. I am sad that you work so hard. I feel like you wouldn't even notice if I wasn't here. I am sad that you are always so busy. I am sad that you don't want to talk with me. I feel hurt that you do not care. I don't feel special.
3. **Fear:** I am afraid you don't even know why I am upset. I am afraid you don't care. I am afraid of sharing my feelings with you. I am afraid you will reject me. I am afraid we are drifting further apart. I am scared that I can't do anything about it. I am afraid that I am boring to you. I am afraid you don't like me.
4. **Regret:** I feel so embarrassed wanting to spend time with you when you don't even care. I feel embarrassed getting so upset. I am sorry if this sounds demanding. I am sorry that I am not more loving and accepting. I am sorry that I was cold when you didn't want to spend time with me. I am sorry that I didn't give you another chance. I am sorry that I stop trusting your love.
5. **Love:** I do love you. That's why I brought the mango. I wanted to do something to please you. I wanted to spend some special time together. I still want to have a special evening. I forgive you for being so indifferent to me. I forgive you for not responding right away. I understand that you were in the middle of reading something. Lets have a loving intimate evening.

P.S. The response I would like to hear; “I love you, Virginia, and I also want to spend a loving evening with you. I am going to miss you.”

### 3.8.5.2 STEP 2: Writing a Response Letter

Writing a Response Letter is the second step in the Love Letter Technique. Once you have expressed both your negative and positive feelings, talking an additional three to five minutes to write a Response Letter can be a healing process. In this letter, you will write the kind of response you would like to have from your partner.

It works like this. Imagine that your partner is able to respond lovingly to your hurt feelings—the ones you expressed in your Love Letter. Write a short letter to yourself pretending it is your partner writing to you. Include all the things you would like to hear from your partner about the hurts you have expressed. The following lead-in phrases can get you started:

- Thank you for...
- I understand...
- I am sorry...
- You deserve...
- I want...
- I love...

Sometimes writing a Response Letter is even more powerful than writing a Love Letter. Writing out what we actually want and need increases our openness to receiving the support we deserve. In addition, when we imagine our partners responding lovingly, we actually make it easier for them to do so.

Some people are very good at writing out their negative feelings but have a hard time finding the feelings of love. It is especially important for these people to write Response Letters and explore what they would want to hear in return. Be sure to feel your own resistance about letting your partner support you. This gives you an added awareness about how difficult it must be for your partner to deal lovingly with you at such times.

Sometimes, women object to writing Response Letters. They expect their partners to know what to say. They have a hidden feeling that says “I don’t want to tell him what I need; if he really loves me he will know.” In this case a woman needs to remember men are different than them and don’t know what women need; they need to be told.

A man’s response is more a reflection of his planet than a mirror of how much he loves her. If he were a woman, he would know what to say, but he is not. Men really don’t know how to respond to woman’s feelings. For the most part, our culture doesn’t teach men what women need.

If a man has seen and heard his father respond with loving words to his mother’s upset feelings, then he would have a better idea about what to do. As it is, he doesn’t know because he’s never been taught. Response Letters are the best way to teach a man about a woman’s needs. Slowly, but surely, he will learn.

Sometimes women ask me “If I tell him what I want to hear, and he starts saying it, how do I know he is not *just* saying it? I’m afraid he may not really mean it.”

This is an important question. If a man doesn't love a woman he will not even bother to give her what she needs. If he even attempts to give a response similar to her request, then most likely he is really trying to respond.

If he doesn't sound fully sincere it's because he is learning something new. Learning a new way of responding is awkward. To him it may feel weak. This is a critical time. He needs lots of appreciation and encouragement. He needs feedback telling him he's on the right track.

If his attempts to support her seem somewhat insincere, it is usually because he is afraid his efforts will not work. If a woman appreciates his attempt, the next time he will feel more secure and thus be able to be more sincere. A man is not a fool. When he feels that a woman is receptive to him and that he can respond in a way that makes a positive difference, he will do it. It just takes time.

Women as well can learn a lot about men and what they need by hearing a man's Response Letter. A woman is generally perplexed by a man's reactions to her. She has no idea why he rejects her attempts to support him. She misunderstands what he needs. Sometimes she resists him because she thinks he wants her to give up herself. In most cases, however, he really wants her to trust, appreciate, and accept him.

To receive support we not only have to teach our partners what we need but we also have to be willing to be supported. Response Letters ensure that a person is open to being supported. Otherwise, communication cannot work. To share hurt feelings with an attitude that says "Nothing you say can make me feel better" is not only counterproductive but also hurtful to your partner. It is better not to talk at these times.

### **3.8.5.3 STEP 3: Sharing your Love Letter and Response Letter**

Sharing your letters is important for the following reasons:

- It gives your partner an opportunity to support you.
- It allows you to get the understanding you need.
- It gives your partner necessary feedback in a loving and respectful way.
- It motivates change in the relationship.
- It creates intimacy and passion.
- It teaches your partner what is important to you and how successfully to support you.
- It helps couples to start talking again when communication breaks down.
- It teaches us how to hear negative feelings in a safe and non-defensive way.

There are five ways to share your letters outlined below. In this case, it is assumed that *she* wrote the letter, but these methods work just as well if *he* wrote the letter.

1. *He* reads her Love Letter and Response Letter out loud while she is present. Then he holds her hands and gives his own loving response with a greater awareness of what she needs to hear.
2. *She* reads her Love Letter and Response Letter out loud while he is listening. Then he holds her hands and gives his own loving response with a greater awareness of what she needs to hear.
3. *First he reads her Response Letter out loud to her.* Then he reads her Love Letter out loud. It is much easier for a man to hear negative feelings when he already knows how to respond to those feelings. By letting a man know what is required of him, he doesn't panic as much when he is

hearing negative feelings. After he reads her Love Letter he then holds her hands and gives his own loving response with a greater awareness of what she needs to hear.

4. *First she reads her Response Letter to him.* Then she reads her Love Letter out loud. Finally, he holds her hands and gives her a loving response with a greater awareness of what she needs.
5. *She gives her letters to him and he reads them privately within twenty-four hours.* After he has read the letters, he thanks her for writing them and holds her hands and gives her a loving response with a greater awareness of what she needs.

#### **3.8.5.4 What to Do If Your Partner Can't Respond Lovingly**

Based on their past experiences some men and women have great difficulty hearing Love Letters. In this case they must not be expected to read one. But even when your partner chooses to hear a letter, sometimes they are unable to respond right away in a loving manner. Let's take Paul and Theresa as an example.

If Paul is not feeling more loving after he has heard his partner's letters, then it is because he can't respond with love at that time. But after time his feelings will change.

When reading the letters, he may feel attacked by the anger and hurt and become defensive. At such times he needs to take a time-out to reflect on what was said. He might want to excuse himself to pray about it.

Sometimes when a person hears a Love Letter they only hear the anger and it will take a while before they can hear the love. It helps if, after a bit, he rereads the letter, especially the regret and love sections. Sometimes before I read a Love Letter from my wife, I read the love section first and then I read the full letter.

If a man is upset after reading a Love Letter, he could also respond with his own Love Letter, which would allow him to process the negative feelings that came up when he read her Love Letter. Sometimes I don't know what is bothering me until my wife shares a Love Letter with me, and then suddenly I have something to write about. By writing my letter I am able to find again my loving feelings and reread her letter and hear the love behind her hurt.

If a man cannot immediately respond with love, he needs to know that it's OK and not be punished. His partner needs to understand and accept his need to think about things for a while. Perhaps to support his partner, he can say something like "Thank you for writing this letter. I need some time to pray about and think about it and then we can talk about it." It is important that he not express critical feelings about the letter. It is also important that he show respect for his partner by committing to a definite date and time for discussing the letter. Sharing letters, however, needs to be a private and safe time for both parties.

All of the above suggestions for sharing Love Letters also apply when a woman has difficulty responding to a man's letter in a loving way. I generally recommend that couples read out loud the letters they have written. It is helpful to read your partner's letter out loud because it helps them to feel heard. Experiment with both and see what fits you.

#### **3.8.5.5 Making It Safe for Love Letters**

Sharing Love Letters can be scary. The person writing their true feelings will feel vulnerable. If their partner rejects them it can be very painful. The purpose of sharing the letter is to open up feelings so that partners can become closer. It works well as long as the process is done in safety. The person receiving the Love Letter needs to be particularly respectful of the writer's expression. If they cannot give true, respectful support, they shouldn't agree to listen until they can.

Sharing letters needs to be done with the correct intention. Sharing a letter needs to be done in the spirit of following two statements of intent:

**Statement of Intent for Writing and Sharing a Love Letter**

I have written this letter in order to find my positive feelings and to give you the love you deserve. As part of that process I am sharing with you my negative feelings, which are holding me back.

Your understanding will help me to open up and to let go of my negative feelings. I trust that you do care and that you will respond to my feelings in the best way you can. I appreciate your willingness to listen and support me.

In addition I hope that this letter will assist you in understanding my wants, needs, and wishes.

**Statement of Intent for Hearing a Love Letter**

I promise to do my best to understand the validity of your feelings, to accept our differences, to respect your needs as I do my own, and to appreciate that you are doing your best to communicate your feelings and love.

I promise to listen and not correct or deny your feelings. I promise to accept you and not try to change you.

I am willing to listen to your feelings because I do care and I trust that we can work this out.

### **3.8.5.6 When to Write Love Letters**

The time to write a Love Letter is whenever you are upset and you want to feel better. Here are some common ways Love Letters can be written:

1. Love Letter to an intimate partner.
2. Love Letter to a friend, child, or family member.
3. Love Letter to business associate or client. Instead of saying "I love you" at the end you may choose to use "I appreciate" and "I respect." In most cases I don't recommend sharing it.
4. Love Letter to yourself.

5. Love Letter to God or Higher Power. Share your upset feelings about your life with God and ask for support.
6. Role reversal Love Letter. If it is hard to forgive someone, pretend that you are them for a few minutes and write a Love Letter from them to you. You will be amazed at how quickly you become more forgiving.
7. Monster Love Letters. If you are really upset and your feelings are mean and judgmental, vent them in a letter. Then burn the letter. Do not expect your partner to read it unless you both can handle negative feelings and are willing to do so. In that case even monster letters can be very helpful.
8. Displacement Love Letter. When present events upset you and remind you of unresolved feelings from childhood, imagine you can go back in time and write a letter to one of your parents, sharing your feelings and asking for their support.

### **3.8.6 Prayer**

For all the same reasons as the Love Letter Technique, prayer also helps develop loving communication within intimate relationships. It also allows people to get in touch with the influence of the Holy Spirit in their lives.

There are two types of prayer: 1. Praying privately with one's partner; 2. Praying as a family or as a group. Whichever technique you apply, prayer can have the many of the same healing affects as Love Letters, but you will need to follow it with the following activities order to have full impact:

1. Further investigate the problem and try to better understand it.
2. Brainstorm possible solutions.
3. Agree on a solution you can both live with.
4. Try out the solution.

These techniques are similar to those found in section 5.9.4: Cooperative Problem Solving Techniques.

### **3.8.7 Journaling**

Journaling works the same as the Love Letter technique, except that journals are generally considered to be private. They should not be shared with anyone for the sake of your privacy and confidentiality, but you can address many of the same issues as with Love Letters. After you have used your journal to write a love letter, you might want to transcribe the letter onto a separate document and use the same techniques as Love Letters discussed previously.

## **3.9 How to Resolve Family Conflicts**

### **3.9.1 Rules For Conflict Resolution**<sup>16</sup>

Below are a few useful guidelines for resolving family conflicts:

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<sup>16</sup> Baby and Child Care, Paul C. Reisser, M.D., 1997; Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.; pp. 459-463.

1. Mutual, not one-way respect, is an absolute necessity. Without respect on both sides, any relationship will ultimately deteriorate or become destructive. With mutual respect it is possible to have an intense disagreement with another person without causing damage to a relationship or those who are affected by it. Respect acknowledges the ultimate worth of the other person—as established by God and not by any other attributes or accomplishments—and affirms that worth in attitudes, words, and actions.

*If parents do not respect one another or if respect flows only in one direction, attempts to resolve issues are likely to be unsuccessful or hurtful.* This fundamental problem must be addressed—usually in a counseling setting—if a marriage is going to survive and thrive through the years of raising children and beyond.

2. When a disagreement arises, conversations should focus on the issue and not the person. If Mom feels she needs more help with the kids in the evening, it isn't productive to begin the discussion with the statement "You care more about that TV than your own children!" If Dad is getting worried about the family budget, he won't get very far by saying, "All you ever do is spend the money I work so hard to bring home!" Once the issue is defined (How do we care for the kids when we're both tired? or How can we keep better track of our finance?), the focus can shift toward generating and evaluating a potential solution.
3. When an issue needs to be discussed, pick an appropriate time and place. Make time if you don't have any for each of you to express your needs and views. Not at the end of the day when energy is low and fuses may be short; not right before bed; not when anger is at a fever pitch; not when there isn't time to work through it; not when the TV is on, the phone is ringing, the kids are crying, and the dog is barking. If it is clear that an issue needs to be addressed, it's quite all right for either person to call time and say, "This isn't a good time to discuss this" or "I don't feel like talking about it right now"—as long as a specific time is set to talk about it in the very near future. The best time to talk is when both parties are rested, focused, and attentive or during a family meeting. It's helpful to work through an issue in a place that is relatively free of distractions and interruptions. This may be a particular room, somewhere out in the yard, or a place away from home. Many couples do their best negotiating at a coffee shop or on a long walk.
4. If it is not expedient to solve a problem as it happens because it is too big or because the parent or child are too busy or too tired to solve the problem immediately, then the parties involved should write down the problem and add it to the agenda for the next weekly family meeting.
5. Pray together before discussing the issue. Laying the issue before God can help keep it in perspective and reinforce your common ground. Be careful not to use this prayer time to express your viewpoint or claim God's backing for your side of the conflict. Prayer should be an exercise in humility, not a power play.
6. Each person must be able to express his or her viewpoint fully, without interruption. A key element of respect is listening carefully to what the other person is saying, without thinking about one's own response. One technique that encourages attentive listening involves picking an object (such as a pen) and stipulating that whoever holds it is entitled to speak without any interruption. The other person cannot say a word until the pen is passed, and the pen will not be passed until the person receiving it can summarize what was just said to the speaker's satisfaction—without argument, rebuttal, or editorial comment. If the listener doesn't get it right, the pen doesn't pass. This approach may at first seem awkward and ritualistic, but it is surprisingly effective at improving the listening skills. Get in the habit of checking frequently to be sure that you understand what the other person is saying. "I hear you saying that..." This is called empathetic or reflective listening.

7. Avoid “You..” statements—especially those containing the words always, never, should, or shouldn’t. Replace them with statements that express your own feelings. “You never spend any time at home anymore!” essentially demands a rebuttal (“That’s not true!). IN contrast, “It seems as if the kids and I are spending more evenings by ourselves than ever before, and it makes me feel lonely” is a straightforward observation and an expression of a genuine feeling. Similarly, a statement such as “You shouldn’t make commitments for both of us without talking to me first!” is likely to provoke a defensive response. The one way in which a “you” statement can legitimately enter a conversation is in this form: “When you say (or do)\_\_\_\_\_, I feel\_\_\_\_\_.” (For example, “When you make commitments for both of us without talking to me first, I feel as if my opinion doesn’t count.”) This type of statement can help one person understand how specific words or actions are affecting the other.
8. Avoid “Why..?” questions—especially those (once again) containing always or never. “Why do you always leave the back door open?”: can be answered in only one of two ways: defensively (“I don’t either!”) or sarcastically (“Because I’m an idiot!”) “Why...?” questions immediately and automatically turn a discussion into a battle.
9. Avoid dragging events from the distant past into the current issue. “Here we go again...!” or “This is just what you did on our vacation in 1990, when you...” If current problems are indeed related to grievances from the past, then those specific concerns need to be discussed and resolved apart from any current problems.
10. Name-calling and other forms of insults are disrespectful and should be banned from all conversations within a family (or anywhere else). Verbal insults live in everyone’s memory long after apologies have been made. One of the most powerful lessons your children can learn from you is how to disagree or be angry with a person without labeling, name-calling, or insulting them in other ways. Remember that body language (sighing, rolling the eyes, etc.), gestures, and tone of voice can communicate disrespect as powerfully as the most explicit insult.
11. The discussion of an issue should eventually be focused on arriving at a point of cooperating on exploring possible courses of action. “What can I do to help you not feel so tired at the end of the day?” or “How can we make Sunday morning less hectic?” It may help to list a number of possibilities and then talk through the pros and cons of each one.
12. Realize that on a number of issues you may have to “agree to disagree,” and that in doing so, the other person’s viewpoint is not to be subject to constant ridicule. This will mean compromising in some cases. There is usually, however, some solution that will allow for each person’s needs to be met.
13. If your discussion of issues frequently deteriorate into shouting matches or glum statements, get some help. It takes courage and maturity to go to a counselor or to a mature couple whom you know to be experienced in conflict resolution, in order to determine what goes wrong when disagreements arise in your home. Constructive suggestions from an unbiased third party, if acted upon consistently, can drastically improve the quality and outcome of these conversations.

### 3.9.2 Should We Argue In Front of the Children?<sup>17</sup>

Parental modeling of respectful disagreements can be a powerful and useful life lesson for children to observe, provided that a few cautions are kept in mind:

1. Consider your audience. The child(ren) should be old enough to comprehend what you are talking about and emotionally mature enough to grasp the concept that you can disagree with someone

<sup>17</sup> Baby and Child Care, Paul C. Reisser, M.D., 1997; Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.; pp. 463-464.

whom you deeply love and respect. Preschoolers and early-grade-school children can become terrified by the thought that Mom and Dad don't like each other and may misinterpret a spirited parental exchange as the unraveling of their world. They probably should rarely if ever, witness a serious parental disagreement. Older children and adolescents, on the other hand, can benefit from seeing how two mature people can settle an issue in a positive way.

2. Play by the rules. If kids are going to watch or listen, you should be well versed in healthy conflict resolution, resolve to keep the tone of conversation respectful and strive to come to a positive solution of your issue.
3. Consider demonstrating how you settled an issue. If you had a particularly fruitful conversation about a problem, think about reenacting it for your children to show how you dealt with it. You might even demonstrate some right and wrong ways to deal with an issue—especially if your children are having some problems in this area themselves.
4. Beware of voicing a disagreement in front of a child who is the subject of the disagreement. Parents should be united, even if they are not in total agreement when dealing with basic issues of child rearing—especially those relating to limits and discipline. A child must never get the idea that if Mommy says no, he can go talk to daddy, or that one parent will veto the other's disciplinary measures. However, with some concerns that are not fundamentally important, an older child might benefit from hearing different viewpoints, as long as they are expressed appropriately. (For example, the pros and cons of going to a summer camp or joining an athletic team could be an excellent topic for discussion among child and parents, even if there is no total agreement about the best decision).
5. Declare a cease-fire, if necessary. If your discussion is deteriorating into a shouting match and children are within earshot, *call it off* until you can continue in private—after you have cooled down. It is devastating—and inappropriate—for children to hear their parents yelling, insulting one another, or being physically aggressive. If your disagreement reaches this level, you should not only isolate it from your children but seek counseling as soon as possible.

### 3.9.3 When Siblings Engage in Combat<sup>18</sup>

This section does not begin with the word *if* because siblings *will* have conflicts—sometimes with shocking ferocity. In some families the nonstop bickering and pummeling that goes on in the backseat of the car, at the kitchen table, around the TV set, or in any other location where two or more children are gathered, is enough to cause mothers and fathers to want to turn in their resignation from parenthood. This is particularly exasperating when the parents have not modeled antagonistic or harsh behavior. *Where does all this awful hostility come from? Where did we go wrong?*

What generates so much conflict between brothers and sisters? With rare exception, it is not the result of poor parenting. Much of it is an expression of basic human nature. There is nothing in the human genetic code that spontaneously brings forth from children concerns for the rights and needs of others—including their closest family members. This (and nearly all other values) must be taught and modeled by parents, relatives, teachers, and other civilizing influences as children grow up.

A number of other factors may contribute to sibling combat. Recognizing them and working to reduce their impact can go a long way toward maintaining peace in your home:

<sup>18</sup> Baby and Child Care, Paul C. Reisser, M.D., 1997; Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.; pp. 464-468.

1. *Desire for parental attention.* *There's only so much of Mom and Dad to go around—how do I know that I'm still loved and important?* This isn't merely the unspoken question of a toddler when a new baby comes home. Regardless of the number and the ages involved, if there is more than one child in the nest there will be some serious concerns about (and competition for) a parent's attention. Ironically, in some cases children may instigate a fight merely to get an adult involved with them—even when the consequences are unpleasant. But even if the attention-seeking behavior is annoying, the basic questions are the same: *Who cares about me? Am I significant to anyone? Does what I think or do really matter?*

To avoid endless guilt, you need to acknowledge that you have limits—that you can't be all things to one child, let alone many. Nevertheless, amidst all the basic responsibilities of daily living; maintaining a home; generating income; and pursuing church, educational, or community projects, *some time and energy must be available for individual attention to each child on a regular basis.* If your schedule is particularly busy, you should consider setting a regular date with each child, during which he will have your undivided attention. This need not be elaborate; a walk in the park or an outing for an ice-cream cone can be a memorable occasion, provided that the parent isn't distracted by thoughts about all the other things that need to be done at home.

2. *Comparisons.* When two children first meet, comparisons are an immediate and normal occurrence: Who is older, bigger, and faster? If there is a disagreement, who is tougher? What toys does one have that the other doesn't? Depending on the situation, these questions may be minor points of interest that do not affect a budding friendship, or they may prove to be a source of major conflict.

Within the close quarters of a family, comparisons between children will be an inevitable daily reality and may become a source of ongoing friction. What happens if one child is a prodigy in school and her brother has learning disabilities? What if one is gifted in sports and another literally can't get to first base? What if the first two children are relatively compliant but the third has a will of steel and a limitless capacity to tell everyone where to get off?

Parents of more than one child will regularly have to exercise a delicate responsibility: recognizing and praising each child's unique skills, strengths, and accomplishments without implying that one sibling is somehow better than another. In some cases, you may have to look a lot harder to find what is praiseworthy, but is that child who will most need your affirmation. Whatever you do, avoid negative comparisons such as "Why can't you throw a ball like your brother?" or "You'll go a lot farther in life if you buckle down to your schoolwork like your sister does!" These kinds of comments are virtually guaranteed to stir resentment.

3. *Invasion of privacy.* While sharing is a virtue that should be encouraged during and after the preschool years, no child—or adult—appreciates having his possessions pawed through, broken, strewn on the floor, or taken to places unknown. This often becomes a point of contention when a child becomes mobile and begins exploring (and thrashing) the fascinating toys belonging to older siblings. It is quite appropriate to help an older child safeguard her belongings when there is a toddler on the loose, perhaps by providing closet or shelf space for her that is inaccessible to the younger child, keeping the other child's bedroom door closed, or limiting the range of the toddler's explorations. Unfortunately, older children and adolescents can also thoughtlessly raid a sibling's (or a parent's) possessions, often provoking surprisingly harsh responses.

You need to caution your children about becoming overly attached to an emotional about their possessions. But you also need to instill in them a healthy respect for the possessions of others, especially within your own home.

4. *Oppression*. Older children can be merciless in their physical and emotional torment of younger siblings, and parents must be prepared to intervene when this type of behavior is going on. But sometimes younger children can harass and irritate older siblings, and they should not be given free rein to do so simply because they are smaller.
5. *Injustice*. “He did it!” and “She started it!” are common “not guilty” pleas of siblings who are asked to account for a mess, a broken toy (or window), or a fight. Many times you will have to sort out who did what to whom, and at times you will need the wisdom of Solomon to dispense justice in the face of conflicting testimony or inconclusive evidence. While children may fervently seek to escape punishment, they care desperately about fairness. Don’t play favorites. The fact that one child is normally more compliant than another doesn’t mean that he isn’t capable of instigating wrongdoing.

In addition to your efforts to minimize these hot spots for sibling rivalry, here are a few more general principles to keep in mind:

1. *Don’t get pulled into every conflict*. Sometimes children will start an uproar in a misguided attempt to gain adult attention. Ignoring their efforts will reduce the odds of a repeat performance. Even if that isn’t their motivation, some situations it’s reasonable to give children a chance to sort out their own conflicts.
2. *Don’t let conflicts get out of hand*. If the children are not arriving at an appropriate solution, if someone is being bullied, or if insults (or fists) are flying, call a time-out for tempers to cool down.
3. *Repeatedly teach the principle of mutual respect and its implications*. Just as marital conflicts must be settled within a framework of mutual respect, so also must disagreements between children. This is the basis for curbing insults and not allowing arguments to escalate into physical combat.
4. *Administer disciplinary measures privately*. The embarrassment of being disciplined in front of other people—especially other children who may secretly take pleasure in watching the punishment—is both painful and counterproductive and more likely to lead to resentment than improved behavior.
5. *Discourage tattling*. If one child tells you about the misdeeds of another, the second child’s behavior must be dealt with, assuming that the story is true. But if the first child seemed smug or gleeful while reporting to you what his sibling did or appeared to gloat over the other child’s discipline, he needs to be reprimanded too. The issue isn’t that he reported the wrongdoing; at times such information may prevent an accident or injury. What you want to discourage is the attitude of tattling that derives satisfaction or pleasure from another’s “crime and punishment.”
6. *Remember that “this too will surely pass”*. It is often difficult to believe that children who have squabbled so intensely for so many years can actually have civilized relationships later in life. Yet in the vast majority of cases, a child’s passage into adolescence and adulthood ends sibling warfare and replaces it with pleasant camaraderie, deepening friendship, and (most surprisingly) fervent loyalty.

### 3.9.4 How to Hold “Family Court”

A very healthy and innovative way to deal with family conflicts is to hold “Family Court”. Make the entire family who are 12 years old or older into a “jury” that renders a binding verdict. This provides healthy ways for people to discuss and to solve relationship problems and teaches the value of team work, discipline, respect, and self-control. Reserve this approach for hotly contested issues that cannot be resolved at the weekly family meetings mentioned in section 3.6 below. Over time, if you use the techniques for conflict resolution mentioned here, then most issues should eventually get resolved at

the family meeting in a much more cooperative way after they learn more about the attitudes and expectations of family members during a few “trials.” Use the rules documented below to govern the trial proceedings.

1. Maintain a “court calendar” on the refrigerator door. As disagreements happen throughout the week that family members feel the need to “litigate”, enter the disagreement onto this court calendar so they come up at the designated family court time. Emphasize that there is to be no argument or disputes unless and until the hearing happens. If there is a thing that is being argued over, the “judge” confiscates it temporarily until the hearing and a decision can be rendered about it.
2. Allocate a time each week to hold the court. Weekends are preferable. Hold court only if there are issues to “litigate” and devote no more than an hour to the hearing so family members don’t lose interest.
3. Maintain a binder that becomes the “court record” that everyone in the family can refer to for a synopsis of each argument and hearing. Give all family members access to a copy of this folder when there are disputes but let the “judge” keep the original locked up for safekeeping.
4. Court hearing protocol:
  - 4.1. At the beginning of the hearing, designate a “recorder” or “clerk” for the proceedings and rotate the responsibility, so each family member gets a chance to do this job and develops an appreciation for it. This person’s job is to record the argument and the results of the hearing.
  - 4.2. Family members who refuse to participate in the proceeding as a juror or recorder will:
    - 4.2.1. Not receive an allowance.
    - 4.2.2. Forfeit their right to litigate any disputes and automatically lose any dispute with another family member who is a juror. This forces them to compromise.
  - 4.3. Let Dad be the “judge”.
  - 4.4. Let each party who has a disagreement become their own advocate or “attorney”.
  - 4.5. Give each side equal time to speak and “present their case” to the “jury” without interruption.
  - 4.6. Allow parties to submit evidence and testimony during the proceeding at least one day before the hearing so that the other side has a chance to prepare to argue against it.
  - 4.7. Exclude the parties who are involved directly in the dispute from voting as part of the jury.
  - 4.8. After the matter has been “submitted to the court”, the jury renders a verdict. After the votes are tallied, each family member who renders a verdict is obligated to present reasons why he or she ruled the way they did to the rest of the jury.
  - 4.9. If the jury has an even number of members and there is a tie, then the “judge” (Dad/Husband) renders the final decision.
  - 4.10. The findings for each hearing should be transcribed by the recorder onto a “Court Findings” sheet that goes into the original and official “court record” binder.
  - 4.11. The judge then makes a copy of the findings and puts it into the copy “court record” binder that the family can view.

### **3.10 Emotional and Verbal Abuse**

Emotional and verbal abuse within relationships are basically about control. One partner wants to control or manipulate the other.

#### **3.10.1 How do people become emotional abusers?**

Emotional abuse originates from our experiences during early childhood up to the age of about 11. Beliefs we learn as children are behind the emotions and actions that lead to emotional abuse. Recall from chapter five of this document children misbehave in order to feel important and needed for four different reasons: 1. To get attention; 2. To have power over parents; 3. To get revenge; 4. To display inadequacy. Emotional abuse in a spousal relationship can be classified as a type of power-motivated misbehavior. Basically, the child ego in the emotional abuser wants power and control over their spouse as a way for them to feel like they belong and are important. They need far more of this type of validation than most people because of the low self-esteem and mistrust of people they learned as a child that causes them to want to overcompensate to regain that self-esteem as an adult.

There are five types of traumatic experiences as a child that we can experience which can lead to the low self-esteem that causes the development of emotionally abuse behavior patterns in adults:

1. Rejection or abandonment by one's parents or other close family members.
2. Incest or sexual abuse by a parent or relative
3. Molestation by non-relatives.
4. Emotional abuse by other family members or emotional abuse between their parents that teaches them negative ways of dealing with their own family problems.
5. Physical abuse by family members.

Once a child has experienced any or all of these traumatic events, they are scarred emotionally and their emotional development stops. Unless they learn from others to deal effectively with these emotions, they will be scarred for life. Emotional development then stops because they learn at a very early age that people are selfish and hurtful and should be avoided. They decide that they can't or shouldn't trust anyone because they are afraid they might be hurt badly again. Fear and resentment and insecurity about human relationships is the result, which is at the heart of why they will then isolate themselves and not pursue relationships with people around them throughout their future life. The often subliminal or unconscious reasoning of people in this emotional state is:

*“If the very people in my own family who are supposed to care most about me will hurt me this badly, then certainly non-relatives and everyday people I might interact with at home in a committed relationship, at work, and at church who are even less likely to care about me are sure to treat me even WORSE.”*

Emotional abusers often make the perfect companion during the courtship process. When emotional abusers get married or have sexual relations with a prospective spouse, however, they can often demonstrate the Dr. Jekyll Mr. Hyde mentality, and suddenly use the marriage commitment as an excuse or weapon to become very controlling. They become very defensive and possessive. They do this because they have such a fear, mistrust, and a low regard for other people in general based on their very bad experiences as a child. They are afraid of being abandoned and hurt again and this fear pervades their every thought. They feel that people are basically conceited, selfish, and abusive by nature and because of this, they feel that the only way they can get their needs met on a continuing basis is to use force and coercion and legal means (behavior modification techniques in psychological parlance). They will then try to criticize, coerce, and punish people who don't meet their needs. They will become competitive and use threats of physical violence and legal action to intimidate the abused spouse. Instead of relying on mutual trust and respect to get their needs met like most normal people, their insecurity will cause them to fall back to old and destructive behavior patterns that will only alienate and isolate them further from the people who love them and who want to help (duress causes

us to regress). They will then watch how their spouse reacts to their negative behaviors and use this reaction as a confirmation of their basic fears and negative beliefs. In effect, they will see exactly and only what they wanted to see and their negative view of the world will become a self-fulfilling negative prophesy. They will ignore the beauty and the goodness in the people around them, and in the process, they will miss out on what life and love is really about!

Once the emotional damage has been done in early childhood, the self-destructive behavior patterns have been established that this person will carry with them into adulthood. Children who have been abused are likely themselves to become emotional abusers as adults, carrying on these destructive behavior patterns into future generations and infecting the families and lives of their children and their children's children. The only way to break this damaging cycle is with love, determination, counseling, and emotional support by the spouse of the emotional abuser. We need to keep the communication channels open and avoid being defensive or hyper-reactive. We need to be willing to debate and defend God's plan for the family and the right course of action without letting our emotions or selfish interests get in the way of right thinking. However, we also need to recognize that we will worsen the situation with an abusive spouse by reacting with a desire to control their behavior or coerce them. It would be unethical to fight emotional abuse with more emotional abuse. Therefore, unless there is physical abuse or infidelity, we should resist the temptation to flee home, refuse to submit sexually to our spouse, or refuse to communicate as a way to punish our spouse because this makes us just as abusive and bad as our abusive partner! By doing these things, we are just confirming our abusive spouse's worse fears. Instead, what is needed most is love, patience, commitment, and prayer.

Another interesting fact is that the negative attitudes and behaviors at the heart of emotional abusers are intensified when there are chemical dependencies in the family. For instance, emotional abuse is much higher among alcoholics and drug abusers than it is among sober people. Alcohol and drugs prevent people from dealing effectively and constructively with their problems, which makes them "slaves of sin." Therefore, before counseling or therapy for emotional abuse will work, chemical dependencies must be eliminated patiently and persistently. This will take commitment and cooperation from spouses and the family of the emotional abuser. The spouse of the emotional abuser should therefore be very supportive and encouraging of efforts to eliminate chemical dependencies by:

1. Attending AA meetings with one's spouse.
2. Encourage and support efforts to improve.
3. Be kind and patient and forgiving when there are relapses.

### **3.10.2 Dichotomies of the Emotional or Verbal Abuser**<sup>19</sup>

Several dichotomies exist in the sphere of human interaction that are useful in describing the behavior of emotional abusers. This section identifies them clearly to help you understand the motivation and desires of emotional abusers.

#### **3.10.2.1 Inequality Versus Equality**

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<sup>19</sup> *The Verbally Abusive Relationship*, Patricia Evans; Adams Media Corp; ISBN 1558505822; 1996, p. 42

Since the verbal abuser needs to have Power Over his partner, he cannot accept her as an equal. He may, however, tell her that he does. Why can't he accept her as an equal? Because he would experience her equality as his inferiority. He would have to ask for what he wanted. He would be open to rejection. He would have to give up control and dominance. Control and dominance seem to give the abuser a sense of power, security, and identity as a male.

One way to identify a relationship of inequality is to determine whether or not the couple can set mutual goals and discuss them together. In an abusive relationship, the couple does not really plan together. Planning together requires mutuality and equality. In an abusive relationship the partner may discover that her mate will not discuss long-or short-term goals with her, nor is he willing, in some instances, even to make plans with her for a weekend. Neither personal goals nor plans for the future together are discussed and agreed upon in a mutually supportive way.

### **3.10.2.2 Manipulation Versus Mutuality**

Since the verbal abuser derives his sense of power from Power Over, he feels powerless within. Feeling powerless, he may get what he wants through indirect and devious means. This is manipulation. One way of manipulating and closing off communication is to respond to the partner's attempt to discuss a problem with, "I never say anything right!" This is a covert way of saying "I can't change and I won't discuss the issue." At other times the verbal abuser may pretend not to understand or to have forgotten what his partner is talking about when she brings up an issue of deep concern to her.

There are many ways to manipulate another person, including being "friendly" only when one expects to get something from the other, suggesting disastrous outcomes to another's plans, and acting as if something has been agreed to or decided that hasn't been agreed to or decided.

### **3.10.2.3 Hostility Versus Goodwill**

All verbal abuse is hostile. The partners of verbal abusers are universally dismayed to realize this. "Why would he be hostile toward me?" they ask in anguish.

The abuser's hostility may be expressed overtly or covertly. He may vent his anger frequently, or he may never reveal it, preferring, instead, to manipulate and subtly control his partner.

Hostility is expressed directly when the abuser blasts his partner. However, every blast may be so filled with accusation that the partner may believe that her mate's anger is her fault. If she accepts accusatory blame as Dora did, in all probability she would be shocked to realize that her mate is actually hostile towards her.

When there is goodwill in the relationship, there is a reaching out--a conscious concern for the other's well-being. Just as the partner asks, "What are you angry about?" her mate asks, "What is upsetting you?"

### **3.10.2.4 Control Versus Intimacy**

When the verbal abuser refuses to discuss a problem, he prevents all possibility of resolution. In this way he exercises control over the interpersonal reality. Partners are frequently left with a sick, hurt feeling that is never really resolved. There is no feeling of closure. Upsetting incidents may reoccur in confusing flashbacks because they haven't been fully understood or resolved.

All verbal abuse is dominating and controlling. Verbal abuse used to control the partner without the partner's knowledge is called "crazymaking." "The sustaining of power seems to be one key factor in CM [crazymaking] behavior. It appears to be a way of asserting dominance while denying its existence or the wish for it." (Bach and Deutsh, 1980, p. 270)

Verbal abuse closes the door to true communication and intimacy. Intimacy in a relationship requires mutuality. Mutuality requires goodwill, openness, and a willingness to share oneself.

The abuser cannot control his partner and be intimate with her at the same time. Intimacy is lacking if there is no equality, partnership, mutuality, and goodwill. "Intimate love is fun, sexy, romantic, inspiring. Whether you have it in your relationship has little to do with how many years you have been together, but depends instead on how often and how deeply you share yourselves with each other." (Paul, 1983, p. 124)

### **3.10.2.5 Negation Versus Validation**

Because of his need for dominance and his unwillingness to accept his partner as an equal, the verbal abuser is compelled to negate the perceptions, experiences, values, accomplishments and plans of his partner. Consequently, the partner may not even know what it is like to feel supported and validated in her relationship. She may take his negation as a lack of common interest or as a misunderstanding. In truth, a verbally abusive relationship is a more or less constant invalidation of the partner's reality.

Validation is a positive affirmation of the other, such as "Yes, I understand how you're feeling." "Is this what you mean?" "I hear you."

### **3.10.3 Things That Most Abusers Have In Common**

Abusive people typically think they are unique, so different from other people that they don't have to follow the same rules as everyone else. But actually, abusers have a lot in common with one another and share a great many thinking patterns and behaviors. These may include:

The anguish and confusion which the partner experiences from the abuse is compounded by the abuser's negation and invalidation of both the abuse and its effects.

#### **Excuse Making**

Instead of accepting responsibility for certain actions, the abuser tries to justify their behavior with excuses. For example, "My parents never loved me," or "My parents beat me," or "I had a bad day, and when I walked in and saw this mess I lost my temper," or "I couldn't let her talk to me that way, there was nothing else I could do."

#### **Blaming**

The abuser shifts responsibility for certain actions to others, which allows the abuser to be angry at the other person for "causing" the behavior. For example: "If you would stay out of it while I am disciplining the kids, I could do it without hitting them."

### Redefining

The abuser redefines the situation so that the problem lies not with the abuser but with others or the outside world. For example: The abuser doesn't come home at 6 p.m. for dinner as prearranged; he or she comes home at 4 a.m. The abuser says, "You're an awful cook anyway. Why should I come home to eat this stuff? I bet the kids wouldn't even eat it."

### Success Fantasies

The abuser believes in fantasies of being rich, famous, or extremely successful in other terms if only other people weren't holding him back. They're blocking the way makes the abuser feel justified in getting back at them, including through abuse. The abuser also puts other people down as a way of building himself up.

### Lying

The abuser manipulates by lying to control information. The abuser may also use lying to keep other people, including the victim, off-balance psychologically. For example: The abuser tries to appear truthful when actually lying, or tries to look deceitful when actually telling the truth.

### Assuming

Abusive people often assume they know what others are thinking or feeling. Their assumption allows them to justify their behavior because they "know" what the other person would think or do in a given situation. For example: "I knew you'd be mad because I went out for a beer after work, so I figured I might as well stay out and enjoy myself."

### Above the Rules

As mentioned earlier, abusers generally believe they are better than other people and so don't have to follow the rules that ordinary people do. That attitude is typical of convicted criminals, too. Each inmate usually believes that while all the other inmates are criminals, he is not. An abuser shows above-the-rules thinking in saying, "I don't need counseling. Nobody knows as much about my life as I do. I can handle my life without help from anybody."

### Making Fools of Others

The abuser combines tactics to manipulate others. The tactics include lying, upsetting the other person just to watch her reactions, and provoking a fight between or among others. He may try to charm the

person he wants to manipulate, pretending a great deal of interest in and concern for that person in order to get on her good side.

### Fragmentation

The abuser usually keeps the abusive behavior separate from the rest of his life. The separation is physical; for example, the abuser will beat up family members but not people outside the home. The separation is also psychological; for example, it is not uncommon for an abuser to attend church Sunday morning and beat the victim Sunday night. The abuser sees no inconsistency in this behavior and feels justified in it.

### Minimizing

The abuser ducks responsibility for abusive actions by trying to make them seem less important than they are. For example: "I didn't hit you that hard", or "I only hit one of the kids. I could have done them all."

### Vagueness

Thinking and speaking vaguely lets the abuser avoid responsibility. For example: "I'm late because I had to do some things on the way [home](#)."

### Anger

Abusive people are not actually angrier than other people. However, they deliberately use their anger to control situations and people. For example: "I'll break your neck if you don't shut up."

### Power Plays

The abuser uses various tactics to overcome resistance to bullying. For example: The abuser walks out of the room when the victim is talking, or out-shouts the victim, or organizes other family members or associates to "gang up" on the victim by shunning or criticizing her.

### Playing Victim

Occasionally the abuser will pretend to be helpless or will act persecuted in order to manipulate others into helping. The abuser has convinced himself that whenever he or she doesn't get what is wanted, the abuser is the real victim. The abuser uses the disguises of victim to strike back at or make fools of other people.

### Drama and Excitement

Abusive people have trouble experiencing close, satisfying relationships. They substitute drama and excitement for closeness. Abusive people find it exciting to watch others become angry, get into fights,

or fall into a general uproar. Often, they'll use a combination of tactics described earlier to set up and exciting situation.

### Closed Channel

The abusive person does not tell much about personal details and real feelings. The abuser is not open to new information about himself either, such as someone else's thoughts about them personally. The abuser is secretive, close-minded and self-righteous. Abusers believe they are right in all situations.

### Ownership

The abuser typically is very possessive. Moreover, the abuser believes that anything that is wanted should be owned, and that the abuser can do as wanted with anything that is his. The same attitude applies to people. It justifies controlling others' behavior, physically hurting them and taking things that belong to them.

### Self-glorification

The abuser usually thinks of himself as strong, superior, independent, self-sufficient, and very virile. When anyone says or does anything that doesn't fit this glorified self-image. The abuser takes it as an insult.

### Poor Anger Management

- Individuals who have experienced a violent and abusive childhood are more likely to grow up and become spouse abusers
- A person who sees violence as the primary method for settling differences as a child is not going to have available very many alternate ways to channel anger.
- A person without an everyday outlet for anger risks exploding toward the people closest to them.

### Inability to Express Feelings With Words

- This type of person is rarely capable of true intimacy and may feel very threatened by the prospect of being open and vulnerable
- Particularly when frustrated, the abusive person expects instant gratification from their spouse who is expected to "read" their mind and "know" what their mate wants. When the mate doesn't know what is expected the husband may interpret this as meaning they do not really love them. Rejection for the abuser = violence.

### Emotional Dependence

- Abusive individuals are usually very emotionally dependent on their spouse.
- The result to their inner rage at being dependent means that the abuser acts in controlling ways to exert power and to deny their own weakness.
- One major symptom is strong jealousy and possessive actions, normally sexual in nature.

- The abuser will spend a great deal of time monitoring their spouses activities.
- The abuser lacks supportive relationships.
- Another sign of dependence is what happens when the abused person leaves the home because of abuse. It is common for the abused to make extraordinary attempts to persuade them to return.

#### Low Self-Esteem

- Jealousy, depression and sensitivity to criticism often result from low self-esteem.

#### Rigid Application of Traditional Sex Attitudes

- Abusive spouses tend to have more inflexible beliefs about roles and functions of their spouses in the marriage. The husband may expect the wife to over fulfill all the household and mothering chores and to be very submissive and subservient.

#### Alcohol and Drug Dependency

- 67% of abusers frequently use alcohol. Alcohol and drugs are used to avoid responsibility for actions.

#### Social Isolation

- Those who isolate themselves from family, friends and people in the community don't have the resources to cope with the stress.

#### Protected From Consequences

- Often a spouse will protect the abuser from consequences. The abuser must learn that actions have consequences.

#### Pride Combined with Power

- "When pride is mixed with power the result is genuinely volatile. Pride makes us think we are right, and power gives us the ability to cram our vision of rightness down everyone else's throat. The marriage between pride and power carries us to the brink of the demonic." (Richard Foster, Money, Sex, Power San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1983,p.180)

### **3.10.4 How to Determine if Your Partner is an Abuser**

No one wants to think that the person they are dating or in love with could possibly harm them. Many times, it is your friends or family that may see something you don't. They may tell you that something is wrong in your relationship. It is estimated that up to 30% or more of relationships have some form of abuse. There are common potential indicators.

The verbal abuser may show a few, many, or all of the following characteristics. Some of these characteristics, by their nature, are very difficult to recognize. Also, the abuser may describe himself

as the opposite of the way his partner experiences him. For example, he may blast her with angry accusations and describe himself as easygoing. The verbal abuser may be:

1. Irritable.
2. Likely to blame his mate for his outbursts or actions.
3. Unpredictable (you never know what will anger him).
4. Angry
5. Intense.
6. Unaccepting of his mate's feelings and views.
7. Unexpressive of warmth and empathy.
8. Controlling.
9. Silent and uncommunicative in private or, frequently, demanding or argumentative.
10. A "nice guy" to others.
11. Competitive toward his partner.
12. Sullen.
13. Jealous.
14. Quick with come-backs or put-downs.
15. Critical.
16. Manipulative.
17. Explosive.
18. Hostile.
19. Unexpressive of his feelings.

Instead of negating their thoughts, you may need to stop and look at your partner's actions. Answer these questions about your partner:

1. Did he or she have a history of any of the following events in her early childhood during their formative years up to about age 11?
  - 1.1. Rejection or abandonment.
  - 1.2. Incest
  - 1.3. Molestation or sexual abuse
  - 1.4. Emotional abuse
  - 1.5. Physical abuse
2. Does he/she come from an abusive home? Does he/she come from a dysfunctional home?
3. Are you discouraged from talking with friends/family?
4. Does he/she always insist on going everywhere with you?
5. Do you have to discuss activity plans, people you will be with, and why you are going to do something with him/her before you can do them?
6. Does he/she have problems with your success?
7. Does he/she react negatively to people in positions of authority?
8. Does he/she belittle you?
9. Does he/she blame you if things happen?
10. Does he/she negate your opinion?
11. Does he/she make you feel guilty?
12. Does he/she call you names?
13. Does he/she lose his/her temper and throw things or hit objects?
14. Have you ever seen this person become violent in a situation with someone else?
15. Does he/she get violent when he drinks?

16. Is your partner jealous of your time, your career, other people in your life?
17. Does he/she play mind games with you?
18. Does he/she believe the myths about domestic violence?

Now look at your own actions and reactions. Answer these questions about yourself to see whether you reward or encourage the abuse:

1. Do you have low self-esteem?
2. Do you accept responsibility for arguments?
3. Do you believe the myths about domestic violence?
4. Do you feel guilty if he/she becomes enraged or jealous, or that you may have caused his actions?
5. Do you allow yourself to be controlled because you believe the person would not do it if they didn't love you?
6. Do you believe jealousy is proof of love?

While all of these indicators are emotional, remember that emotional abuse is often the first one used. This nearly always escalates and becomes a physical form of abuse. It always involves control - one partner controlling the actions of the other. If this kind of behavior is present, you could have a potentially abusive situation that will only GET WORSE as the relationship progresses.

If you answered 'yes' to any of the above questions, you may have a problem. These are only warning signs to help you decide if you want/need help. They do not mean that an abusive situation will happen. However, if these actions are present, you both need to seek separate, outside, impartial counseling. You both need to accept the responsibility that each of you play in this situation. He/she needs to recognize that abuse is not acceptable and you need to recognize that you can't enable his/her actions.

### **3.10.5 How to Recognize the Emotional Signs of Abuse in Yourself**

Many of us do some of these things when we're in a bad mood. When is the behavior classified as abusive? Ask yourself these questions:

- Do you doubt your judgment or wonder if you are "crazy"?
- Are you afraid of your partner and do you express opinions less and less freely?
- Have you developed fears of other people and tend to see others less often?
- Do you spend a lot of time watching for your partner's bad and not-so-bad moods, before bringing up a subject?
- Do you ask your partner's permission to spend money, take classes or socialize with friends?
- Have you lost confidence in your abilities, become increasingly depressed and feel trapped and powerless?

If you answer YES to many of these questions, it is probable you have been abused and have changed as a result of being abused.

If you have friends or relatives who give emotional support and believe you are a good person, you may trust your judgment. But if you feel your batterer is far more important or knows you better than they really do, you will not hear the supportive, positive messages that come your way. If you spend

little time with people other than your batterer -- a common situation -- there will not be other messages to hear.

One way to begin to help yourself is to change the messages you give yourself. You DO have a right to a life free of verbal, emotional and physical abuse. It is easy to get into the habit of coaching yourself for failure, but that can be changed. Begin to modify the things you say to yourself about yourself. You may not be able to change the batterer's behavior, but at least you can start giving yourself positive, empowering messages.

### 3.10.6 Characteristics of Verbal Abuse<sup>20</sup>

1. Verbal abuse is hurtful. It is especially hurtful when it is denied. When the partner's perception of the abuse is discounted and there is not validation of her reality, part of her hurt is her confusion.
2. Verbal abuse attacks the nature and abilities of the partner. The partner may begin to believe that there is something wrong with her or that her abilities are her failings. As Bella noted:

*"I heard so often that I was a lousy driver, I really began to think I had a problem driving. I think I was brainwashed. Do you know what? I've been driving twenty-seven years without an accident or a ticket.*

3. Verbal abuse may be overt (angry outbursts and name-calling), or covert (very, very subtle, like brainwashing). Overt verbal abuse is usually blaming and accusatory, and consequently confusing to the partner. Covert verbal abuse, which is hidden aggression, is even more confusing to the partner. Its aim is to control her without her knowing it.
4. Verbally abusive disparagement may be voiced in an extremely sincere and concerned way. Ellen provides an example:

*"When he quietly and thoughtfully said, "The real reason we've never been able to discuss a book is that there are common phrases you don't comprehend the meaning of but that the average American understands," I thought, "That must be why we have so much trouble in our communication."*

*I felt tremendous pain and despair; after all, then all my pain was my fault."*

5. Verbal abuse is manipulative and controlling. Usually the partner does not know that she is being manipulated and controlled. She may notice, however, that she may be living her life quite differently than she's planned, or certainly less happily.
6. Verbal abuse is insidious. Verbal abuse disregards, disrespects or devalues the partner in such a way that:
  - 6.1. Her self-esteem gradually diminishes, usually without her realizing it.
  - 6.2. She loses self-confidence without realizing it.
  - 6.3. She may consciously or unconsciously try to change her behavior so as not to upset the abuser, so she won't be hurt anymore.

<sup>20</sup> The Verbally Abusive Relationship, Patricia Evans; Adams Media Corp; ISBN 1558505822; 1996.

As Dora advised:

*You'll never be able to tell if you're verbally abused by what your friends see and tell you, nor by what your husband says about himself and the relationship. Please emphasize in your book how very vague and subtle and insidious it is. You get conditioned to it and confused by it, and then you don't know what's going on.*

7. Verbal abuse is unpredictable. Unpredictability is one of the most significant characteristics of verbal abuse. The partner, as discussed earlier, is stunned, shocked, thrown off balance by her mate's sarcasm, angry jab, put-down, or hurtful comment. No matter how intelligent, discerning, or thoughtful she is, she never really expects it, nor, for the most part, can she understand why the upsetting incidents occur or how to prevent them.
8. Verbal abuse is the issue (the problem) in the relationship. When a couple is having a real argument about a real issue, like how to discipline their children or how much time to spend apart or together, both parties may feel angry but they can say, "This is what I'm feeling angry about." or "This is what I want," and eventually, if there is goodwill on both their parts, the issue is resolved. In a verbally abusive relationship there is no specific conflict. The issue is the abuse and this issue is not resolved. Another way to say this is that there is no closure.
9. Verbal abuse expresses a double message. There is an incongruence between the way the abuser speaks and his real feelings. For example, he may sound very sincere and honest while he is telling his partner what is wrong with her, or he may say "I'm not mad" while sounding very angry, or he may, for example, invite her out to dinner and then during dinner maintain an attitude of aloof, cold indifference. Partners say:
 

*He tells me he loves me, and he tells me he can say anything he wants.*

*He says he's accepting of everyone but he criticizes me and won't accept my views or feelings.*

*He says he's relaxed and easygoing but he's angry and irritable every day.*

*He says he's supportive of me, but I feel isolated and lonely with him.*
10. Verbal abuse usually escalates, increasing in intensity, frequency, and variety. For example, early in the relationship, the verbal abuser may abuse his partner with put-downs disguised as jokes and with withholding; gradually, other forms of verbal abuse are added. (These forms are described below as the categories of verbal abuse.)

In many, many cases, verbal abuse escalates into physical abuse which may also begin subtly as "accidental" shoves, pushes, bumps, etc., which then escalate into overt physical battering. One partner said that lately whenever she and her mate were standing near each other, looking at a map for example, she would find him standing on her foot. When she complained he would act surprised as if he hadn't realized it. But it happened again and again.

As verbal abuse escalates toward physical abuse, the abuser may begin moving into the partner's space. One partner said that whenever she was settled in a chair with her coffee and a pillow and then left the room for a moment, when she returned her mate had taken her chair. It did not, she said, matter which chair she had been in. He always refused to give it back. Later she noticed that he started stepping in

front of her when she was approaching the refrigerator or the sink. Noting this transition from verbal to physical abuse is important because the clinical experience of therapists who treat battered women provides evidence that all battered women have been verbally abused.

### 3.10.7 Categories of Verbal Abuse

The abuser is often so good at control that he can turn his intimidating displays on and off in order to continue to look good to the outside world. Many survivors describe this as "*Jekyll/Hyde*" behavior.

Many could not comprehend why their mates raged at them only when people who mattered were not around. Never did they suspect it was because they were chosen they became the chosen scapegoat. ***Verbal abuse is a behavior originating with the abuser's intense need to control his mate as well as his own feeling of powerlessness.*** He does this by diminishing HER and venting his feelings on HER while blaming HER for them.

1. ***Withholding:*** By withholding, the verbal abuser is saying, "I've got something you want and I can withhold it from you. Therefore, I am in control." Or, "If I don't respond, if I refuse to answer, I can control the outcome, that is, I can maintain the status quo. I can be sure that there will be no change. I don't have to ask. I don't have to say no. I don't have to say yes. I don't have to be vulnerable. I can stay in control and therefore risk nothing." To know whether your partner is withholding, ask yourself the following questions:
  - 1.1. Does the abuser stop speaking to you when they're displeased?
  - 1.2. Do they ignore you?
  - 1.3. Do they withdraw affection in order to punish you?
  - 1.4. Do they blame you for this?
2. ***Countering:*** By countering his partner, the verbal abuser is saying, "I can think for both of us. What you think is wrong. What I think is right. If I can get you to doubt yourself, I can control you more easily." To know whether your partner is countering, ask yourself the following questions:
  - 2.1. Does the abuser tell you you're wrong if you don't agree with them?
  - 2.2. Do they argue against your every thought?
  - 2.3. Do they tell you your feelings are wrong?
  - 2.4. Do they tell you that you don't know what you're talking about?
  - 2.5. Do they forbid you from having your own opinions?
3. ***Discounting:*** By discounting his partner's perceptions, the verbal abuser is saying, "I can decree the worthlessness of your perceptions and actions. I am not accountable. I can stay in control." To know whether your partner is discounting, ask yourself the following questions:
  - 3.1. Does the abuser ignore or disparage your feelings?
  - 3.2. Do they put down your feelings?
  - 3.3. Do they dismiss you with statements such as, "you're too sensitive" or "you don't have a sense of humor" or "you're just taking it wrong"?
4. ***Verbal abuse disguised as a joke:*** By telling the partner that the abuse is only a joke, the verbal abuser is saying, "I feel so UP putting you down that I never want to give it up, so I decree that my comments are humorous I'm in control. I can say what I want." To know whether your partner is using verbal abuse disguised as a joke, ask yourself the following questions:
  - 4.1. Does the abuser make fun of you?

- 4.2. Do they ridicule you regarding subjects about which you are particularly sensitive?
  - 4.3. Do they seem to enjoy it?
  - 4.4. Do they accuse you of not being able to take a joke?
  - 4.5. Do they use sarcasm to put you down?
5. **Blocking and diverting:** By thwarting his partner, the verbal abuser is saying, "I do not accept any responsibility to respond to you as a rational person, so I can change the conversation at will. I am in control." To know whether your partner is using blocking and diverting, ask yourself the following questions:
- 5.1. Does the abuser change the subject when you try to bring something up?
  - 5.2. Do they divert serious discussions by accusing you of various things?
6. **Accusing and blaming:** By blaming his partner for his abuse of her, the verbal abuser is saying, "You are to blame for your pain and for everything I say or do to you and for everything that isn't the way I want it to be, so I do not have to stop my behavior. I'm in control." To know whether your partner is accusing and blaming, ask yourself the following questions:
- 6.1. Does the abuser blame you for everything that goes wrong?
  - 6.2. Do they accuse you of hurting them when you tell them your feelings?
  - 6.3. Do they accuse you of having affairs?
  - 6.4. Are they jealous?
7. **Judging and criticizing:** By judging and criticizing his partner, the verbal abuser is saying, "When I tell you what is wrong with your thoughts or actions, I put myself in charge of you and therefore in control of you. If the two of you agree on a common philosophical and religious foundation for your marriage and if you marry a person of the same religious faith as you, then you are far less likely to find this kind of abuse in your marriage. Likewise, if you take the time as a family to document your collective beliefs and write down a family mission statement, you can avoid or lessen this kind of abuse. To know whether your partner is judging and criticizing, ask yourself the following questions:
- 7.1. Does the abuser find fault with everything you do and not praise you or encourage you in anything?
  - 7.2. Are they extremely hard to please?
  - 7.3. Do they tell you "ought" or "should" do things a certain way?
  - 7.4. Do they belittle men or women as a group?
  - 7.5. Do they ridicule or insult your most valued beliefs, your religion, race, heritage or class
8. **Trivializing:** By pretending that his partner, or her actions or perceptions or opinions or thoughts or concerns, are less than they are, the verbal abuser is saying, "When you see how insignificant you are, I will have more power and control over you." To know whether your partner is trivializing, ask yourself the following questions:
- 8.1. Does the abuser belittle what you say?
  - 8.2. Do they dismiss your feelings or accomplishments?
  - 8.3. Do they insult you when you express pride in your own abilities?
  - 8.4. Do they act as if your work is no big deal?
9. **Undermining:** By undermining his partner, the verbal abuser is saying, "When I erode your self-confidence and lessen your determination, you are easier to control." To know whether your partner is undermining, ask yourself the following questions:

- 9.1. Does the abuser squelch your enthusiasm with insensitive comments such as, "You wouldn't understand", or, "You'll never make it"?
  - 9.2. Do they sabotage your ideas by pointing out all the ways in which they might fail?
  - 9.3. Do they interrupt you when you need time alone?
10. **Threatening:** With this very obvious means of control, the verbal abuser is saying, "I have Power Over you. I am in control. Do as I say. If you don't, I'll..., or if you don't...this will happen implying physical harm by a fit of rage or by an unspoken threat like punching a wall, slamming a door with force or throwing something." To know whether your partner is threatening, ask yourself the following questions:
- 10.1. Does the abuser threaten you, overtly or covertly?
  - 10.2. Do they threaten you with violence?
  - 10.3. Do they threaten you with emotional pain?
  - 10.4. Do they regularly threaten to leave you or tell you to leave
  - 10.5. Do they threaten to hurt you or your family
11. **Name calling:** By calling names, the abuser is saying, "You do not exist. You are annihilated, you are now BLANK. Now that you are wiped out, I'm in control, just like in a war." To know whether your partner is name-calling, ask yourself the following questions:
- 11.1. Does the abuser use vulgarities to insult you?
  - 11.2. Do they call you cruel names?
  - 11.3. Do they use terms of endearment with intense sarcasm?
12. **Forgetting:** When the abuser regularly forgets appointments, agreements and/or incidents, he is saying, "I'm in control of your time, your energy or reality and I don't have to be accountable because I'm in control." To know whether your partner is forgetting, ask yourself the following questions:
- 12.1. Does the abuser make a promise and then "forget" to keep it?
  - 12.2. Do they pretend not to remember certain incidents or discussions?
  - 12.3. Do they pretend not to remember prior agreements?
13. **Ordering and demanding:** With these direct displays of control, the verbal abuser is saying, "I have a right to assert Power Over you in an overt act of control. If all of the other intimidating behaviors achieved my goal, you will do as I demand." To know whether your partner is ordering and demanding, ask yourself the following questions:
- 13.1. Does the abuser order you to do something instead of asking?
  - 13.2. Do they demand things?
14. **Denial:** By denying all of his abusive behavior, the abuser is saying, "I can keep everything exactly as it is, with you under my control, and I will not be held accountable." To know whether your partner is using denial, ask yourself the following questions:
- 14.1. Does the abuser deny that certain things happened?
  - 14.2. Do they tell you that they didn't say something, or that you never saw something occur?
15. **Abusive anger:** By being abusively angry, the abuser is saying, "As long as I am scary and intimidating and threatening you, I can have my way." To know whether your partner is using abusive anger, ask yourself the following questions:
- 15.1. Does the abuser erupt into a rage when they are angry?
  - 15.2. Do they scream, yell, or shout?

- 15.3. Do they hurl obscenities?
- 15.4. Does their body language become more aggressive?
- 15.5. Do they stomp, strut, hit things, or hit you? Do they become red in the face?
- 15.6. Do they throw things?
- 15.7. Do they physically get in your way, or follow you from room to room?
- 15.8. Do they snap at you?
- 15.9. Are they usually irritable?
- 15.10. Does all of this usually take place in private, when you are alone? (It's a sure sign things are escalating if the abuser attacks you in public.)
- 15.11. Does the abuser blame you for their anger?

16. **Isolation.** This type of abuse includes:

- 16.1. Controlling what your partner does, who he or she sees and talks to, what he or she reads, where he or she goes.
- 16.2. Limiting your partner's outside involvement.
- 16.3. Demanding your partner remain home when you are not with them.
- 16.4. Cutting your partner off from prior friends, activities, and social interaction.
- 16.5. Using jealousy to justify your actions.
- 16.6. Criticizing or abusing you in public or in front of other relatives so you won't want to spend time around them.
- 16.7. Withhold approval, appreciation or affection as punishment
- 16.8. Refusing to socialize with you.

17. **Deception or lying:** This type of abuse involves manipulating a situation by telling lies to others about the situation or about the behavior of the person who is the target of the abuse. Examples:

- 17.1. Harassing you about affairs your partner imagined you were having but weren't having.
- 17.2. Manipulating you with lies and contradictions.
- 17.3. Falsely accusing you of sexual abuse.
- 17.4. Falsely accusing you of domestic violence.

It is the nature of abuse is that it is never justified and that it is not about conflict. It is, instead, about control. The misconception: Verbal abuse in a relationship can be resolved because two adults should be able to work out their conflicts. The fact: If there is verbal abuse in a relationship, there is no conflict around the abuse. When one is ordered, one is abused; there is no justification and no conflict. When one is criticized, one is being abused; there is no justification for this abuse and certainly no conflict.

### 3.10.8 Categories of Behavioral Abuse

Behavioral abuse in this case is defined as actions rather than words which have the same affect as verbal abuse but which aren't spoken. Here are a few examples of emotionally abusive behaviors rather than statements.

1. Controlling behaviors:

- 1.1. Try to keep you from working.
- 1.2. Try to control your money.
- 1.3. Made all decisions.
- 1.4. Refuse to work or share money.

- 1.5. Took car keys or money away from you.
- 1.6. Change locks in the house and not give your partner a key.
- 1.7. Put partner's belongings out in the front yard.
- 1.8. Destroy personal or financial records designed to keep the abuser accountable.
- 1.9. Asking for divorce and spousal support as a woman and then refusing to get a job after the divorce, thus forcing the other party to support her indefinitely.
2. *Threatening behaviors:* These behaviors make the person feel threatened by the other party.
  - 2.1. Abused, tortured, killed pets to hurt you.
  - 2.2. Destroyed furniture.
  - 2.3. Punched holes in walls.
  - 2.4. Break appliances.
  - 2.5. Wield a gun in a threatening way.
  - 2.6. Put superglue in locks.

### 3.10.9 Checklist for Crazy-making<sup>21</sup>

Covert verbal abuse is subversive because of its indirect quality. It is covert attack or coercion. This kind of abuse has been described as "crazy-making." It is "a form of interpersonal interaction that results from the repression of intense aggression and which seriously impairs its victim's capacity to recognize and deal with the interpersonal reality." (Back and Goldberg, 1974, p.251)

Of value in teaching recognition of the crazy-making experience is the following checklist:

1. Feeling temporarily thrown off balance and momentarily unable to right oneself.
2. Feeling lost, not knowing where to turn, searching aimlessly.
3. Being caught off guard.
4. Feeling disconnected, confused, disoriented.
5. Feeling off balance, as if the rug had been pulled from under one's feet.
6. Receiving double messages but somehow unable or fearful to ask for clarification [Author's note: Or asking for clarification but not getting it.]
7. Feeling generally "bugged" by the simple presence of a person.
8. To discover that one was mistaken in one's evaluation or where one stood or what it was all about.
9. Feeling totally unprepared for a broken promise or unfulfilled expectation.
10. Experiencing the shattering of an important "dream."
11. Where one assumes goodwill, ill will seems to prevail.
12. One feels pushed around, not in control of one's own direction.
13. Unable to get off redundantly spinning circles of thoughts.
14. What seemed clear becomes muddled.
15. An uneasy, weird feeling of emptiness.
16. A strong wish to get away, yet feeling unable to move, as if frozen.
17. One is befuddled, not able to attack the problem.
18. Feeling vaguely suspicious that something is wrong.
19. Feeling that one's subjective world has become chaotic.

### 3.11 Sexual Morality

<sup>21</sup> *The Verbally Abusive Relationship*, Patricia Evans; Adams Media Corp; ISBN 1558505822; 1996, p. 26

C.S. Lewis, a famous British philosopher, had some very insightful things to say about Christian sexual morality in his book entitled “Mere Christianity”. Below is an excerpt from chapter 5 of his book entitled *Sexual Morality* which we agree with wholeheartedly:<sup>22</sup>

*We must now consider Christian morality as regards sex, what Christians call the virtue of chastity. The Christian rule of chastity must not be confused with the social rule of “modesty” (in one sense of that word); i.e. propriety, or decency. The social rule of propriety lays down how much of the human body should be displayed and what subjects can be referred to, and in what words, according to the customs of the given social circle. Thus, while the rule of chastity is the same for all Christians at all times, the rule of propriety changes. A girl in the Pacific islands wearing hardly any clothes and a Victorian lady completely covered in clothes might both be equally “modest,” proper, or decent, according to the standards of their own societies: and both, for all we could tell by their dress, might be equally chaste (or equally unchaste). Some of the language which chaste women used in Shakespear’s time would have been used in the nineteenth century only by a woman completely abandoned. When people break the rule of propriety current in their own time and place, if they do so in order to excite lust in themselves or others, then they are offending against chastity. But if they break it through ignorance or carelessness they are guilty only of bad manners. When, as often happens, they break it defiantly in order to shock or embarrass others, they are not necessarily being unchaste, but they are being uncharitable: for it is uncharitable to take pleasure in making other people uncomfortable. I do not think that a very strict or fussy standard of propriety is any proof of chastity or any help to it, and I therefore regard the great relaxation and simplifying of the rule which has taken place in my own lifetime as a good thing. At its present stage, however, it has this inconvenience, that people of different ages and different types do not all acknowledge the same standard, and we hardly know where we are. While this confusion lasts I think that old, or old-fashioned, people should be very careful not to assume that young or “emancipated” people are corrupt whenever they are (by the old standard) improper; and, in return, that young people should not call their elders prudes or puritans because they do not easily adopt the new standard. A real desire to believe all the good you can of others and to make others as comfortable as you can will solve most of the problems.*

*Chastity is the most unpopular of the Christian virtues. There is no getting away from it: the old Christian rule is, “Either marriage, with complete faithfulness to your partner, or else total abstinence.” Now this is so difficult and so contrary to our instincts, that obviously either Christianity is wrong or our sexual instinct, as it now is, has gone wrong. One or the other, Of course, being a Christian, I think it is the instinct which has gone wrong.*

*But I have other reasons for thinking so. The biological purpose of sex is children, just as the biological purpose of eating is to repair the body. Now if we eat whenever we feel inclined and just as much as we want, it is quite true that most of us will eat too much: but not terrifically too much. One man may eat*

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<sup>22</sup> *Mere Christianity*, C.S. Lewis, 1952, pp. 88-95; Collier Books, New York.

*enough for two, but he does not eat enough for ten. The appetite goes a little beyond its biological purpose, but not enormously. But if a healthy young man indulged his sexual appetite whenever he felt inclined, and if each act produced a baby, then in ten years he might easily populate a small village. This appetite is in ludicrous and preposterous excess of its function.*

*Or take it another way. You can get a large audience together for a strip-tease act—that is, to watch a girl undress on the stage. Now suppose you came to a country where you could fill a theatre by simply bringing a covered plate on to the stage and then slowly lifting the cover so as to let every one see, just before the lights went out, that it contained a mutton chop or a bit of bacon, would you not think that in that country something had gone wrong with the appetite for food? And would not anyone who had grown up in a different world think there was something equally queer about the state of the sex instinct among us?*

*One critic said that if he found a country in which such strip-tease acts with food were popular, he would conclude that the people of that country were starving. He means, of course, to imply that such things as the strip-tease act resulted not from sexual corruption but from sexual starvation. I agree with him that if, in some strange land, we found that similar acts with mutton chops were popular, one of the possible explanations which would occur to me would be famine. But the next step would be to test our hypothesis by finding out whether, in fact, much or little food was being consumed in that country. If the evidence showed that a good deal was being eaten, then of course we should have to abandon the hypothesis of starvation and try to think of another one. In the same way, before accepting sexual starvation as the cause of the strip-tease, we should have to look for evidence that there is in fact more sexual abstinence in our age than in those ages when things like the strip-tease were unknown. But surely there is no such evidence. Contraceptives have made sexual indulgence far less costly within marriage and far safer outside it than ever before, and public opinion is less hostile to illicit unions and even to perversion than it has been since Pagan times. Nor is the hypothesis of “starvation” the only one we can imagine. Everyone knows that the sexual appetite, like our other appetites, grows by indulgence. Starving men may think much about food, but so do gluttons; the gorged, as well as the famished, like titillations.*

*Here is a third point. You find very few people who want to eat things that really are not food or to do other things with food instead of eating it. In other words, perversions of the food appetite are rare. But perversions of the sex instinct are numerous, hard to cure, and frightful. I am sorry to have to go into all these details, but I must. The reason why I must is that you and I, for the last twenty years, have been fed all day long on good solid lies about sex. We have been told, till one is sick of hearing it, that sexual desire is in the same state as any of our other natural desires and that if only we abandon the silly old Victorian idea of hushing it up, everything in the garden will be lovely. It is not true. The moment you look at the facts, and away from the propaganda, you see that it is not.*

*They tell you sex has become a mess because it was hushed up. But for the last twenty years it has not been hushed up. It has been chattered about all day long. Yet it is still a mess. If hushing up had been the cause of the trouble, ventilation would have set it right. But it has not. I think it is the other way round. I think the human race originally hushed it up because it had become such a mess. Modern people are always saying, "Sex is nothing to be ashamed of." They may mean two things. They may mean "There is nothing to be ashamed of in the fact that the human race reproduces itself in a certain way, nor in the fact that it gives pleasure." If they mean that, they are right. Christianity says the same. It is not the thing, nor the pleasure that is the trouble. The old Christian teachers said that if man had never fallen, sexual pleasure, instead of being less than it is now, would actually have been greater. I know some muddle-headed Christians have talked as if Christianity thought that sex, or the body, or pleasure were bad in themselves. But they were wrong. Christianity is almost the only one of the great religions which thoroughly approves of the body—which believes that matter is good, that God Himself once took on a human body, that some kind of body is going to be given to us even in Heaven and is going to be an essential part of our happiness, our beauty, and our energy. Christianity has glorified marriage more than any other religion: and nearly all the greatest love poetry in the work has been produced by Christians. If anyone says that sex, in itself, is bad, Christianity contradicts him at once. But of course, when people say, "Sex is nothing to be ashamed of," they may mean "the state into which the sexual instinct has now got is nothing to be ashamed of."*

*If they mean that, I think they are wrong. I think it is everything to be ashamed of. There is nothing to be ashamed of in enjoying your food: there would be everything to be ashamed of if half the world made food the main interest of their lives and spent their time looking at pictures of food and dribbling and smacking their lips. I do not say you and I are individually responsible for the present situation. Our ancestors have handed over to us organisms which are warped in this respect: and we grow up surrounded by propaganda in favour of unchastity. There are people who want to keep our sex instinct inflamed in order to make money out of us. Because, of course, a man with an obsession is a man who has very little sales-resistance. God knows our situation; He will not judge us as if we had no difficulties to overcome. What matters is the sincerity and perseverance of our will to overcome them.*

*Before we can be cured we must want to be cured. Those who really wish for help will get it; but for many modern people even the wish is difficult. It is easy to think that we want something when we do not really want it. A famous Christian long ago told us that when he was a young man he prayed constantly for chastity; but years later he realised that while his lips had been secretly adding, "But please don't do it just yet." This may happen in prayers for other virtues too; but there are three reasons why it is now specially difficult for us to desire—let alone to achieve—complete chastity.*

*In the first place our warped natures, the devils who tempt us, and all the contemporary propaganda for lust, combine to make us feel that the desires we*

are resisting are so “natural,” so “healthy,” and so reasonable, that it is almost perverse and abnormal to resist them. Poster after poster, film after film, novel after novel, associate the idea of sexual indulgence with the ideas of health, normality, youth, frankness, and good humour. Now this association is a lie. Like all powerful lies, it is based on a truth—the truth, acknowledged above, that sex in itself (apart from the excess and obsessions that have grown round it) is “normal” and “healthy,” and all the rest of it. The lie consists in the suggestion that any sexual act to which you are tempted at the moment is also healthy and normal. Now this, on any conceivable view, and quite apart from Christianity, must be nonsense. Surrender to all our desires obviously leads to impotence, disease, jealousies, lies, concealment, and everything that is the reverse of health, good humour, and frankness. For any happiness, even in this world, quite a lot of restraint is going to be necessary; so the claim made by every desire, when it is strong, to be healthy and reasonable, counts for nothing. Every sane and civilised man must have some set of principles by which he chooses to reject some of his desires and to permit others. One man does this on Christian principles, another on hygienic principles, another on sociological principles. The real conflict is not between Christianity and “nature,” but between Christian principle and other principles in the control of “nature.” For “nature” (in the sense of natural desire) will have to be controlled anyway, unless you are going to ruin your whole life. The Christian principles are, admittedly, stricter than the others; but then we think you will get help towards obeying them which you will not get towards obeying the others.

In the second place, many people are deterred from seriously attempting Christian chastity because they think (before trying) that it is impossible. But when a thing has to be attempted, one must never think about possibility or impossibility. Faced with an optional question in an examination paper, one considers whether one can do it or not: faced with a compulsory question, one must do the best one can. You may get some marks for a very imperfect answer: you will certainly get none for leaving the question alone. Not only in examinations but in war, in mountain climbing, in learning to skate, or swim, or ride a bicycle, even in fastening a stiff collar with cold fingers, people quite often do what seemed impossible before they did it. It is wonderful what you can do when you have to.

We may, indeed, be sure that perfect chastity—like perfect charity—will not be attained by any merely human efforts. You must ask for God’s help. Even when you have done so, it may seem to you for a long time that no help, or less help than you need, is being given. Never mind. After each failure, ask forgiveness, pick yourself up, and try again. Very often what God first helps us towards is not the virtue itself but just this power of always trying again. For however important chastity (or courage, or truthfulness, or any other virtue) may be, this process trains us in habits of the soul which are more important still. It cures our illusions about ourselves and teaches us to depend on God. We learn, on the one hand, that we cannot trust ourselves even in our best moments, and, on the other, that we need not despair even in our worst, for our failures are forgiven. The only fatal thing is to sit down content with anything less than perfection.

*Thirdly, people often misunderstand what psychology teaches about “repressions.” It teaches us that “repressed” sex is dangerous. But “repressed” is here a technical term: it does not mean “suppressed” in the sense of “denied” or “resisted.” A repressed desire or thought is one which has been thrust into the subconscious (usually at a very early age) and can now come before the mind only in a disguised and unrecognizable form. Repressed sexuality does not appear to the patient to be sexuality at all. When an adolescent or an adult is engaged in resisting a conscious desire, he is not dealing with a repression nor is he in the least danger of creating a repression. On the contrary, those who are seriously attempting chastity are more conscious, and soon know a great deal more about their own sexuality than anyone else. They come to know their desires as Wellington knew Napoleon, or as Sherlock Holmes knew Moriarty; as a rat-catcher knows rats or a plumber knows about leaky pipes. Virtue—even attempted virtue—brings light; indulgence brings fog.*

*Finally, though I have had to speak at some length about sex, I want to make it as clear as I possibly can that the center of Christian morality is not here. If anyone thinks that Christians regard unchastity as the supreme vice, he is quite wrong. The sins of the flesh are bad, but they are the least bad of all sins. All the worst pleasures are purely spiritual: the pleasure of putting other people in the wrong, of bossing and patronising and spoiling sport, and back-biting; the pleasures of power, of hatred. For there are two things inside me, competing with the human self which I must try to become. They are the Animal self, and the Diabolical self. The Diabolical self is the worse of the two. That is why a cold, self-righteous prig who goes regularly to church may be far nearer to hell than a prostitute. But of course, it is better to be neither.*