

A Biblical Understanding of Relationships:

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Introduction:

The online dictionary provided by Merriam-Webster defines a *relationship* as: **“the state of being related or interrelated, the relation connecting or binding participants in a relationship such as kinship, a state of affairs existing between those having relations or dealings, or a romantic attachment.”**¹ But to test all things² and avoid conformity to the ungodly patterns of this present evil age³, we need to take that very basic definition and add to it all the Bible teaches about human-to-human and human-to-GOD interactions to develop a thoroughly biblical understanding of relationships.

By allowing Scripture to shape our thinking instead of the corrupted culture that surrounds us, we will learn the correct answers to some critically important questions such as: “What does the Bible teach about friendships?”, “What commandments apply to relationships?”, “What is the purpose of every human-to-human relationship?”, “Does the Bible teach ‘courtship’ or ‘dating’?”, and much more!

¹ <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/relationship>

² 1 Thessalonians 5:21

³ Romans 12:2, Galatians 1:3-4

Eventually in our study, we will go back to the beginning of the Bible (to Genesis) to analyze what the Bible teaches about humanity's first **chronological** relationship. On the way, we will examine what JESUS taught about how life's relationships must always be **prioritized**. But first, we will consider what the Bible and personal **experience** have to do with every relationship that life brings our way.

Chapter 1: Relationships and Free Will

We were all born to a mother and a father, therefore the relationship with have with our parents should be our "first" relationship *experientially* speaking. And typically, even unbelieving parents faithfully care for their children through their most helpless years to keep them fed and protected. For this reason, Paul wrote: **If anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.**⁴

Also, we are born into families, with grandparents, and oftentimes with brothers and sisters, cousins, aunts, uncles, nephews, nieces, and so on. All these are the relationships we experience based (most commonly) on genetics. Therefore, these relationships do not rely on any choices that we have personally made.

Geography also has a role to play in many of our relationships, because we were all born into specific locations which make us part of a community, such as a neighborhood, a town, a city, a county, a state, and a country. However, as children, the community our family chooses to live in is not typically our decision. So, like our familial relationships, when we are young, our community relationships don't commonly involve our free will.

Meanwhile, as life progresses through time, we meet people in our community and we eventually develop friendships. But unlike the relationships we have with our families and our community in general, friendships most definitely involve our free will. Therefore, *because friendships require choices*, the Bible tells us who we can and who we can't be friends with.

In the book of James, it is written: **Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.**⁵

The term "**world**" in that passage is being used as a reference to people outside of the Church, who do not obey the Word of GOD. Essentially, there are two kingdoms in this life: GOD's kingdom, represented by the Church, which obediently submits to GOD's Word, and satan's kingdom called "the world", which routinely disobeys GOD's Word.

⁴ 1 Timothy 5:8

⁵ James 4:4

One way the world disobeys the Word of GOD is by knowingly or unknowingly worshipping other gods. And because the worship of pagan gods is the equivalent to spiritual adultery, that is why the passage referred to “adulterers and adulteresses”. But even if we don’t observe any overt pagan religious activity in another person, if we can see that they don’t obey GOD’s Word, we know that they are still of “the world”.

The fact is, all unbiblical behavior is pagan because some pagans worship false gods like self, money, pleasure, fame, or beauty, and other pagans worship more traditional, abominable false gods like artemis, baal, or chemosh. Therefore, no matter how old we are, if we are part of GOD’s kingdom, we are forbidden from becoming friends with the people of “the world” who disobey GOD’s Word. And the Bible explains we become GOD’s enemies when we even *desire* to be friends with those who refuse to obey His commandments!

For this reason, the very first Biblical commandment that refers to “friends” records: **“If your brother, the son of your mother, your son or your daughter, the wife of your bosom, or your friend who is as your own soul, secretly entices you, saying, ‘Let us go and serve other gods,’ which you have not known, neither you nor your fathers, of the gods of the people which are all around you, near to you or far off from you, from one end of the earth to the other end of the earth, you shall not consent to him or listen to him, nor shall your eye pity him, nor shall you spare him or conceal him; but you shall surely kill him; your hand shall be first against him to put him to death, and afterward the hand of all the people. And you shall stone him with stones until he dies, because he sought to entice you away from the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage. So all Israel shall hear and fear, and not again do such wickedness as this among you.”**⁶

This law was given to Israel by GOD to make sure no idolaters could rise up in their nation and lead the people of the LORD astray. And we can be sure that developing relationships with pagans that worship false gods like self, money, pleasure, fame, or beauty, or the other pagans that worship false gods like artemis, baal, or chemosh will still eventually lead to death and destruction. So, we must be able to say: **I have not sat with idolatrous mortals, nor will I go in with hypocrites. I have hated the assembly of evildoers, and will not sit with the wicked.**⁷

However, within the Church in the New Covenant, instead of putting people to death, we are to put them out of the Church and shun them unless or until they repent. Therefore, Paul explained: **I wrote to you in my epistle not to keep company with sexually immoral people. And I certainly meant not with the sexually immoral people of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or idolaters, since you ought to come out of the world**⁸. **But now I**

⁶ Deuteronomy 13:6-11

⁷ Psalms 26:4-5

⁸ Therefore “Come out from among them And be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, And I will receive you.” “I will be a Father to you, And you shall be My sons and daughters, Says the LORD Almighty.” Therefore,

have written to you not to keep company with anyone named a brother, who is sexually immoral, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner—not even to eat with such a person. For what have I to do with judging those also who are outside? Do you not judge those who are inside? But those who are outside God judges. Therefore “put away from yourselves the evil person.”⁹

Therefore, it doesn't matter if someone claims to be part of the Church, if they don't obey the Word of GOD, we are not to keep company with them. And these verses and many more must govern our choices when we decide who our friends are in life.

Meanwhile, when a child is still young, they do not yet know all that the Bible commands about how we must carefully **choose** our friends; and that is one very important reason GOD gives every child parents.

Chapter 2: The Parent-to-Child Relationship

The very first experiential relationship of life, and one of two foundational relationships that must be properly understood if we are ever to truly comprehend every **other** relationship in life, is the parental relationship.

To parents, GOD commanded: **“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one! You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.”¹⁰**

When considering the relationship between parents and their children, the first thing we should observe about this commandment is the fact that GOD expects parents to have a close communicative relationship with their children! They are to be with them in the morning when they rise up, at night when they lie down, during the day as they walk in the way, and in the evening when they sit in the house.

But all of this time spent together is to have an even higher purpose and a much higher priority. The purpose is contained in the verbs “teach”, “talk”, “bind”, and “write”; because all of those verbs refer to parents interweaving GOD's commandments into every aspect of their child's life. Also, because we recognize those verbs as part of what every effective educator

having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. 2 Corinthians 6:17-7:1

⁹ 1 Corinthians 5:9-13 (NKJV with translation repaired)

¹⁰ Deuteronomy 6:4-9

must do, we see that GOD appointed parents as the primary teachers of their children and commanded them to consider teaching them His commandments their primary parental duty!

So, parents must develop an authoritative *teaching* relationship with their children, they must consistently communicate with them about GOD's commandments, and they must consciously direct their conversations with their children back to GOD's covenant. Meanwhile, they must avoid the trap of loving their children more than they love GOD since GOD clearly made love for Him the highest priority within the commandment!

This means GOD is to be every parent's first love! Yes, along with non-parents, parents must love GOD with all their heart, all their soul, and all their strength. Then, out of love and devotion to GOD, they are to spend time with their children, constantly teaching them of His commandments at every opportunity in order to correct them and guide them into the same type of loving relationship they already have with GOD!

Or said another way, parents should base the relationship they have with their children on the pattern of the Tabernacle! GOD did not meet with Moses at the lampstand, the laver, or the altar of incense. No, GOD met with Moses at the Ark of the Covenant¹¹, and parents must metaphorically lead their children to that same Ark where the commandments were recorded, each and every day to teach them how to love GOD with all their heart, mind, soul, and strength.

If this pattern is not diligently followed, parents can idolize their children and become dangerously blind to the faults JESUS sees in them. Therefore, like JESUS they must think: **“As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten”**¹²; and they must make GOD's commandments the standard by which they evaluate their children. This is the educational and relational priority GOD has commanded all of His people to observe with their children!

However, many worldly-minded people in this age send their children off to other worldly-minded people to educate them! Eventually, their children will be prepared to 'succeed' on their way to hell, because they will know how to read and write (some of them, in multiple languages).

They will know how to do algebra, trigonometry, and calculus, but they won't know much about the first and greatest Commandment. They will even know the histories of many different ancient civilizations, but they won't know the history of devastation and destruction every generation of Israel faced when they turned away from GOD's commandments to follow the priorities of the pagan nations that surrounded them.

¹¹ Exodus 25:22

¹² Revelation 3:19

Yes, this world's educational and relational priorities infiltrating Christian families prove that the world is influencing most Christians more than the Bible in almost all areas of life. Meanwhile, the only way to reverse this tragedy is for parents to passionately realize the role they must play in the education and salvation of their children.

For this reason, we bow our knees before our heavenly Father and pray: May these words **“turn the hearts of the fathers to the children,’ and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.”**¹³ before it is too late.

Every day the sun rises over the eastern horizon, you have a little more time to sow the seed of GOD's Word into the hearts of your children. We don't know how much time we will have with them. Despite the statistics, tomorrow is not guaranteed. So, we must redeem the time and **“bring the [children] up in the training and admonition of the Lord”**¹⁴ with diligence, intention, and purpose.

About this, our Brother James also wrote in his epistle: **Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.**¹⁵ Souls cannot be saved by anything the world has to teach! Only GOD's Word can save a soul from eternal torment in the lake of fire! Meanwhile, parents are given the solemn duty in the Bible to be the primary teachers of GOD's soul-saving Word to their children.

Pastors teach the parents, parents teach the children, and many souls are saved. Yes, parents must pastor the flock that is their household, and take to heart what Paul wrote to his “son in the faith”, Timothy. Paul admonished his protégée about GOD's Word, saying: **Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all. Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.**¹⁶

Dear parents, this promise also applies to you! JESUS has enlisted you to help Him save the souls of your children simply by intentionally and consistently teaching them His Word, day and night! JESUS has done the hardest part for you and them already at the cross, but He has given you the extraordinarily important job of shepherding your child's heart in His ways.

One day your sons will leave your home, most likely to marry their wives, and your daughters will leave, most likely to marry their husbands. They will start new families of their own and

¹³ Luke 1:17

¹⁴ Ephesians 6:4

¹⁵ James 1:21

¹⁶ 1 Timothy 4:15-16

lead their children into GOD's holy Covenant. But until that time, you are responsible for their spiritual education and discipline.

Meanwhile, we must remember, that the world is only trying to keep their children alive for around 80 years or so, but we want our children to live forever in the presence of GOD! Similarly, the world is typically accepting of whatever path their children choose, but we understand the path to *eternal life* is narrow and difficult and few find it!

Therefore, while the world (and the worldly-minded believer) focuses exclusively on worldly things, we must focus on eternal things! We must teach the children the Covenant of eternal life, and train them to live out GOD's will here on earth as it is done in heaven. Then, as we educate them in GOD's commandments and how they should live out their love for GOD and their neighbor, we must also teach them about what GOD has said regarding friends!

Thus, when we inform them about that important topic, we must remember that it is written: **Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will dwell in them And walk among them. I will be their God, And they shall be My people." Therefore "Come out from among them And be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, And I will receive you." "I will be a Father to you, And you shall be My sons and daughters, Says the LORD Almighty."**¹⁷

GOD commands us to come out from the world and be separate! Therefore, we must raise our children with the understanding that we have been called out of the world, away from the unbelievers, the lawless, the darkness, those who follow belial, and those who participate in idolatry. Yes, we must not have fellowship, communion, accord, part, or agreement with those who disobey the Word of the LORD. Likewise, we must train up our children in this principle along with all of the rest of the instructions GOD has provided to us.

By the way, this also means that parents must carefully choose the communities they place their families into! Scripture declares: **Do not be deceived: "Evil companionship corrupts good morals."**¹⁸ Therefore, one of the fastest ways to demolish all of your efforts to guide your children in the ways of the LORD is to let them develop relationships with those who don't know, believe, and obey GOD's Word.

Every group of people you intentionally associate your family with must be tested by 2 Corinthians 6:14-18 and the rest of GOD's Word, because your child will be selecting their

¹⁷ 2 Corinthians 6:14-18

¹⁸ 1 Corinthians 15:33

friends (and eventually their spouse) from one of those groups you trained them to interact with! Yes, when parents make their choices of association, they are indirectly training their children.

Therefore, GOD commanded: **“Take heed to yourself, lest you make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land where you are going, lest it be a snare in your midst. But you shall destroy their altars, break their sacred pillars, and cut down their wooden images (for you shall worship no other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God), lest you make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land, and they play the harlot with their gods and make sacrifice to their gods, and one of them invites you and you eat of his sacrifice, and you take of his daughters for your sons, and his daughters play the harlot with their gods and make your sons play the harlot with their gods.”**¹⁹

Your children are watching who you choose to work with, eat with, enter into agreements with, and much more. They learn much more from your actions than they do from your words. Therefore, decide carefully who you associate your family with because those associations are part of how you **“bring the [children] up in the training and admonition of the Lord”**²⁰.

Meanwhile, while it is unlikely, it is possible that a case may arise in which a child may seek to develop relationships with people from outside of the communities you have carefully chosen to associate with. They might even desire to develop a friendship with a person from one of the doctrinally sound Christian communities you fellowship with, but you may notice that the person they are drawn to is not obedient to the Word of GOD.

If such a case arises, you might be concerned that you will lose your child’s affections if you put your foot down and insist that they no longer associate with certain people that disobey GOD’s Word. But be very careful, because you yourself disobey GOD’s Word if you compromise on this issue. As long as they are under your roof, they are your responsibility.

Joshua did not *hope* that his household would serve the LORD! No, Joshua was *sure* that would be how things would go in his house when he said: **“Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the river, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.”**²¹

Joshua was the Biblical head of his house, and that meant he was responsible before GOD to ensure that everyone who lived in his house served GOD faithfully without deviating to the right or to the left. And if we think of how GOD has commanded His Church to operate, we can

¹⁹ Exodus 34:12-16

²⁰ Ephesians 6:4

²¹ Joshua 24:15

see that a home should operate in a very similar manner. Therefore, Joshua was not only responsible to train up his house in GOD's ways, but he was also responsible to use *discipline* to maintain his role of authority, and ultimately GOD's authority in His home.

Thus, Proverbs teaches: **He who spares his rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him promptly.**²² Yes, temporal physical *discipline* is part of properly raising a child according to the Bible. But it is not done to make a child comply with the parent's will. No, discipline should be lovingly applied to ensure the child complies with *GOD's will* since it is, after all, "**His** admonition and instruction" we are to train our children up in!

Yes, because temporal physical discipline is meant to save a soul from hell, Proverbs explains: **Do not withhold correction from a child, for if you beat him with a rod, he will not die. You shall beat him with a rod, and deliver his soul from hell.**²³

The world does not agree with what these verses teach about discipline and parental authority, but please remember, the world does not believe in hell. So, any parent who is foolish enough to listen to the voice of the world over the voice of GOD's Word regarding how to raise their children will not believe that physical discipline should ever be employed.

Sadly, those parents will be physically disciplined by GOD Himself one day for their dangerous errors²⁴. But in the meantime, we must understand that raising children is all about eternity, and since the world does not understand that fact, they really should not be trusted when it comes to how parents should discipline their children.

The fact is: reasonable, loving, controlled, spirit-guided discipline is the method GOD has provided for establishing authority, and authority can be defined as "the right to teach, correct, and discipline". Therefore, because parents will be held accountable for how they taught, corrected, and even disciplined their children, parents who neglect any part of this duty will be held responsible for the dereliction of their Biblical duties. Parents will not be judged for the choices their children make when they leave the home, but they will be judged on how they raised them when they still were under their authority.

To maintain parental authority, GOD issued the 5th Commandment of the Covenant, and He even issued the death penalty for children who curse or strike their parents in Exodus, just after the 5th Commandment was given. Yes, shortly after GOD issued the Ten

²² Proverbs 13:24

²³ Proverbs 23:13-14

²⁴ "And that servant who knew his master's will, and did not prepare himself or do according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes." Luke 12:47

Commandments, He said: **“He who strikes his father or his mother shall surely be put to death.”²⁵ “And he who curses his father or his mother shall surely be put to death.”²⁶**

For this reason, the book of Proverbs warns: **“The eye that mocks his father, and scorns obedience to his mother, the ravens of the valley will pick it out, and the young eagles will eat it.”²⁷** Likewise, Paul lists “disobedience to parents” as a characteristic of people we must turn away from in 2nd Timothy.²⁸

So, unlike the culture of corruption around us rotting in moral death and decay, a culture that pumps out media portraying children being defiant and disobedient to their parents without consequence, the Church is taught to shun all those who disobey their parents until they repent, and even refuse admission into leadership for any man who cannot maintain control of his children.²⁹

Likewise, the Apostles taught us to consider parental discipline a standard feature in our relationship with GOD, by writing: **You have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: “My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; For whom the LORD loves He chastens, And scourges every son whom He receives.” If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons. Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness. Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.³⁰**

Truly Scripture makes it very plain that chastening is not only par for the course in parenting, it is also to be expected in the life of every Christian. But the purpose of discipline must always

²⁵ Exodus 21:15

²⁶ Exodus 21:17

²⁷ Proverbs 30:17

²⁸ 2 Timothy 3:2-5

²⁹ A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior, hospitable, able to teach; not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but gentle, not quarrelsome, not covetous; one who rules his own house well, having his children in submission with all reverence (for if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?); 1 Timothy 3:2-5; Let deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well. 1 Timothy 3:12; For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you— if a man is blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of dissipation or insubordination. Titus 1:5-6

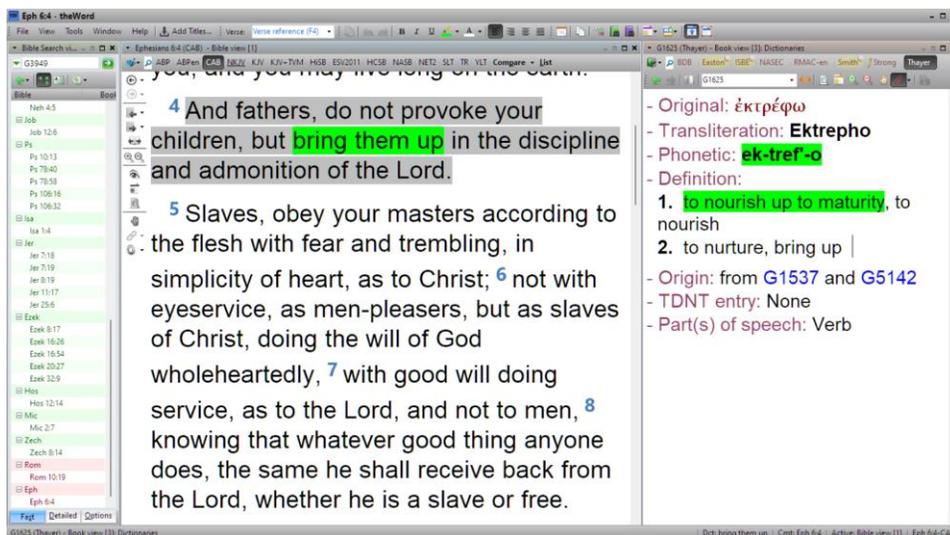
³⁰ Hebrews 12:5-11

be righteousness as defined by GOD, therefore GOD's will and GOD's Word must govern the relationship every parent has with their children.

Therefore, Paul admonished Fathers by writing: **“fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.”**³¹ and: **“Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged.”**³²

What can a father do that can provoke their child to wrath (or more literally translated “exasperate”³³ them) or cause them to become discouraged? Well, the answer is found just after the conjunction Paul used in that first passage.

After warning fathers not to “provoke” their children, Paul used the Greek equivalent of the word **“but”** or **“rather”** combined with a word that means “to nourish up to maturity”, which was translated as “bring them up”. And then Paul revealed that the “discipline and admonition of the LORD” was to be the standard the father must employ.



Imagine how frustrated or discouraged you would be if nothing you ever did was considered “right” or “well-pleasing” to your father. How would you feel if your father never said anything kind, gentle, loving, or encouraging to you?³⁴ How would you respond to a father who commonly corrected you for things even GOD would not correct? That would most certainly lead a child into exasperation and discouragement.

So, to counter that paternal tendency, Paul commanded fathers to make sure it was the LORD's discipline and admonition they were employing. Yes, when fathers make GOD's

³¹ Ephesians 6:4

³² Colossians 3:21

³³ par-org-id'-zo - to rouse to wrath, to provoke, to exasperate

³⁴ 1 Thessalonians 2:11

standards their standards, they won't correct their children over small things that don't matter, they won't nitpick, and they won't take out their frustrations on their family.

Also, Paul contrasted the Greek verb that means "provoke" against the Greek verb that means "nourish". And that second verb brings to mind the relationship a good shepherd will seek to have with his sheep.

Like GOD, a good shepherd desires to feed and nourish his sheep, building them up by leading them to greener pastures. Such a shepherd leads his sheep gently and patiently with a trusted staff of instruction. His sheep know: he cares for them, he desires for them to flourish, and they know his kind warm voice. The shepherd knows he has a rod to protect his sheep from external harm, and occasionally he corrects them if they refuse to hear his voice calling to them.

Meanwhile, the good shepherd knows it is always better to try to gently lead with the staff of teaching whenever possible, before employing the rod of correction. He knows the sheep will scatter if they are provoked too frequently by the overuse of the rod, so he reserves his rod of correction for times when it is absolutely necessary.

But a bad shepherd never takes the time to spiritually feed the sheep in his care. He never nourishes them in the discipline and instruction of the LORD. Instead, he generally ignores them and only interacts with them for selfish, petty, or worldly reasons. When it comes to a bad shepherd, the faults they find with the sheep are faults based on the shepherd's own personal standards and shortcomings. Of course, this exasperates and discourages the sheep. It leaves them malnourished, feeling alone, unprotected, unloved, and in peril.

Then, inevitably, a wolf in shepherd's clothing will come along and pay attention to the neglected, beat-down sheep. The wolf will tell those sheep what they want to hear and lead those sheep astray. But the evil wolves (who represent false teachers) would have a much more difficult time misleading the sheep (who represent the children) if the shepherds (who represent the fathers) would have taken the time to nourish their children in the Word of GOD each day.

Before your child's life is over, they *will* choose a shepherd. If you make JESUS your Shepherd, and intentionally lead your children each day just as JESUS leads you, you will dramatically increase the odds of your children choosing JESUS as their shepherd! But if you don't diligently show them an example of what an amazingly wonderful Shepherd JESUS is by first letting Him become your Shepherd, your children will be easy prey for the wolves of this present evil age.

Satan will certainly try to distract you from your mission with work, television, sports, hobbies, or spiritually unprofitable friendships, but you must resist him and realize the souls of your sheep hang in the balance. Your future and the future of your family are in your hands, so like

Joshua, take a stand and proclaim, “as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD”, and live each day with that priority at the top of your list!

Chapter 3: The Child-to-Parent Relationship

Adam and Eve were the only two human beings to enter into life without a childhood. Even JESUS experienced the beginning of His human life as a child, having a mother and an adopted father. So, just as every parent should look to JESUS to see how He would teach, correct, and even discipline His disciples to know how they should teach, correct, and discipline their children, every child should look to JESUS to see how they should treat their parents.

However, before we learn how JESUS treated His parents, we need to first understand that JESUS did not cease to be GOD when He was a child. On the day JESUS was born to Mary, JESUS still knew everything about who He was, why He came, how He would die, what He was going to face, and much, much more.

This is why the Apostle John described the birth of JESUS by writing: **In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.³⁵ And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.³⁶**

Truly, there was not a single day in our LORD’s life when He did not know all things, including what everyone on the earth He created was thinking. So, John also recorded: **Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many believed in His name when they saw the signs which He did. But Jesus did not commit Himself to them, because He knew all men, and had no need that anyone should testify of man, for He knew what was in man.³⁷**

Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John recorded many examples of JESUS knowing everything, including how He knew every detail about a Samaritan woman’s life, a woman He had just met for the first time in person at a well. So, after a very brief conversation with JESUS: **The woman then left her waterpot, went her way into the city, and said to the men, “Come, see a Man who told me all things that I ever did. Could this be the Christ?”³⁸**

Because JESUS knew that woman’s entire romantic relationship history, she realized He was very special, but what do you think people thought when they saw JESUS turn water into wine, command the storms and bring calm, cleanse lepers, give sight to the blind, heal the sick, and

³⁵ John 1:1-3

³⁶ John 1:14

³⁷ John 2:23-25

³⁸ John 4:28-29

raise the dead? People who witnessed JESUS do these things understood that JESUS has unlimited power to do anything He chooses to do!

Thus, after JESUS personally defeated death, and stood before His Apostles resurrected after three days in the tomb, Thomas perfectly summarized who they had been following for three and a half years when He said: **“My Lord and my God!”**³⁹

Yes, JESUS never stopped being omniscient, which means He never stopped knowing all things. And JESUS never stopped being omnipotent, which means that He never stopped having the power to do anything He desired to do. And the only omniscient, omnipotent being in the universe is GOD!

Meanwhile, GOD is not only one person. No, instead GOD is like a perfect, harmonious, eternal family. GOD the Father, GOD the Son, and GOD the HOLY SPIRIT have always existed together, they have always loved each other, they always agree on everything, and they have always been equally omniscient and omnipotent. And we need to understand that JESUS never stopped being GOD when we look at how He treated Joseph and Mary because it will help us understand even better how we should treat our parents.

Remembering that we are talking about GOD’s eternally existing, all-powerful, all-knowing Son who took on human flesh to save us from our sins, we are ready to read about how JESUS interacted with Joseph and Mary as a child.

Luke records: His parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover. And when He was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem according to the custom of the feast. When they had finished the days, as they returned, the Boy Jesus lingered behind in Jerusalem. And Joseph and His mother did not know it; but supposing Him to have been in the company, they went a day’s journey, and sought Him among their relatives and acquaintances.⁴⁰

So when they did not find Him, they returned to Jerusalem, seeking Him. Now so it was that after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers. So when they saw Him, they were amazed; and His mother said to Him, “Son, why have You done this to us? Look, Your father and I have sought You anxiously.”⁴¹

And He said to them, “Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father’s business?” But they did not understand the statement which He spoke to them.

³⁹ John 20:28

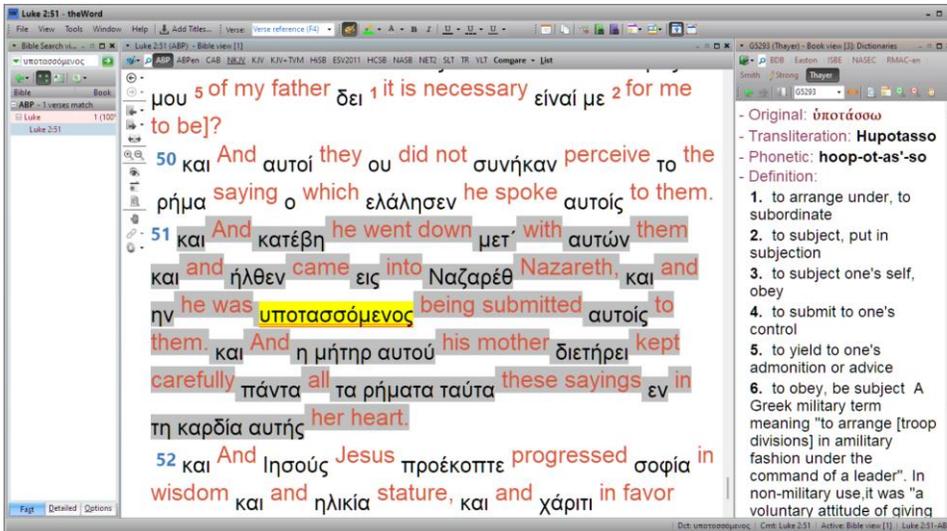
⁴⁰ Luke 2:41-44

⁴¹ Luke 2:45-48

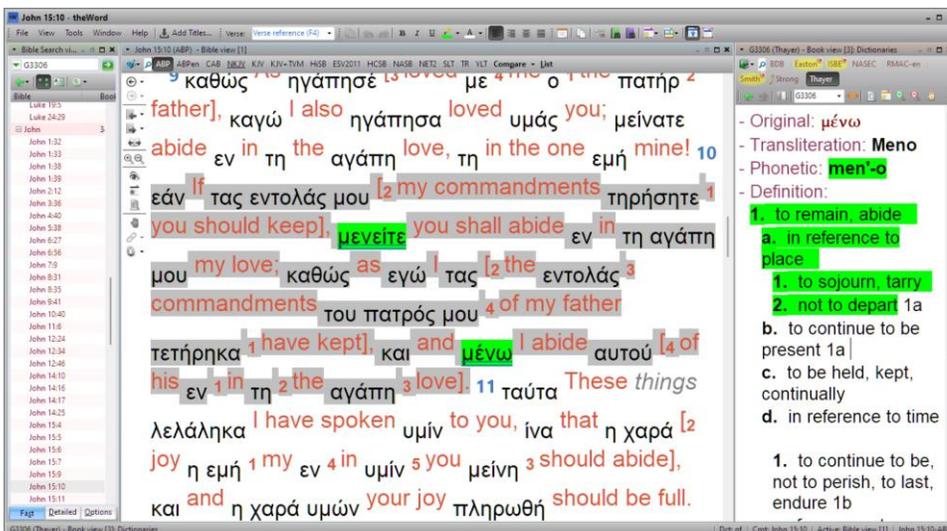
Then He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them, but His mother kept all these things in her heart.⁴²

Please notice, even at twelve years old, JESUS knew His Father’s business took place at the temple amidst the teachers. JESUS knew His Father was in Heaven, that His people needed to hear His “understanding” and His “answers”, and that He wanted to begin accomplishing His task, but Mary and Joseph did not yet understand.

Then, we need to note that Luke used an amazing Greek word as he ended that account, and that word is: **“hoopo-tas-só-menos”**.



The Greek word **“hoo-pot-as-só”** means: “to submit, to arrange under, to be in subjection to, to yield to, or to obey”. And the Greek word **“meno”** means: “to remain, abide, stay, or continue”.



⁴² Luke 2:49-51

So, we can see that Luke actually wrote that JESUS “**was continuously submitting**”⁴³ to Mary and Joseph as He returned to Nazareth with them. JESUS did not want to be in Nazareth, He wanted to be in the temple, His “**Father’s house**”⁴⁴, doing “**His Father’s Business**”⁴⁵! But He willingly submitted His will to the will of his earthly parents while He lived in their household because that is what the 5th Commandment requires of every child⁴⁶ unless sin would be the result.

Yes, the 5th Commandment of the Masoretic Text states: “**Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the LORD your God is giving you.**”⁴⁷ But the far more ancient Septuagint records this commandment as: “**Honor your father and your mother, that it may be well with you, and that you may live long on the good land, which the Lord your God gives to you.**”⁴⁸

GOD knew that things would only go “well” for the nation of Israel if the people kept His Commandments. If they turned from His Commandments, they would not live long on the “good” land⁴⁹ He was giving to them because He would be forced to punish them for their disobedience.

For this very reason, GOD warned: “**You shall therefore keep all My statutes and all My judgments, and perform them, that the land where I am bringing you to dwell may not vomit you out.**”⁵⁰

Meanwhile, GOD knew that they would need to be taught, corrected, and even disciplined to learn to keep His Commandments; and each generation would have to teach the next generation, or the foundation of their nation would be destroyed! Yes, the foundation of GOD’s throne is His Commandments, the foundation of the nation of Israel is GOD’s Commandments, and only those who keep His Commandments will live long on the good land. Therefore, just like the rest of the Commandments, the 5th Commandment relies on the rest of them to function! Truly, the 5th Commandment cannot be properly understood and upheld outside of the context of the other nine!

⁴³ ἡν υποτασσόμενος

⁴⁴ John 2:16

⁴⁵ Luke 2:49

⁴⁶ Unless sin would be the result, for example as in Leviticus 18:6 & 29. Children are to submit to their parents, but parents are to submit to GOD.

⁴⁷ Exodus 20:12

⁴⁸ Exodus 20:12 CAB

⁴⁹ Ephesians 6:3 uses the same word as the LXX reading of Exodus 20:12, and both should read “land”. “Earth” is a mistranslation because it is inconsistent with the full contextual reading of the commandment Paul was quoting.

⁵⁰ Leviticus 20:22

If a pagan, idolatrous, blaspheming, Sabbath-profaning parent quotes the 5th commandment in order to establish their authority with their child, does it carry the same weight as it would if a GOD-loving, idol-hating, blasphemy-hating, Sabbath-keeping parent quoted it? Obviously not!

When someone denies the eternal, foundational authority of GOD's first four Commandments, they diminish the authority of the 5th Commandment at the same time. And this is true because all of the Commandments were issued by the same Ultimate Authority at the same time, and written by His hand on the same holy tablets!



You see, the Commandments are all based on GOD's ultimate authority, and if someone *denies* GOD's authority while quoting GOD to establish their *own* authority, it actually defeats their argument. It is like sitting far out on a tree branch while at the same time sawing it off right next to the tree. So, parents need to remember that ***they must submit to GOD's authority first before they ask their children to submit to their authority.*** And that is why there are four very important Commandments before, and five very important Commandments after, Commandment number Five!

And this brings us to the next thing we must understand, which is: JESUS would never have obeyed Joseph or Mary if they had ordered Him to sin! He would have honored them, He would have shown them respect, and He would have spoken to them in a submissive way, but He would have submissively, patiently, and gently explained He could not do as they asked since His heavenly Father had already forbidden their request.

For example, if Mary commanded JESUS to bow to a foreign god, JESUS would have submissively refused. Or if Joseph commanded JESUS to take the LORD's name in vain, JESUS would have submissively refused. And this is because **all authority flows from GOD**, through the authorities He appoints; and when a lower authority tries to command us to disobey the Ultimate Authority (who is GOD), we must submissively refuse.

The Apostles gave us a great example of this principle in Acts, where Luke recorded Peter saying to the rulers, elders, scribes, and priests of Israel who had just commanded Peter and John not so speak about JESUS anymore: **“Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to**

you more than to God, you judge. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.”⁵¹

JESUS had commanded them to tell the world about Him and make disciples, but some of the most powerful men in Israel were commanding them to disobey JESUS. And when this conflict of authority occurred, Peter did not rebuke Israel’s leaders or try to overthrow them. No, he respectfully acknowledged their authority even while he explained that they had to obey GOD “more”, who had commanded them to speak.

Then, in the next chapter, when they tried to stop the Apostles from speaking about JESUS again, Peter and the other Apostles literally replied: **“It is necessary to obey God to a greater degree (or more) than men.”⁵²** So we can see that GOD must be obeyed first, above all other forms of authority, but we must show respect to the lesser authorities even when they contradict GOD. Meanwhile, after this encounter, Peter and his companions demonstrated what happens when obeying GOD conflicts with a sinful earthly authority; and the result was an unjust beating.

Yes, when earthly authorities refuse to submit to GOD, and they try to force us to disobey GOD, the righteous person will stay submitted to GOD no matter what consequences they face. But they never try to overthrow the evil earthly authority, or even treat them disrespectfully. No, they remain submissive and respectful, while they obey GOD above all else! And this means they will also face whatever unjust punishment they might receive with *joy* because they know it will bring favor with GOD!

Thus, even JESUS (during His earthly life) submitted to the authority of the parents He created! And Peter and the Apostles submitted to the authority of the elders, scribes, and priests, who unjustly beat them for their obedience to GOD! And this should help us see that submission is not optional, and those who resist authority are resisting the ordinances of GOD!

About this, Paul wrote: **Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves.**⁵³

Can you guess what the very first human “governing authority” GOD ever appointed was? If you guessed fathers and mothers, you are correct! Yes, every other form of divinely appointed earthly authority is patterned after the parental relationship! And children that never learn to

⁵¹ Acts 4:19-20

⁵² Acts 5:29 (Literally translated)

⁵³ Romans 13:1-2

submit to their parents will also have an extraordinarily hard time submitting to all other forms of earthly authority.

So, GOD commanded: **“He who strikes his father or his mother shall surely be put to death.”**⁵⁴ The Bible never records this punishment ever being applied to a single child, so we should ask ourselves “Why?”. There was a man who picked up sticks on the Sabbath, and he was stoned to death, so why was there never a record of one single child who struck his parents? The obvious answer is that all of the children knew that such an evil act would never be tolerated in a godly society!

The GOD who made us agreed with that conclusion because He said: **“If a man has a stubborn and rebellious son who will not obey the voice of his father or the voice of his mother, and who, when they have chastened him, will not heed them, “then his father and his mother shall take hold of him and bring him out to the elders of his city, to the gate of his city. “And they shall say to the elders of his city, ‘This son of ours is stubborn and rebellious; he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton and a drunkard.’ “Then all the men of his city shall stone him to death with stones; so you shall put away the evil from among you, and all Israel shall hear and fear.”**⁵⁵

The GOD who created the universe and stretched out the heavens like a cloth, and the GOD who wrote the genetic code in every living thing in six days and rested on the seventh - yes that GOD - declared that this punishment was just, right, and good; because all Israel would hear about it and fear, it would stop such “evil” from ever happening again.

And JESUS repeated this sentiment when He walked among us, saying: **“For God commanded, saying, ‘Honor your father and your mother’; and, ‘He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death.’ “But you say, ‘Whoever says to his father or mother, “Whatever profit you might have received from me is a gift to God”– ‘then he need not honor his father or mother.’ Thus you have made the commandment of God of no effect by your tradition.”**⁵⁶

JESUS quoted the Commandment regarding honoring parents **and** the death penalty for cursing them recorded in Exodus 21:17 and attributed both of them to GOD as part of His Commandments regarding parents. Yes, JESUS knows that a world where children curse and strike their parents is a world with a destroyed foundation.

So, to preserve the Commandments that are the foundation of His throne, His kingdom, and His people, GOD made the punishment for violating the 5th Commandment death! And we can

⁵⁴ Exodus 21:15

⁵⁵ Deuteronomy 21:18-21

⁵⁶ Matthew 15:4-6

be sure, that even while we don't stone rebellious children to death these days, JESUS will never allow them into His kingdom!

Paul lists those who are disobedient to their parents among other evil people who “deserve death”, in Romans, writing about: **...violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful; who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them.**⁵⁷ Yes, Paul thought children who were disobedient to their parents were “deserving of death”, but he understood that the death they will receive is the second death of hell.

JESUS and His servant Paul understood that the punishments of the first covenant were to teach the people about the *eternal* punishment every sinner will face if they refuse to repent. Therefore, they agreed with the passages that stated things like: **“He who curses his father or his mother shall surely be put to death.**⁵⁸ But they knew the wages of sin would be paid in eternity.

Therefore, when the Apostles read: **“Everyone who curses his father or his mother shall surely be put to death. He has cursed his father or his mother. His blood shall be upon him.”**⁵⁹ they would say: “Amen”! And we know this because the Apostles knew that the Scriptures commanded: **“ ‘Cursed is the one who treats his father or his mother with contempt.’ And all the people shall say, ‘Amen!’ ”**⁶⁰

However, they also taught: **“God has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead.”**⁶¹ **“Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts. Then each one’s praise will come from God.”**⁶²

Truly, the Apostles never disagreed with a single verse regarding the punishment of rebellious children, they simply understood that it was appointed to JESUS to render the final judgment on the day of His return. And they taught that expulsion from the Church was the maximum sentence they could impose until JESUS came to judge the world.⁶³

⁵⁷ Romans 1:30b-32

⁵⁸ Exodus 21:17

⁵⁹ Leviticus 20:9

⁶⁰ Deuteronomy 27:16

⁶¹ Acts 17:30-31

⁶² 1 Corinthians 4:5

⁶³ 1 Corinthians 5:11-13

So, now that we have learned how the KING of Kings and the LORD of Lords remained submitted to Mary and Joseph, and we have proven that submission to every appointed authority is not optional, we understand why Paul wrote: **“Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ‘Honor your father and mother,’ which is the first commandment with promise: ‘that it may be well with you and you may live long on the land.’”**⁶⁴ And: **“Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing to the Lord.”**⁶⁵

Beyond all doubt, the Apostles taught that children must submit to, honor, and obey their parents, and they taught that parents must bring up their children in the training and admonition of the LORD. But eventually, there must be a substantial modification in the relationship a child has with their parents.

JESUS explained: **“Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning ‘made them male and female,’ ‘and said, ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’? ‘So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.”**⁶⁶

Yes, eventually every child grows up, and then they **“leave their father and mother”**. Sometimes this departure is related to marriage, sometimes it is related to ministry, but even JESUS left the home of His parents when the time was right. Luke explains: **Now Jesus Himself began His ministry at about thirty years of age, being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph, the son of Heli...**⁶⁷

Also, Mark recorded: **As JESUS walked by the Sea of Galilee, He saw Simon and Andrew his brother casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. Then Jesus said to them, “Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men.” They immediately left their nets and followed Him. When He had gone a little farther from there, He saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who also were in the boat mending their nets. And immediately He called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants, and went after Him. Then they went into Capernaum, and immediately on the Sabbath He entered the synagogue and taught.**⁶⁸

⁶⁴ Ephesians 6:1-3 (Ephesians 6:3 uses the same word as the LXX reading of Exodus 20:12, and both should read “land”. “Earth” is a mistranslation because it is inconsistent with the full contextual reading of the commandment Paul was quoting.)

⁶⁵ Colossians 3:20

⁶⁶ Matthew 19:4-6

⁶⁷ Luke 3:23

⁶⁸ Mark 1:16-21

Truly, JESUS left His eternal heavenly home to enter the home of Mary and Joseph. Then He left the home of Mary and Joseph to begin His teaching ministry. And His disciples left the homes of their parents to follow JESUS and join Him on His mission to save the world!

Therefore, JESUS later explained to His disciples: **“Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My sake and the gospel’s, who shall not receive a hundredfold now in this time—houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions—and in the age to come, eternal life.”**⁶⁹

So, in some places, JESUS talked about children leaving the homes of their parents for ministry reasons, and in other places, He spoke about them leaving for marriage; but the LORD expected children to grow up and leave the homes of their parents to establish homes of their own. Thus, there are three phases in the life of every child, the **“receiving”** phase, the **“repeating”** phase, and the **“repaying”** phase.

During *the receiving phase*, the child receives love, food, shelter, clothing, instruction, correction, discipline, and every other thing that they need to grow into a mature adult physically, emotionally, and (above all) spiritually. And the purpose and measure of the success of *the receiving phase* are this: Does the child become an adult that loves GOD with all their heart, all their soul, and all their strength by knowing and keeping GOD’s Commandments?

Then, during *the repeating phase*, the adult becomes self-sufficient and supplies others with love, food, shelter, clothing, instruction, correction, discipline, and every other thing they need to grow into mature people physically, emotionally, and (above all) spiritually. And once again, it is paramount that *the repeating phase* is focused on loving GOD with all the heart, mind, soul, and strength by keeping His Commandments while leading others to do the same.

Some adults might experience their *repeating phase* in a ministry focused on spiritually discipling others who are not their physical children; as JESUS, Paul, and the Apostles demonstrated. Other adults experience their *repeating phase* in a ministry like the one their parents had, raising their own children into mature people physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Others might raise children *and* disciple adults *at the same time*. But in our *repeating phase*, we all must be teaching GOD’s Commandments to whatever flock GOD has assigned to us, for as long as they remain in our assigned flock.

Then, eventually, as the life-long *repeating phase* continues, a new final phase develops alongside *the repeating phase* called *the repaying phase*. And during this phase, when our

⁶⁹ Mark 10:29-30

parents (who once supported us) can no longer support themselves, we must seek to help them in repayment of the debt we owe them for the generous love they showed to us.

This *repaying phase* was what JESUS was referring to when He said: **“All too well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition. For Moses said, ‘Honor your father and your mother’; and, ‘He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death.’ But you say, ‘If a man says to his father or mother, “Whatever profit you might have received from me is Corban”—’ (that is, a gift to God), then you no longer let him do anything for his father or his mother, making the word of God of no effect through your tradition which you have handed down. And many such things you do.”**⁷⁰

The *repaying phase* was what JESUS had in mind when John described what JESUS said to him from the cross. John recalled: **When Jesus therefore saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing by, He said to His mother, “Woman, behold your son!” Then He said to the disciple, “Behold your mother!” And from that hour that disciple took her to his own home.**⁷¹

And *the repaying phase* was what Paul was discussing when he wrote: **Honor widows who are really widows. But if any widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn to show piety at home and to repay their parents; for this is good and acceptable before God.**⁷² In fact, it is from this passage we derived the name: “repaying phase”.

Meanwhile, after reviewing these passages, we can see that honoring our mother and father takes on a practical, financial aspect during *the repaying phase*. And we have witnessed earlier how submissive obedience was the primary way we honored our parents during *the receiving phase* of our childhood. But now we must understand that the primary way we honor our parents during *the repeating phase* of life is to love GOD with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength; even if they don’t!

For this reason, JESUS said: **“Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword. For I have come to ‘set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law’; and ‘a man’s enemies will be those of his own household.’ He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me.”**⁷³

Would JESUS ever teach His disciples to violate the 5th Commandment? Absolutely not! However, the principle we learned earlier about how **“we must obey GOD to a greater degree**

⁷⁰ Mark 7:9-13

⁷¹ John 19:26-27

⁷² 1 Timothy 5:3-4

⁷³ Matthew 10:34-38

than men” is the basis of some of the most challenging teachings JESUS presented about parents and their children in *the repeating phase* of life.

Did JESUS come to “set” young children in *the receiving phase* of life “against” their fathers and mothers? Certainly not! No, He was addressing how his adult followers would have parents turn against them for following JESUS as the MESSIAH of Israel during *the repeating phase* of life.

So, the truth is, when we are born again, we are adopted into a new family. And only when we understand this, can we comprehend the following passage. Matthew recorded: **While JESUS was still talking to the multitudes, behold, His mother and brothers stood outside, seeking to speak with Him. Then one said to Him, “Look, Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside, seeking to speak with You.” But He answered and said to the one who told Him, “Who is My mother and who are My brothers?” And He stretched out His hand toward His disciples and said, “Here are My mother and My brothers! “For whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister and mother.”⁷⁴**

This means we must honor our parents to obey the 5th Commandment, even in *the repeating phase* of life. However, when we are born again⁷⁵, we must honor our heavenly Father and His family first, even if that means that our earthly parents disagree with our faith. We still love our parents, treat them with respect, and repay them for the love they showed us as children, but we repeat and obey GOD’s commandments first and foremost, above all else.

You see, all of these relationships were designed around teaching and enforcing GOD’s Commandments! Parents are to teach the Commandments to their children and enforce obedience to them. Then, when the children grow up and have children of their own, they are to teach the Commandments to their children and enforce them! And this is why we call the second and longest phase of a person’s life *the repeating phase* because it is when we are to be repeating GOD’s commandments to others while *repeating* the pattern our parents were supposed to be following with us!

Similarly, governments, when functioning properly, are appointed to GOD to punish what He calls “evil” and reward what He calls “good”. Therefore, governments are technically also supposed to be *repeating* GOD’s Commandments and enforcing them.

For this reason, Paul wrote: **Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do**

⁷⁴ Matthew 12:46-50

⁷⁵ John 3:3, John 3:5-8, 1 Peter 1:23

you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same. For he is God’s minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God’s minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil. Therefore you must be subject, not only because of wrath but also for conscience’ sake. For because of this you also pay taxes, for they are God’s ministers attending continually to this very thing.⁷⁶

But this system has broken down. The foundations have been destroyed. Lawlessness has increased. The love of many has grown cold. People have exchanged the truth of GOD for a lie. Vileness has been exalted among men, and righteousness has been discarded. Those whom GOD appointed to teach His commandments, teach against His commandments. The authorities GOD raised up to enforce His commandments, enforce their own man-made ideas. Parents no longer base the relationships they have with their children on GOD’s Commandments. And governments no longer base the relationships they have with their citizens on GOD’s Commandments.

This satanic deception must end with us. We have been appointed by GOD for such a time as this to take a stand against this lawlessness; to teach GOD’s Commandments unceasingly to the flock GOD has entrusted to us, to obey His Commandments from the heart, and to make them known in this world.

Chapter 4: Rebuilding the Wall

Metaphorically speaking, you and I must imagine that we are in the position of Nehemiah. We must do our part in repairing the wall that protects GOD’s people from their evil adversary that seeks to steal, kill, and destroy.

That forgotten wall would have kept Adam and Eve safe from death and sin. And in their situation, their wall was much simpler. To them, GOD said: **“Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”**⁷⁷

“You shall not eat” of that one particular tree. That simple commandment was the wall GOD erected for Adam and Eve to protect them from sin, the wages of sin, and the power of satan. And the simplicity of their situation was recorded for our sakes so we could see that satan has no new schemes. He always attacks the walls GOD lovingly erected to protect us, to gain destructive power and deadly authority over our souls.

In the case of Adam and Eve, the attack began with: “Did GOD really say?”, it was followed by the lie that claimed: “You will not surely die!”, and it concluded with the wickedly deceitful

⁷⁶ Romans 13:1-6

⁷⁷ Genesis 2:16-17

proposition that GOD's Commandments are trying to keep us from something positive, but we can do what is right in our own eyes and replace GOD's judgments with our own.

Other times in history, satan has convinced GOD's people they can ignore and forget the protective walls the LORD erected regarding their relationships. So, the people of GOD entered into friendships, covenants, and marriages with their Commandment-breaking neighbors. And just as GOD clearly warned, those relationships led them down a broad, well-populated road that ended in destruction.

If we look at the LORD's Commandments like the protective walls of the City of GOD, we can understand the metaphorical concept of you and I becoming like Nehemiah in whatever spheres GOD has appointed us as governors. We may not be in authority over anyone but ourselves, or we may be in authority over our families, employees, or churches; but whatever sphere of authority GOD has appointed us over, we must make His Commandments our wall of protection, and we must diligently rebuild the protective wall that our enemy is constantly endeavoring to destroy.

Also, like Nehemiah, we must recognize that those who resist us as we rebuild the wall of GOD's Commandments around our lives are our enemies, and we must prepare to defend the wall that separates us from those enemies, even as we rebuild it!

Anyone who resists the Commandments of GOD is an enemy of GOD and a servant of satan, even if they pastor the largest church on earth, lead millions to come forward in stadiums around the globe, or have educational degrees from the most respected seminaries in the world.

We know this is true because, regarding Abraham -the father of all of the faithful- GOD said: **"I will make your descendants multiply as the stars of heaven; I will give to your descendants all these lands; and in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed; because Abraham obeyed My voice and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws."**⁷⁸

Yes, in the first book of the Bible, after recording the very first human sin when mankind broke one of GOD's Commandments and brought death into the world, the Bible records GOD blessing Abraham and establishing him as the father of all who would believe, because Abraham obeyed the Commandments of GOD.

Then, in the second book of the Bible, GOD chose another man, a descendant of Abraham named Moses, and said to him: **"Come up to Me on the mountain and be there; and I will give you tablets of stone, and the law and commandments which I have written, that you**

⁷⁸ Genesis 26:4-5

may teach them.”⁷⁹ Then, at Mount Sinai, GOD descended from heaven in the sight of the people and announced His Ten Commandments, proving once and for all time, GOD exists and His Commandments are the primary message He wants mankind to remember!

For this reason, in the third book of the Bible, GOD warned: **“If you do not obey Me, and do not observe all these commandments, and if you despise My statutes, or if your soul abhors My judgments, so that you do not perform all My commandments, but break My covenant, I also will do this to you: I will even appoint terror over you, wasting disease and fever which shall consume the eyes and cause sorrow of heart. And you shall sow your seed in vain, for your enemies shall eat it. I will set My face against you, and you shall be defeated by your enemies. Those who hate you shall reign over you, and you shall flee when no one pursues you.”**

“And after all this, if you do not obey Me, then I will punish you seven times more for your sins. I will break the pride of your power; I will make your heavens like iron and your earth like bronze. And your strength shall be spent in vain; for your land shall not yield its produce, nor shall the trees of the land yield their fruit.”

“Then, if you walk contrary to Me, and are not willing to obey Me, I will bring on you seven times more plagues, according to your sins. I will also send wild beasts among you, which shall rob you of your children, destroy your livestock, and make you few in number; and your highways shall be desolate.”

“And if by these things you are not reformed by Me, but walk contrary to Me, then I also will walk contrary to you, and I will punish you yet seven times for your sins. And I will bring a sword against you that will execute the vengeance of the covenant; when you are gathered together within your cities I will send pestilence among you; and you shall be delivered into the hand of the enemy. When I have cut off your supply of bread, ten women shall bake your bread in one oven, and they shall bring back your bread by weight, and you shall eat and not be satisfied.”

“And after all this, if you do not obey Me, but walk contrary to Me, then I also will walk contrary to you in fury; and I, even I, will chastise you seven times for your sins. You shall eat the flesh of your sons, and you shall eat the flesh of your daughters. I will destroy your high places, cut down your incense altars, and cast your carcasses on the lifeless forms of your idols; and My soul shall abhor you.”⁸⁰

Because of that very clear warning to all who would despise His Commandments, the last book of the Bible records GOD sending judgments in waves of sevens. Seven seals, seven trumpets,

⁷⁹ Exodus 24:12

⁸⁰ Leviticus 26:14-30

and seven bowls; all with increasing levels of sword, famine, pestilence, desolation, and destruction, while evil leaders war against the saints and overcome them.

Yes, GOD warned in the third book of the Bible how things would end for a world that was in rebellion against His Commandments! So, we must pay special attention, when, in the fifth book, **Abraham's descendant Moses declared: "Surely I have taught you statutes and judgments, just as the LORD my God commanded me, that you should act according to them in the land which you go to possess. ... Only take heed to yourself, and diligently keep yourself, lest you forget the things your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life. And teach them to your children and your grandchildren, especially concerning the day you stood before the LORD your God in Horeb, when the LORD said to me, 'Gather the people to Me, and I will let them hear My words, that they may learn to fear Me all the days they live on the earth, and that they may teach their children.'**"⁸¹

If we forget that GOD has revealed Himself to the world both at Mount Sinai and at the Sermon on the Mount, and both times He taught us to keep His Commandments, we (and our children) will be condemned with the rest of this doomed planet that does not "keep" His GOD's Commandments. And when you realize that the verb most commonly associated with GOD's Commandments is "**keep**", and you realize that satan is trying to steal them away from you, you begin to understand how you must fight this ancient spiritual war!

The verb "**keep**" first means we must "**know**" GOD's commandments! Then it means we must "**remember**", "**protect**", and "**obey**" them. Then it means we must "**pass them down**" so they are not forgotten by the next generation!

Moses understood this, so reminded the children of Israel he was appointed to shepherd: "**Then you came near and stood at the foot of the mountain, and the mountain burned with fire to the midst of heaven, with darkness, cloud, and thick darkness. And the LORD spoke to you out of the midst of the fire. You heard the sound of the words, but saw no form; you only heard a voice. So He declared to you His covenant which He commanded you to perform, the Ten Commandments; and He wrote them on two tablets of stone. And the LORD commanded me at that time to teach you statutes and judgments, that you might observe them in the land which you cross over to possess.**"⁸²

Like Nehemiah rebuilding the wall and reinforcing it, Moses established and constantly reinforced the Commandments of the LORD in the hearts of the people by repeating them and reminding the people to "**keep**" them. However, many of the children of Israel did not "**keep**"

⁸¹ Deuteronomy 4:5,9-10

⁸² Deuteronomy 4:11-14

those Commandments, so GOD rejected those who refused to remember, guard, and obey them.

Moses explained: **“This day the LORD your God commands you to observe these statutes and judgments; therefore you shall be careful to observe them with all your heart and with all your soul. Today you have proclaimed the LORD to be your God, and that you will walk in His ways and keep His statutes, His commandments, and His judgments, and that you will obey His voice. Also today the LORD has proclaimed you to be His special people, just as He promised you, that you should keep all His commandments.”**⁸³ And, he added: **“The LORD will establish you as a holy people to Himself, just as He has sworn to you, if you keep the commandments of the LORD your God and walk in His ways.”**⁸⁴

Yes, Moses explained to the people that the Commandments were the Covenant that bound them to the LORD as His special people. But like an unfaithful wife who violates the marriage covenant to commit adultery against her husband, Israel was unfaithful to the LORD their GOD. They trampled His covenant underfoot, so they faced the sword, the famine, and the pestilence GOD warned them about in Leviticus. After that, when they still refused to repent, they were turned over to their enemies, who were allowed to make war against them and overcome them.

Thus, the Scriptures explain: **As for man, his days are like grass; As a flower of the field, so he flourishes. For the wind passes over it, and it is gone, And its place remembers it no more. But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting On those who fear Him, And His righteousness to children’s children, To such as keep His covenant, And to those who remember His commandments to do them. The LORD has established His throne in heaven, And His kingdom rules over all.**⁸⁵

There are satanically inspired false teachers who foolishly claim some or all of the Commandments of GOD were only ever meant for the nation of Israel, but the Bible plainly teaches that GOD rules over all people, and Israel was called to display GOD’s righteous Commandments to all nations!

Thus, Israel is not mentioned, when Scripture declares: **Blessed is the man who fears the LORD, who delights greatly in His commandments. His descendants will be mighty on earth; The generation of the upright will be blessed.**⁸⁶

⁸³ Deuteronomy 26:16-18

⁸⁴ Deuteronomy 28:9

⁸⁵ Psalms 103:15-19

⁸⁶ Psalms 112:1-2

GOD is an impartial judge! He will not judge people of one nation differently from those of another nation. In fact, Peter declared: **“In truth, I perceive that God shows no partiality. But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him.”**⁸⁷

But this fact was easy to see long before the book of Acts because GOD’s Word records: **Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, For this is man’s all. For God will bring every work into judgment, Including every secret thing, Whether good or evil.**⁸⁸

Mankind’s purpose is to fear GOD and keep His Commandments according to the Holy Scriptures! So, it is no surprise that JESUS taught: **“If you want to enter into life, keep the commandments.”**⁸⁹

Meanwhile, more sophisticated false teachers try to act as if GOD’s commandments were somehow “replaced by love” in the New Covenant. So, we must remind such deceivers that JESUS said: **“He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him.”**⁹⁰

And when the false teachers try to deceive the world with satanic lies such as “unconditional love”, we must oppose them by asking: Have you not read that our Savior said: **“As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love. “If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love.”**⁹¹

Now, the deepest dungeons of deception contain false teachers who claim that JESUS was not speaking to His Church in those passages. No, these deceptive dispensational charlatans claim that Paul was the Apostle we must focus on. Meanwhile, our Brother Paul wrote: **Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing, but keeping the commandments of God is what matters.**⁹²

Yes, Paul fully agreed with the Apostle John, who explained: **Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He who says, “I know Him,” and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.**⁹³

And John understood that GOD’s Commandments were the very definition of love, so he taught: **By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His**

⁸⁷ Acts 10:34-35

⁸⁸ Ecclesiastes 12:13-14

⁸⁹ Matthew 19:17b

⁹⁰ John 14:21

⁹¹ John 15:9-10

⁹² 1 Corinthians 7:19

⁹³ 1 John 2:3-4

commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome.⁹⁴

Similarly, John wrote: **This is love, that we walk according to His commandments. This is the commandment, that as you have heard from the beginning, you should walk in it.⁹⁵** Like the rest of the Apostles, John knew GOD never changes! His Commandments are the epitome of perfection, and the line between light and darkness can never be moved.

So, in the last chapter of the last book of the Holy Bible, John recorded: **Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city.⁹⁶**

Meanwhile, when John taught so frequently about the Commandments of JESUS, he was simply fulfilling the Great Commission. Yes, Matthew plainly wrote: **Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe (or more literally “keep”) all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Amen.⁹⁷**

And those who truly understand the New Covenant, understand it is perfectly compatible with the Covenant Moses was given. Because they know only the tablets were changed, from stone to flesh, when the New Covenant was announced!

Yes, it is written: **“Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah– “not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the LORD. “But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.⁹⁸**

May we continue fulfilling the Great Commission by making disciples, while teaching them to keep all He has commanded. And in this way, we will rebuild the walls that have fallen down, and prepare a remnant that is ready for the return of the King!

Chapter 5: Life’s Most Important Relationship

⁹⁴ 1 John 5:2-3

⁹⁵ 2 John 1:6

⁹⁶ Revelation 22:14

⁹⁷ Matthew 28:18-20

⁹⁸ Jeremiah 31:31-33

Not long ago, in the chapter entitled: “The Parent-to-Child Relationship”, the second section of our discussion began by saying: “The very first experiential relationship of life, and one of two foundational relationships that must be properly understood if we are ever to truly comprehend every *other* relationship in life, is the parental relationship.”

Then that introduction was followed by the following passage: **“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one! You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.”**⁹⁹

Well, now that we have discussed the fact that the Parent-to-Child relationship must, above all else, be focused on teaching GOD’s Commandments to our children to rebuild a divine protective wall around our families, we are ready to discuss that *other* foundational relationship we must properly understand, to discover how that relationship is the subject of the first, chief, or greatest Commandment!

Using the Greek equivalent of those English words, JESUS answered the question: **“Which is the first commandment of all?”**: by replying: **“The first of all the commandments is: ‘Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is one. And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ This is the first commandment.”**¹⁰⁰

In that passage, the Greek word “*pro'-tos*” was translated as “*first*”, but a clearer translation would be “*foremost*”, “*chief*”, or “*greatest*”. And JESUS quoted that familiar passage of the Bible that best describes the most important and foundational relationship of all, and that must be our relationship with GOD! You see, the words: “*first*”, “*foremost*”, “*chief*”, and “*greatest*” are statements of priority, and the secret to keeping the “*greatest*” commandment is to keep our priorities in the right order.

The Britannica Dictionary defines the word “*priority*” as: **“something that is more important than other things and that needs to be done or dealt with first”**¹⁰¹. And this means that our relationship with GOD must come first, before every other relationship in life! In fact, setting proper priorities is actually the real subject of the Commandment, and the purpose of the introduction: **“Hear O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is one”**.

⁹⁹ Deuteronomy 6:4-9

¹⁰⁰ Mark 12:29-30

¹⁰¹ <https://www.britannica.com/dictionary/priority>

You see, the Hebrew word translated in that statement into English as “one” is: “ekh-awd”, and that is the same word used in Genesis chapter 1, where it is written: **“God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. So the evening and the morning were the first day.”**¹⁰²

Yes, both the Hebrew and the Greek word we translate as “first” in Genesis chapter 1 were used in Deuteronomy in what JESUS called “**the First Commandment**”. So, we can contextually read that passage to say: **“Here O Israel, the LORD our GOD, the LORD is first, and you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.”**¹⁰³

Doesn't it help us remember and understand the passage that JESUS called “**the first Commandment**” when we see that, based on our most common translations of Genesis chapter 1, the word “first” can be included in Deuteronomy 6:4-9? Obviously, the command was to love GOD with all the heart, soul, mind, and strength, which meant we must love Him “first” above all else!

GOD alone is perfect, holy, eternally just, entirely pure, unfathomably wise, magnificently glorious, and beautiful beyond description! Not one truly beautiful thing exists that GOD did not create, and every lovely thing only exists because GOD decided to fashion it!

Every pleasant thing you have ever experienced came from GOD, and James explains: **Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning. Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures.**¹⁰⁴ So, instead of loving the things GOD made more than we love GOD, we must love GOD first, above all else, since He is the source of every lovely thing!

How foolish would it be to love a gift that your parent gave you more than you loved your parent? If the gift is good, the source of the gift is naturally better! And the truth is, GOD is better than any gift He has ever given mankind! So, GOD deserves the firstfruits of all of the love we are capable of producing!

This does not mean that we will not love other people in our lives, but it means we will love GOD **first**, above all else. Then we will show our love to others in the ways that GOD has taught us to show love, which is through His Commandments! Therefore, John wrote: **By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments.**

¹⁰² Genesis 1:5

¹⁰³ Mark 12:29-30

¹⁰⁴ James 1:17-18

For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome.¹⁰⁵

GOD's Commandments are the DNA of true, lasting, rational, eternal love. We love GOD by having no other gods besides Him, by never bowing to a graven image, by never taking His name in vain, by keeping His Sabbath holy by resting on the seventh day, by honoring the parents He gave us, by respecting His image imprinted on mankind by detesting murder, by honoring the sacred union of a husband and wife in marriage as GOD created it and avoiding all romantic intimacy outside of marriage, by never stealing what GOD has not given us, by never bearing false witness against our neighbor who was created in GOD's image, and by not coveting the things GOD has not supplied to us, but by instead being grateful for all He has provided. Truly, by obeying these commandments in love for GOD, we also love our neighbor.

Meanwhile, since GOD is our Creator, Provider, Lawgiver, Protector, and Judge, how much sense would it make to put Him second or third in our lives? Can a parent, spouse, or friend save us from hell? Can they evaluate all our actions and decide where we will spend eternity? Most certainly not! No one can do that but GOD!

This leads us to the second reason we must put GOD first in our lives, and that is because GOD is the Judge, and all sin must eventually be punished! Either we repent of our sins and decide to keep GOD's Commandments so the blood of JESUS will wipe away all our sins, or we will continue sinning until judgment day and receive the wages of sin which are the second death of hell. The choice is ours, but JESUS died so every descendant of Adam can be forgiven when they repent and follow Him in love and obedience.

Meanwhile, when we understand that GOD will judge all sin impartially, we will obey the verse that commands: **The LORD of hosts, Him you shall hallow; Let Him be your fear, And let Him be your dread.**¹⁰⁶ The two most powerful motivators in every person's life are love and fear! And Scripture teaches that GOD must occupy the number one spot in *both* categories for every saint!

Our first or primary love must be GOD, and our first or primary fear must also be GOD. Only by allowing GOD to be first in *both* of those categories will we avoid all of the snares of the devil, and serve GOD through every test that comes our way.

Yes, Peter explained: **If you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay here in fear; knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless**

¹⁰⁵ 1 John 5:2-3

¹⁰⁶ Isaiah 8:13

conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.¹⁰⁷

What do you call someone who both loves GOD above all else *and* fears GOD above all else? Well, Scripture would call such a person a *servant* of GOD! So, like the Apostles who frequently introduced themselves as servants of GOD¹⁰⁸, we should think in the same way!

Yes, Peter, James, Paul, John, Jude, David, Moses, and many other men and women of GOD called themselves GOD's servants! For example, the final Book of the Bible begins with the words: **The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants—things which must shortly take place. And He sent and signified it by His angel to His servant John.¹⁰⁹**

So, the Book of Revelation was written by GOD's "servant" John to the rest of GOD's "servants" to explain to them what would shortly take place. And the final chapter of the book repeats this, by recording: **The Lord God of the holy prophets sent His angel to show His servants the things which must shortly take place.¹¹⁰** Sadly, those who are not truly GOD's servants seem incapable of understanding the Book of Revelation. But GOD's true "servants" who keep the Commandments of GOD and the faith of JESUS can easily comprehend the message of the book!

Likewise, the Book also makes it clear that only GOD's "servants" will be protected as the plagues of Revelation unfold, by stating: **"Do not harm the earth, the sea, or the trees till we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads."¹¹¹** Simply being a "believer" will not protect someone from the plagues! No, only those who are considered "servants" of GOD will be sealed!

Therefore, Paul wrote about our salvation in JESUS saying: **But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life.¹¹²** And in another place, he asked: **Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.¹¹³**

¹⁰⁷ 1 Peter 1:17-19

¹⁰⁸ 2 Peter 1:1, James 1:1, Titus 1:1, Philippians 1:1, Romans 1:1, Jude 1:1

¹⁰⁹ Revelation 1:1

¹¹⁰ Revelation 22:6

¹¹¹ Revelation 7:3

¹¹² Romans 6:22

¹¹³ 1 Corinthians 6:19-20

In many different ways, the Apostles taught us to seek to “please” the LORD in all things! Yes, not only did Paul and his fellow Apostles live as “servants” of JESUS, Paul wrote: **Finally then, brethren, we urge and exhort in the Lord Jesus that you should abound more and more, just as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God; for you know what commandments we gave you through the Lord Jesus.**¹¹⁴

Oftentimes in life, we are tempted to live to please ourselves, and occasionally we are tempted to live to please other people, but the Bible plainly teaches that ***we must live our lives to please GOD!***

At one time, we did not know GOD, we did not serve GOD, and we walked in ways that were not pleasing to GOD. But when we repented of our sins and recognized that we needed JESUS to save us and cleanse us from the guilt we earned by violating His Commandments, we left that worldly thinking behind to walk a new path characterized by obedience to GOD.

Therefore, Paul reminded Titus: **For we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another.**¹¹⁵ And Peter explained: **For you were like sheep going astray, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.**¹¹⁶

Sadly, however, many people who call themselves Christians still live like the world around them, “serving only themselves” without fear, pleasing only themselves, and concerning themselves more with what other people think of them than what GOD has commanded. Or, in other words, they live in disobedience to the greatest Commandment, and put GOD second, third, or even last.

About these self-deceived, false Christians, Jude warns: **These are spots in your love feasts, while they feast with you without fear, serving only themselves. They are clouds without water, carried about by the winds; late autumn trees without fruit, twice dead, pulled up by the roots.**¹¹⁷

Those who fear the LORD will serve the LORD, those who do not fear GOD, will serve themselves. Jude made this clear. But Paul did also, by writing: **Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we**

¹¹⁴ 1 Thessalonians 4:1-2

¹¹⁵ Titus 3:3

¹¹⁶ 1 Peter 2:25

¹¹⁷ Jude 1:12

persuade men; but we are well known to God, and I also trust are well known in your consciences.¹¹⁸

What target are you **“aiming”** your life towards? What is your primary goal in life? Is it to be successful, famous, happy, or admired by others? If so, those things have become idols in your life! On the other hand, if your primary goal in life is to live in a way that is pleasing to the LORD, only then can you say that JESUS is your LORD and your GOD!

To a Christian, success is found in pleasing the LORD! To the Christian, the only person we should hope really knows our name is JESUS! To a Christian, our happiness must be found in making JESUS happy! And our Savior taught us to seek praise from GOD, not men!

Yes, JESUS said: **“How can you believe, who receive honor from one another, and do not seek the honor that comes from the only God?”¹¹⁹** And Paul wrote: **Whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ.¹²⁰**

Paul also explained: **For this reason we also... do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of GOD.¹²¹**

And Paul exhorted Timothy by writing: **You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier.¹²²**

If Adam would have kept his priorities in the right order, would he have eaten the forbidden fruit when Eve gave it to him in Genesis 3:6? Certainly not! His love for GOD and the fear of the LORD would have kept him away from that fruit.

Similarly, if Solomon would have kept his priorities in the right order, would he have allowed his many wives to lead him into sin in 1 Kings 11:4? Certainly not! His love for GOD and the fear of the LORD would have led him away from all forms of idolatry! You see, they both failed because they did not love the LORD their GOD first (with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength) and fear sinning against Him!

About this, JESUS warned: **“He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does**

¹¹⁸ 2 Corinthians 5:9-11

¹¹⁹ John 5:44

¹²⁰ Colossians 3:23-24

¹²¹ Colossians 1:9-10

¹²² 2 Timothy 2:3-4

not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it.”¹²³

When any other relationship becomes more important to us than our relationship with GOD, it means we are violating the first commandment by not loving GOD first, above all others. And if we love or fear anyone more than we love or fear GOD, we will cease to be servants of GOD and become servants of someone else. Also, because this can happen for selfish reasons, JESUS mentions losing our earthly temporal lives to find true, eternal life in Him.

Likewise, in another place, JESUS said: **“If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple. For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has enough to finish it– lest, after he has laid the foundation, and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, ‘This man began to build and was not able to finish.’ Or what king, going to make war against another king, does not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is still a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks conditions of peace. So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple.”¹²⁴**

The cost of becoming a real “servant” of JESUS is putting Him first in all things! And the word translated in this passage as “**hate**” can also refer to “assigning a lesser value to someone or something in comparison to the value placed on someone or something else”.

For example, the same Greek word was used to describe how Jacob felt about Leah, in Genesis. There it is written: **Then Jacob also went in to Rachel, and he also loved Rachel more than Leah. And he served with Laban still another seven years. When the LORD saw that Leah was unloved, He opened her womb; but Rachel was barren.**¹²⁵

Verse thirty plainly said that Jacob “**loved**” Rachel more than Leah, but verse 31 used the same Greek word “**mis-eh'-o**” that JESUS used which translators rendered into English as “**hate**” in Luke 14 and “**unloved**” in Genesis 29. So, in certain contexts, the word “**mis-eh'-o**” means to love much less than something else.

Therefore, every true “servant” of JESUS must love Him much more than anyone or anything else, including their own life! They must love Him with all their heart, all their soul, all their

¹²³ Matthew 10:37-39

¹²⁴ Luke 14:26-33

¹²⁵ Genesis 29:30-31

mind, and all their strength; and by doing this they will obey the first and greatest Commandment!

And once we understand that ultimate commandment, we can understand that every other relationship in life must comply with the Biblical priority to keep GOD first! Parents must keep GOD first, by teaching His Commandments to their children. Children must keep GOD first by honoring their parents and obeying the Commandments of GOD their parents were instructed to teach them. Governments are to keep GOD first by enforcing GOD's just and righteous Commandments in society and punishing those who violate them. Citizens are to keep GOD first by submitting to the governing authorities whom GOD appointed to enforce His Commandments. And Friends are to keep GOD first by only establishing friendships with those who also keep GOD's Commandments.

As our Creator, Savior, Lawgiver, Judge, and LORD, JESUS CHRIST must be the head of every person, every human organization, every relationship, and especially every family. And only by keeping JESUS at the head of all things as our ultimate authority, do we keep Him "first" and "love Him by keeping His Commandments"!

But because time marches on and children grow up to become adults, transitions to this general order of relationships occur, such as the stages of life we discussed earlier. And for many people, life's progression eventually leads to marriage.

Chapter 6: Life's Second Most Important Decision

Obviously, the decision to put GOD first in our hearts is life's most important decision, but not many decisions can interfere with our relationship with GOD more than choosing the wrong spouse! If "bad company corrupts good morals"¹²⁶ (and it does), what will happen to a person's morals if they share nearly every moment of the rest of their life with that bad company?

Before Solomon was led astray by his pagan wives¹²⁷, he wrote: **A virtuous woman is a crown to her husband, but as a worm in wood, so a bad woman destroys her husband.**¹²⁸ Sadly he did not listen to the wisdom GOD gave him, and he was destroyed by his wives.

Before that destruction came upon him, Solomon also wrote: **The lips of an immoral woman drip honey, and her mouth is smoother than oil; but in the end she is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword. Her feet go down to death, her steps lay hold of hell.**¹²⁹

Obviously, immoral men are just as dangerous as immoral women, and righteous people need to flee from all immoral people like Joseph fled from Potiphar's wife!

¹²⁶ 1 Corinthians 15:33

¹²⁷ 1 Kings 11:4

¹²⁸ Proverbs 12:4 CAB

¹²⁹ Proverbs 5:3-5

Therefore, several passages in the Bible are devoted to warning GOD's people (and especially young men) how to avoid the eternal dangers of immoral people of the opposite gender who do not practice righteousness.

Yes, Scripture warns of women who wear: **“the attire of a harlot”**¹³⁰. It warns against women who are **“fickle and rebellious”**¹³¹. It warns against women who show physical affection to men who are not their husbands, such as **“she caught him, and kissed him”**¹³². And these warnings obviously work both ways, so ladies should flee from men who dress immodestly, who are fickle and rebellious, and who desire to show physical affection to women who are not their wives!

With all of this in mind, you can be sure that marriage is life's second most important decision. So, how do we keep GOD as our top priority even while we are considering the first human-to-human relationship ever mentioned in the Bible? Well, we must learn what GOD has commanded regarding all aspects of romantic love and marriage, beginning with what sort of spouse GOD permits His servants to marry.

As we have already learned, the Bible commands: **Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: “I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people.” Therefore “Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, And I will receive you.” “I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, Says the LORD Almighty.”**¹³³ Clearly, GOD's servants are not permitted to even befriend people who do not obey the Word of GOD! We must “come out from among them and be separate”.

But how can we spot if someone walks in the darkness of lawlessness, unbelief, or idolatry? How can we know if we should have fellowship with any given person? Well, JESUS said: **“You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles? “Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Therefore by their fruits you will know them. Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your**

¹³⁰ Proverbs 7:10

¹³¹ Proverbs 7:11 CAB

¹³² Proverbs 7:13 CAB

¹³³ 2 Corinthians 6:14-18

name?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’”¹³⁴

When JESUS spoke about “fruit” in that passage, it was a metaphor for “works”.¹³⁵ Just as JESUS “judges everyone impartially by their works”¹³⁶ (as seen in Revelation chapters 2 and 3), we must evaluate people by the works that they do. We must consider: Do their works demonstrate that they are obedient to GOD’s Word, or do their works demonstrate disobedience? The same JESUS who will quote Psalm 6:8 and send all who work lawlessness away from His Kingdom, also said: **“My mother and My brothers are these who hear the word of God and do it.”**¹³⁷ Similarly, JESUS said: **“You are My friends if you do whatever I command you.”**¹³⁸

JESUS always uses His Commandments found in His holy Word to determine who His true friends and family are, and we must do likewise! So, we must not ever even think of marrying someone who does not know, believe, and obey all of GOD’s commandments, let alone consider befriending them!

However, the only way to know if someone knows, believes, and obeys all of GOD’s commandments is to spend time with them as a Brother or Sister in the LORD, walking in the Way of Righteousness together before romance/marriage is ever considered. If you come upon a tree in the winter when its leaves have fallen to the ground, or in the spring when the branches are only beginning to bring forth the budding of life, how can you truly know if the tree bears good fruit?

We must evaluate the fruit of a tree by watching it for a year or two; observing it through all the seasons of life. Also, it is important (if that tree is metaphorically representing a person) that we don’t let the tree know we are evaluating its fruit. After all, immature fruit is easy to produce for a short time, but mature fruit is the only fruit that will stand the test of time. And mature fruit is the kind that is consistently produced when no one is looking, season after season, by those who put GOD first, even when times get tough.

¹³⁴ Matthew 7:16-23

¹³⁵ “Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance...” Matthew 3:8

“Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance...” Luke 3:8

“...they should repent, turn to God, and do works worthy of repentance.” Acts 26:20

(ax'-ee-os which means “worthy of” was used in each passage, followed by the Greek word for repentance. But Paul wrote of “works” while John spoke of “fruit”. Plus, John described the obedient works he was referring to as “fruit”. Thus, by using the same phrases while exchanging the word, and examining the contexts of the metaphorical fruit passages, we see fruit is a metaphor for works)

¹³⁶ 1 Peter 1:17

¹³⁷ Luke 8:21

¹³⁸ John 15:14

Thus, in the Bible, when righteous men like Joseph and righteous women like Mary were considering marriage, they spent years watching one another's choices before making life's second most important decision. In fact, that is a big part of what the word "betrothed" in this next passage is referring to.

Matthew records: **Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit.**¹³⁹ The Greek word translated as "betrothed" is "mnace-tyoo'-o", which means "to promise". You can be sure that *before* Joseph and Mary promised themselves to each other, they attended the same synagogue with their families for many years. They both knew the other loved GOD with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength through direct observations. Then, only *after* they saw each other consistently choosing to obey GOD and shun evil, did they enter into a *promise* to marry.

Meanwhile, betrothal involves a promise of faithfulness, and then during the betrothal, a bride and a husband *continue* to examine the one they are promised to, making sure they will be faithful to the lifelong, sacred covenant they are considering. But until the betrothal ends successfully in marriage; they do not "come together" physically or romantically in any way. Therefore, they can easily end the betrothal if unfaithfulness occurs, because all they have shared to that point was a promise. This is very important to remember: prior to marriage, a promise is all a couple should give to one another!

Meanwhile, any unfaithfulness to their betrothed is grounds to righteously "**put away**" or literally "**set free**" the other person from their promise. Similarly, unfaithfulness to GOD by breaking His Commandments would also be a legitimate reason to end a betrothal.

Thus, Scripture explains: **Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit. Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly. But while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins."**¹⁴⁰

Why did Joseph consider "putting away" Mary before he knew of the miracle of the MESSIAH's conception? If Mary was a sexually immoral fornicator, Joseph did not want to marry such a sinner. No, as a righteous man, Joseph only wanted to marry a righteous woman.

¹³⁹ Matthew 1:18

¹⁴⁰ Matthew 1:18-21

But why did Joseph want to put her away “secretly”? Because the entire community of GOD-fearing people they lived among and went to synagogue with each Sabbath knew of their betrothal. Therefore, ending the betrothal in a public way would have openly humiliated Mary. But once the angel assured Joseph that Mary had indeed been faithful to GOD and to him, Joseph valiantly shared in the inevitable but unjust shaming Mary was to face at the hands of all those who refused to believe the origins of her miraculous Child.

Neither Joseph nor Mary would have ever considered entering into a lifelong covenant of marriage with a person who did not know, believe, and obey GOD’s Word, and neither will JESUS! No, JESUS is currently betrothed to His Church, but the marriage does not occur until Revelation chapter 19. So, until then, JESUS is watching and testing His Bride to see if she will be faithful.

Meanwhile, all those who are betrothed to JESUS who are unfaithful by willfully violating His Commandments will have their lampstand taken away, He will come upon them suddenly like a thief in the night when they are not ready, He will blot out their names from His book of life, and He will vomit them out of His mouth!

Yes, JESUS warned several churches He would end His betrothal to them in these ways because of their unfaithfulness, and this teaches us how careful we must be when we are making the second most important decision in life. JESUS is watching every member of His Church, testing them for years, deciding if He will eternally yoke to them in marriage. So, how careful should every follower of CHRIST be when considering marriage?

Even though GOD has said: **“It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him.”**¹⁴¹; through Paul, GOD has also warned: **Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be loosed. Are you loosed from a wife? Do not seek a wife. But even if you do marry, you have not sinned; and if a virgin marries, she has not sinned. Nevertheless such will have trouble in the flesh, but I would spare you.**¹⁴²

Marriage is an amazing blessing, and the only divinely authorized way for human life to continue, but it can be challenging to align the wills of two people completely on every subject, every day, for the rest of their lives. We will see later how GOD addresses that serious issue, but it is worth noting that we must not allow an internal desire to experience the joys of marriage to trick us into marrying the wrong person, marrying too soon, or marrying when that is not GOD’s plan for our lives.

The freedom to sinlessly end a betrothal-type relationship ends when both bride and groom say “I do” on their wedding day. Therefore, JESUS said: **“Whoever divorces his wife, except for**

¹⁴¹ Genesis 2:18

¹⁴² 1 Corinthians 7:27-28

sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery.” Then His disciples said to Him: “If such is the case of the man with his wife, it is better not to marry.”¹⁴³ Marriage is a life-long commitment, but because of bad influences, divorce, and adultery, marriage can sometimes lead to consequences that last for eternity!

Technically, divorce is only permissible before GOD when a spouse has committed sexual immorality, but abandonment by an unbeliever can also end a marriage, according to Paul. He explained to new believers, who, after coming to repentance, found themselves married to unbelievers: **But to the rest I, not the Lord, say: If any brother has a wife who does not believe, and she is willing to live with him, let him not divorce her. And a woman who has a husband who does not believe, if he is willing to live with her, let her not divorce him.**¹⁴⁴

Then Paul summarized that principle by saying: **Brethren, let each one remain with God in that state in which he was called.**¹⁴⁵ So, Christians are not permitted to divorce their unbelieving spouses, because they should know from the Scriptures that “GOD hates divorce”¹⁴⁶.

However, Paul went on to explain: **But if the unbeliever departs, let him depart; a brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases. But God has called us to peace.**¹⁴⁷ In this way, abandonment by an unbeliever can sever the marital responsibilities Paul spoke of when he wrote: **Let the husband render to his wife the affection due her, and likewise also the wife to her husband. The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. And likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. Do not deprive one another except with consent for a time, that you may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again so that Satan does not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.**¹⁴⁸

If an unbeliever leaves a believer, the believer is no longer under those marital obligations, but they are still not free to remarry according to the Bible. So, Paul explained: **Now to the married I command, yet not I but the Lord: A wife is not to depart from her husband. But even if she does depart, let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband. And a husband is not to divorce his wife.**¹⁴⁹

¹⁴³ Matthew 19:9-10

¹⁴⁴ 1 Corinthians 7:12-13

¹⁴⁵ 1 Corinthians 7:24

¹⁴⁶ Malachi 2:16

¹⁴⁷ 1 Corinthians 7:15

¹⁴⁸ 1 Corinthians 7:3-5

¹⁴⁹ 1 Corinthians 7:10-11

GOD's design for marriage is a life-long union of one man to one woman, and the principle: "till death do you part" came from the Bible. Yes, Scripture says: **The woman who has a husband is bound by the law to her husband as long as he lives. But if the husband dies, she is released from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband lives, she marries another man, she will be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from that law, so that she is no adulteress, though she has married another man.**¹⁵⁰

Because of this, JESUS taught: **"Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced from her husband commits adultery."**¹⁵¹ But, due to sin and the hardness of the heart that sin leads to¹⁵², JESUS taught about one divorce exception. Matthew records this exception in two different passages, but it is worded slightly differently in each case. Once JESUS said: **"But I say to you that whoever divorces his wife for any reason except sexual immorality causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a woman who is divorced commits adultery."**¹⁵³ But, on another occasion, JESUS said: **"And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery."**¹⁵⁴

Despite the fact that these two passages seem almost identical, they are slightly different in how we should apply them. The Matthew 5 exception passage applies to a husband *causing* his wife to commit adultery by divorcing her for reasons other than her having already committed adultery. So, this passage explains that ***only the exception of sexual immorality allows a righteous spouse to divorce an unrighteous spouse without sinning.***

The Matthew 19 exception passage applies to a husband committing adultery if he *remarries* another woman after divorcing his wife for any reason other than her having committed adultery against him first. So, this passage explains that ***only the exception of sexual immorality allows a righteous spouse to remarry without sinning after divorcing an unrighteous spouse.***

By considering all that Scripture teaches about marriage, we see that marriage is the binding of a man to a woman for life. If one of the spouses violates that covenant by committing sexual immorality, the righteous spouse is permitted to divorce the unfaithful spouse and remarry, but only in the LORD. So, we can see why the Disciples of our LORD said: If such is the case of the man with his wife, it is better not to marry."

¹⁵⁰ Romans 7:1-3

¹⁵¹ Luke 16:18

¹⁵² Hebrews 3:12-14

¹⁵³ Matthew 5:32

¹⁵⁴ Matthew 19:9

Immediately after the Disciples uttered that conclusion, JESUS answered their comment by saying: **“All cannot accept this saying, but only those to whom it has been given: For there are eunuchs who were born thus from their mother’s womb, and there are eunuchs who were made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven’s sake. He who is able to accept it, let him accept it.”**¹⁵⁵

While we must never forbid a Biblically sound marriage for widows and the as-yet-unmarried who have been taught what Scripture has to say about the subject, both JESUS and Paul spoke positively of celibacy in this life.

Paul wrote: **But I say to the unmarried and to the widows: It is good for them if they remain [unmarried] even as I am; but if they cannot exercise self-control, let them marry. For it is better to marry than to burn.**¹⁵⁶ Then he explained: **But I want you to be without care. He who is unmarried cares for the things of the Lord—how he may please the Lord. But he who is married cares about the things of the world—how he may please his wife. There is a difference between a wife and a virgin. The unmarried woman cares about the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit. But she who is married cares about the things of the world—how she may please her husband. And this I say for your own profit, not that I may put a leash on you, but for what is proper, and that you may serve the Lord without distraction.**¹⁵⁷

So, when it comes to the second most important decision in life, not every Christian is called to marry. Some are called by GOD to live lives of undistracted devotion to JESUS, while others are called to marry a Christian spouse who equally loves the LORD their GOD with all their heart, mind, soul, and strength.

So, Paul added: **But this I say, brethren, the time is short, so that from now on even those who have wives should be as though they had none, those who weep as though they did not weep, those who rejoice as though they did not rejoice, those who buy as though they did not possess, and those who use this world as not misusing it. For the form of this world is passing away.**¹⁵⁸

Christians must not live like the rest of the world around them, making happiness in this life their primary concern. On the contrary, JESUS said: **“He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.”**¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁵ Matthew 19:11-12

¹⁵⁶ 1 Corinthians 7:8-9

¹⁵⁷ 1 Corinthians 7:32-35

¹⁵⁸ 1 Corinthians 7:29-31

¹⁵⁹ John 12:25

No, we must set our minds on things above, seek first His Kingdom and His righteousness, and put GOD first in every area of our existence. Scripture declares: **Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.**¹⁶⁰ And JESUS commanded: **“Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.”**¹⁶¹

Along with Paul, I highly recommend that you keep these Biblical admonitions in mind when considering the second most important decision of your life. Only consider marrying someone who is thinking in the way GOD’s Word commands us to think and look very carefully at their fruit over many seasons, to see if it demonstrates a Biblical mindset consistent with loving GOD with all the heart, mind, soul, and strength.

The covenant of marriage is a lifelong covenant, and it is never wise to enter such a covenant lightly, hastily, or without plenty of sound Bible-based counseling from Parents and Pastors. Parents and Pastors are appointed by GOD to help those in their care understand all that the Bible has to say about the covenant of marriage. They are appointed by GOD to help sons and daughters put GOD first and honestly analyze the spiritual condition of both parties while discussing important subjects like expectations, boundaries, and priorities.

Meanwhile, GOD not only *appointed* such people into roles of oversight over sons and daughters who are considering marriage, He also *supplied them* with years of experience that can help those pondering holy matrimony understand some of the blessings and challenges that are common to all marriages.

Mothers can share with their daughters the blessings and challenges of submission. Fathers can share with their sons the blessings and challenges of leadership. Parents can help their children prepare to work together through daily responsibilities like employment, budgeting, shopping, bills, large purchases, raising children, and most important of all, keeping GOD first in all these things.

Similarly, Pastors can help those considering marriage understand the boundaries GOD has set for husbands and wives. They can discuss with them the importance of identifying and sharing Biblical priorities. And they can help them set expectations that align with GOD’s Word for each other and their future.

Scripture teaches **They that have no guidance fall like leaves, but in much counsel there is safety.**¹⁶² So GOD has graciously supplied several counselors to every Christian son or daughter who is considering marriage; and since marriage is life’s second most important decision, the wise seek such counsel and listen carefully.

¹⁶⁰ Colossians 3:2

¹⁶¹ Matthew 6:33

¹⁶² Proverbs 11:14 CAB

Chapter 7: Sometimes You Can Judge a Book by Its Cover!

Obedience to the Word of GOD, including all of His commandments, is the true test Christians must apply to any person they might consider a prospect for marriage. And one of the easiest ways you can preliminarily judge a book is by examining its cover! If the cover of a book contains filthy language, should you read that book? If the cover of a book displays immoral images, should you open it? If the cover obviously promotes a lie, is it an appropriate book for a saint? Absolutely not!

Despite the common but unbiblical expression “You can’t judge a book by its cover”, you can actually tell quite a lot about a book by the cover the author chose to adorn their work. Similarly, if we notice immoral, disobedient choices in the way a person dresses (or doesn’t dress) their body, those choices, at the very minimum, indicate they don’t yet know what GOD’s Word teaches about clothing.

How can you recognize if someone is obeying the command to keep the Sabbath day holy? How can you observe if someone is obeying the command to have no other gods besides our LORD? How can you determine if someone is obeying the command not to bear false witness? Obviously, when we see people disobey these commandments, we properly identify the perpetrators as “lawless”. But why do people think that we should not identify lawlessness when we see people violating equally plain commandments of the Bible?

Without a doubt, you can begin to identify when a person knows, believes, and obeys GOD’s Word, by observing how they dress their body because Scripture has clear guidelines on the subject of clothing.

The LORD’s servant Peter wrote: **Do not let your adornment be outward - arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on fine apparel - rather let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God.**¹⁶³

The word “merely” was added to that passage in many translations by some false teacher/translator, but Peter did not include such an idea. Instead, Peter said ***our adornment should not be outward***. We should not wear fancy hairstyles, expensive jewelry, or fine clothing. This was not a suggestion; it is a command penned by Peter and inspired by the HOLY SPIRIT. Christians should not dress like the world, nor should we participate in their fleshly pageants of outward adornment, immodesty, and vanity.

But Peter was not the only Apostle inspired to write such a command. Similarly, the Apostle Paul wrote: **I desire therefore that the men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting; in like manner also, that the women adorn themselves in modest**

¹⁶³ 1 Peter 3:3-4

apparel, with propriety and moderation, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly clothing, but that which is proper for women professing godliness, with good works.¹⁶⁴

Once again, Scripture explicitly forbids the wearing of fancy, expensive, or otherwise showy hair, jewelry, or clothing. Meanwhile, Peter encouraged the inward adornment of a gentle and quiet spirit, and Paul encouraged the outward adornment of good works. These commands are plainly recorded in Scripture, but because pastors rarely discuss them, most Christians disobey them on a regular basis.

Despite this widespread failure in regards to clothing, Scripture most certainly teaches us to wear **“modest apparel”**. And the Greek word Paul used that is translated as **“apparel”** is: “kat-as-tol-ay”, and it means: “lowering, letting down, a garment let down, dress”. The root word of that term comes from the verb “kat-as-tel'-lo”, which means: “to send or put down, to lower”. So, what do you think Paul would say about short, revealing clothing if he used a term based on the verb “to lower” to refer to the garments we should wear?

Well, Scripture is clear that revealing the thigh is to reveal one’s nakedness, and to reveal one’s mature nakedness to anyone we are not married to is most certainly shameful. Thus, as a judgment, GOD said: **“Come down and sit in the dust, O virgin daughter of Babylon; sit on the ground without a throne, O daughter of the Chaldeans! For you shall no more be called ‘tender and delicate’. Take the millstones and grind meal. Remove your veil, take off the skirt, uncover the thigh, pass through the rivers. Your nakedness shall be uncovered! Yes, your shame will be seen.”**¹⁶⁵

Because revealing the thigh is revealing one’s nakedness, GOD commanded the priest to approach His altar on a ramp instead of steps and wear trousers under his garments!¹⁶⁶ Thus, the word translated as “propriety” in Paul’s letter to Timothy about how Christians are to dress, was: “ahee-doce”, which means **“a sense of shame or honour, modesty, or bashfulness”**.

Contrary to the satanic thinking of the world, the Bible teaches that exposing our nakedness to anyone but our spouse is exceedingly shameful. JESUS spoke of this when He said: **“I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see.”**¹⁶⁷

Fashion was invented to sell more clothing to satisfy the greed of the clothing industry. Immodesty was invented by satan to lead souls to hell through lust. But those who have a

¹⁶⁴ 1 Timothy 2:8-10

¹⁶⁵ Isaiah 47:1-3a

¹⁶⁶ Exodus 20:26, Exodus 28:42

¹⁶⁷ Revelation 3:18

Biblical worldview founded on GOD's Word understand that clothing has only one primary purpose, and that is to conceal nakedness.

Did you notice I did not say the purpose of clothing is to "cover" nakedness? Well, there is a very specific reason for the use of the verb "conceal". But before we learn about that reason, please notice the difference between "covering" and "concealing" in the photos below.



Are both corvettes covered? Which one is more "concealed", the one on the left or the one on the right? Which covering is more revealing? Can you see all of the corvette's shape through the tight fabric on the left car? Beyond the color of the car on the left, what else is left to the imagination? Which cover is providing better protection from thieves? If you knew someone with a sinful desire to steal corvettes, which cover is more likely to make them stumble? Well, please remember these corvettes when we read the following verse, and learn about the word the LORD used when He described the purpose of clothing.

In Exodus, GOD said: **And you shall make for them linen pants to cover the indecency of their flesh, from the loin unto the thighs they shall be.**¹⁶⁸ But the word translated as "cover" is the Greek term "kal-ooop'-to", which means: "to hide, veil, or to hinder the knowledge of a thing". Similarly, the Hebrew Masoretic text records GOD using the Hebrew word "kaw-saw", which means: "to cover, conceal, or hide".

Does skin-tight clothing "hide" a body, "veil" a body, or "hinder the knowledge of" the shape of a person's body? The Bible teaches that clothing must perform these functions! Does skin-tight clothing conceal or just cover? Well, Scripture commands us to conceal our nakedness, to feel ashamed if our nakedness is exposed outside of the privacy of marriage, and to dress with propriety and moderation! Therefore, Christians must reject this relatively recent, wicked, worldly trend toward skin-tight clothing, and we must choose clothing that hides or conceals our bodies, "that the shame of our nakedness may not be revealed".

A good and simple test would be, can you put your hand between your clothing and your body and still conceal the presence and shape of your hand? If you can, your clothing is probably

¹⁶⁸ Exodus 28:42

loose enough to conceal your nakedness. If the outline or presence of your hand can be seen, your clothing is not loose enough to conceal your nakedness.

Please remember, clothing is supposed to **hide** or **conceal** your nakedness, not just *cover* it. Therefore, JESUS said: **“I counsel you to buy from Me ...white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed...”**¹⁶⁹ And the word JESUS used, which is translated here as “revealed” is “fan-er-o'-o”, and it means: “to make manifest or visible or known what has been hidden or unknown”. Your nakedness is to remain hidden and unknown to all but your spouse, and total concealment of nakedness is the purpose of clothing.

Mankind has struggled since Genesis to properly conceal their nakedness. Yes, Scripture records: **Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings.**¹⁷⁰ The word here translated as “coverings” is “khag-ore'”, and it means “loin covering”. So, when Adam and Eve sewed fig leaves together, they only made coverings that obscured their loins.

Next, Scripture recorded GOD showing us all how clothing should work, saying: **For Adam and his wife, the LORD God made tunics of skin, and clothed them.**¹⁷¹ When GOD made clothing for Adam and Eve, He made “tunics”, and according to Strong’s Concordance, GOD made “keth-o'-neth”, which means: “coats” or “robes”. Yes, the Hebrew word used in Genesis 3:21 describes a long garment that loosely hangs from the shoulders and continues down beyond the waist to the knee or the ankle. Thus, GOD made a much more modest and decent form of clothing for Adam and Eve than they made for themselves.



Then, since godly people took GOD’s Word to heart, clothing like the tunics the LORD made for Adam and Eve were worn by the Biblically obedient all through history. For example, when we

¹⁶⁹ Revelation 3:18

¹⁷⁰ Genesis 3:7

¹⁷¹ Genesis 3:21

read: **Then the hand of the LORD came upon Elijah; and he girded up his loins and ran ahead of Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel**¹⁷², this passage tells us a lot about the prophet's clothing.

Because men and women all through the Bible wore long, loose-fitting, ankle-length robes or tunics, when they ran, they had to "gird up their loins" and turn their long-flowing garments into an ancient pair of shorts. This was done by gathering up all of the loose fabric, pulling it up between the legs, and tucking it into a belt.



This style of clothing was the norm all through Scripture, so Peter wrote: **Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of JESUS CHRIST.**¹⁷³

All throughout Biblical history, the saints (both male and female) wore long, loose-fitting, ankle-length clothing and that is why Peter used the metaphor of "girding up the loins of our mind". He knew that all of his readers would easily understand how the metaphor of preparing robes to run applied to preparing our minds for the race that lay ahead, "**bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of CHRIST**"¹⁷⁴.

Likewise, Paul makes it clear that certain parts of our body must be hidden, by writing: **Those members of the body which we think to be less honorable, on these we bestow greater**

¹⁷² 1 Kings 18:46

¹⁷³ 1 Peter 1:13

¹⁷⁴ 2 Corinthians 10:5

honor; and our unpresentable parts have greater modesty, but our presentable parts have no need.¹⁷⁵

Similarly, Paul's words in Romans 14 should also be applied to clothing for both men and women. He wrote: **Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food. All things indeed are pure, but it is evil for the man who eats with offense. It is good neither to eat meat nor drink wine nor do anything by which your brother stumbles or is offended or is made weak.**¹⁷⁶

Like eating meat or drinking wine, we must not destroy the work of GOD for the sake of vanity, immodesty, or clothing! Instead, we should make sure our clothing is above reproach in decency and modesty, so we never offend or weaken a brother or sister in the LORD!

Our King has warned: **"Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea. "Woe to the world because of offenses! For offenses must come, but woe to that man by whom the offense comes!"**¹⁷⁷

We should hide our nakedness out of a Biblical sense of shame and modesty, but if that fails, the fear of the LORD should be a secondary reason we all must hide our nakedness! JESUS will not look kindly on anyone who causes even the least of His servants to sin by dressing immodestly!

One example of an immodest dressing woman can be found in Proverbs 7. There a woman with no shame partially demonstrated her wickedness through her clothing. Scripture records: **My son, keep my words, and hide my commandments with you. My son, honor the Lord, and you shall be strong; and fear none but Him. Keep my commandments, and you shall live; and keep my words as the pupils of your eyes. And bind them on your fingers, and write them on the table of your heart. Say that wisdom is your sister, and gain prudence as an acquaintance for yourself; that she may keep you from the strange and wicked woman, if she should assail you with flattering words.**¹⁷⁸

Then Scripture warns: **She looks from a window out of her house into the streets, at one whom she may see of the senseless ones, a young man devoid of understanding, passing by the corner in the passages near her house, and speaking, in the dark of the evening, when there happens to be the stillness of night and of darkness: and the woman meets him having the attire of a harlot, that causes the hearts of young men to flutter. And she is fickle and rebellious, and her feet abide not at home. For at one time she wanders outside, and at**

¹⁷⁵ 1 Corinthians 12:23-24

¹⁷⁶ Romans 14:20-21

¹⁷⁷ Matthew 18:6-7

¹⁷⁸ Proverbs 7:1-5

another time she lies in wait in the streets, at every corner. Then she caught him, and kissed him...¹⁷⁹

And the passage concludes by warning: **So with much conversation she prevailed on him to go astray, and with the snares of her lips forced him from the right path. And he followed her, being gently led on, as that of an ox led to the slaughter, and as a dog to bonds, or as a deer shot in the liver with an arrow: and he hastens as a bird into a snare, not knowing that he is running for his life. Now then my son, listen to me, and attend to the words of my mouth. Let not your heart turn aside to her ways, for she has wounded and cast down many, and those whom she has slain are innumerable. Her house is the way of hell, leading down to the chambers of death.**¹⁸⁰

Unless you desire death and hell, when someone's publicly-worn clothing can be described as "the clothing of a harlot" or the way they dress "causes young men's hearts to flutter", flee from such a person! Non-marital presentations of immodest clothing will only attract positive attention from immoral people. But those of us who fear the LORD and obey His commandments should only think negatively towards all types of immodest clothing in public spaces. Immodesty leads to sin, death, hell, and destruction, and all Biblically-minded Christians will desire to live among others who dress modestly and obediently and abhor immodesty.

Therefore, clothing is one fruit we must examine when considering a potential spouse. And after we examine how a spousal candidate clothes themselves, we can examine what they think of those who dress immorally. Do they turn away from the immoral, immodest people of this world and avoid media with images of such wickedness, or do they seem unphased when such things appear before them?

GOD said Job was a righteous man, so all Christians should follow his righteous example. And Scripture records that Job said: **I made a covenant with my eyes, and I will not take notice of a maiden. Now what portion has God given from above? Is there an inheritance given of the Mighty One from on high? Alas! Destruction to the unrighteous, and rejection to them that do iniquity! Will He not see my way, and number all my steps?**¹⁸¹

Godly men and women turn away their eyes from immodesty. They know GOD sees all of their deeds and He will punish the wicked for their lawlessness. So, they would rather pluck out their eye and cast it from them before willingly filling their eyes with temptation. Yes, mark

¹⁷⁹ Proverbs 7:6-13

¹⁸⁰ Proverbs 7:21-27

¹⁸¹ Job 31:1-4

and avoid all those who don't turn away the immorality and immodesty on display all around us, and follow the path Job followed.

Likewise, vanity and deception should be something every Christian should avoid. So please consider: in this world's culture, when people use the word "makeup" in a sentence about a person's face, it becomes a noun describing types of face paint traditionally applied at a mirrored table literally called a "vanity".



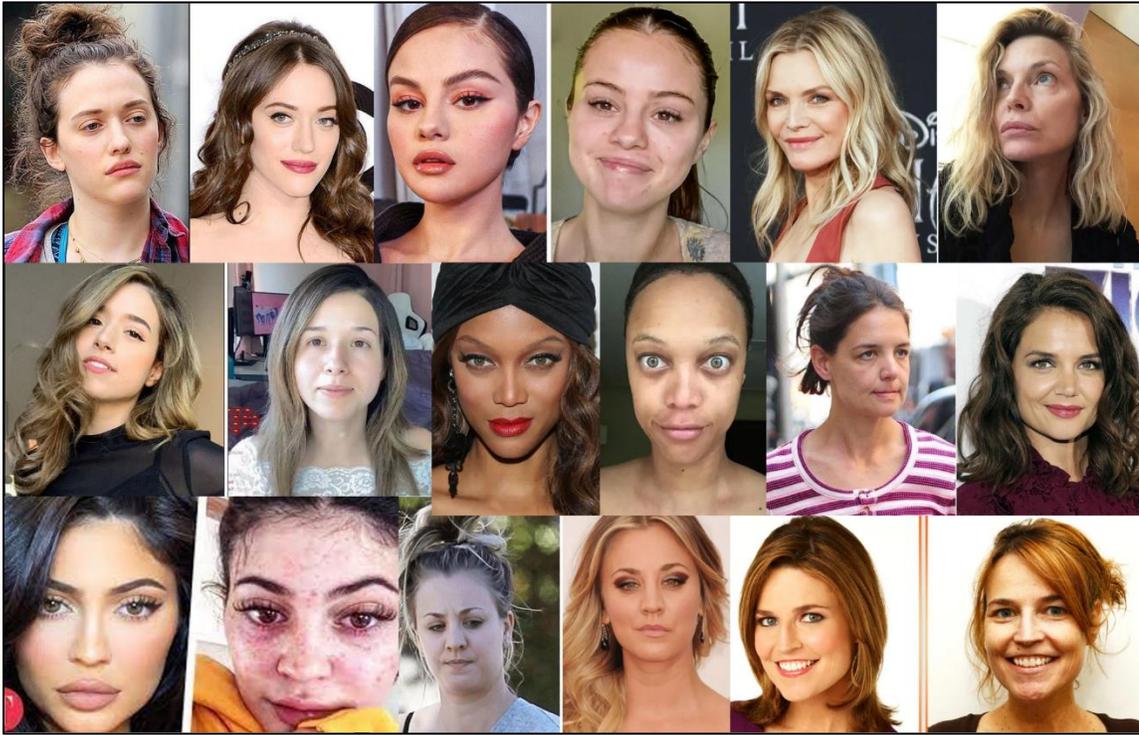
Then, in that same ungodly culture, if we split that same word "makeup" into the two English words it is comprised of, and place the words "make up" together in a sentence as a verb, typically that sentence is about deception. Please notice, when used as a verb, the phrase "make up" often describes someone deceptively discussing something that does not actually exist.¹⁸²

A screenshot of the Macmillan Dictionary website for the entry "make up". The page shows the title "make up" with "DEFINITIONS AND SYNONYMS" and "PHRASAL VERB" below it. There are sections for "WORD FORMS" and "DEFINITIONS" with a list of 9 numbered definitions. A red circle with the number 1 highlights the first definition: "TRANSITIVE to invent an explanation for something, especially in order to avoid being punished or embarrassed". On the right side, there are sections for "OTHER ENTRIES FOR THIS WORD" listing "make-up NOUN", "make up for PHRASAL VERB", "make up to PHRASAL VERB", "make up the leeway", and "make-up malfunction". There are also buttons for "Using the dictionary", "Share this entry" with social media icons, and "QUIZZES" with "VOCABULARY QUIZ".

They say a woman is "made up" when she has her face paint applied, and that is a true statement. Makeup is face paint that is used to fabricate a face that does not really exist, a

¹⁸² https://www.macmillandictionary.com/us/dictionary/british/make-up_1

face that GOD did not create. Most commonly, women use face paint to deceptively attract attention to themselves, and lately, sinful men deceptively use makeup to pretend they are women.



Meanwhile, archeologists have discovered that the Egyptians practiced deceptive face painting long ago when they uncovered the oldest evidence of makeup buried in an ancient Egyptian tomb. Therefore, because face painting has been a pagan custom for thousands of years, the Bible addresses it in three separate passages.

The first passage is describing Jezebel, the quintessential immoral woman. And it records: **Now when Jehu had come to Jezreel, Jezebel heard of it; and she put paint on her eyes and adorned her head, and looked through a window. Then, as Jehu entered at the gate, she said, “Is it peace, Zimri, murderer of your master?” And he looked up at the window, and said, “Who is on my side? Who?” So two or three eunuchs looked out at him. Then he said, “Throw her down.” So they threw her down, and some of her blood spattered on the wall and on the horses; and he trampled her underfoot. And when he had gone in, he ate and drank. Then he said, “Go now, see to this accursed woman, and bury her, for she was a king’s daughter.” So they went to bury her, but they found no more of her than the skull and the feet and the palms of her hands. Therefore they came back and told him. And he said, “This is the word of the LORD, which He spoke by His servant Elijah the Tishbite, saying, ‘On the plot of ground at Jezreel dogs shall eat the flesh of Jezebel; ‘and the corpse of Jezebel shall be as refuse on the surface of the field, in the plot at Jezreel, so that they shall not say,**

“Here lies Jezebel.”¹⁸³ Not every person who paints their face will be eaten by dogs, but they will all be walking in the footsteps of Jezebel who was.

Our next passage is a prophecy describing how the LORD perceived Israel and Judah to be like immoral sisters committing harlotry against Him by repeatedly violating His covenant. Through Ezekiel, GOD said: **“Furthermore you sent for men to come from afar, to whom a messenger was sent; and there they came. And you washed yourself for them, painted your eyes, and adorned yourself with ornaments. “You sat on a stately couch, with a table prepared before it, on which you had set My incense and My oil. “The sound of a carefree multitude was with her, and Sabeans were brought from the wilderness with men of the common sort, who put bracelets on their wrists and beautiful crowns on their heads. “Then I said concerning her who had grown old in adulteries, ‘Will they commit harlotry with her now, and she with them?’ “Yet they went in to her, as men go in to a woman who plays the harlot; thus they went in to Oholah and Oholibah, the lewd women. “But righteous men will judge them after the manner of adulteresses, and after the manner of women who shed blood, because they are adulteresses, and blood is on their hands. “For thus says the Lord GOD: ‘Bring up an assembly against them, give them up to trouble and plunder. ‘The assembly shall stone them with stones and execute them with their swords; they shall slay their sons and their daughters, and burn their houses with fire. ‘Thus I will cause lewdness to cease from the land, that all women may be taught not to practice your lewdness.”**¹⁸⁴

Not all people who wear makeup necessarily practice the harlotry that Israel and Judah practiced, and not all people who wear makeup will be stoned to death or slaughtered with the sword, but all who paint their faces like Oholah and Oholibah walk in the footsteps of the sisters the LORD labeled “the lewd women”. And GOD judged them with the stated intention: “that all women may be taught not to practice [such] lewdness”.

And this brings us to our third passage about makeup in the Bible, a passage about Jerusalem. Through His prophet Jeremiah, the LORD said: **Say to this people and to Jerusalem, there is a spirit of error in the wilderness: the way of the daughter of My people is not to purity, nor to holiness. But a spirit of full vengeance shall come upon Me; and now I declare My judgments against them. Behold, he shall come up as a cloud, and his chariots as a tempest. His horses are swifter than eagles. Woe unto us, for we are in misery! Cleanse your heart from wickedness, O Jerusalem, that you may be saved; how long will your grievous thoughts be within you?**¹⁸⁵

¹⁸³ 2 Kings 9:30-37

¹⁸⁴ Ezekiel 23:40-48

¹⁸⁵ Jeremiah 4:11-14

And what will you do? Though you clothe yourself with scarlet, and adorn yourself with golden ornaments; though you adorn your eyes with paint, your adornment shall be in vain. Your lovers have rejected you, they seek your life.¹⁸⁶

GOD was judging Jerusalem for her spiritual harlotry, and he described her as an immoral woman who “**adorned herself outwardly**”¹⁸⁷ in flashy clothing and expensive jewelry while painting her face to try to lure Babylon with her deceptive adornments. But Babylon had turned against her because GOD was going to use Babylon to bring His judgment against Jerusalem’s immorality.

So, each example of face painting in the Bible is applied to immoral women using deceptive allurements to attract men. Each description ended in judgment. And each example was presented as a description of conduct that should not be emulated. On the other hand, Scripture never describes the Bride of CHRIST as adorning her face with paint, clothing her body with vain, immodest clothing, or conducting herself with anything even resembling vanity!

No, Scripture says about the Bride of the King: **Let us rejoice and be exceedingly glad, and let us give Him glory, for the wedding of the Lamb has come, and His wife has prepared herself." And to her it was granted that she should be dressed in fine linen, bright and pure, for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.**¹⁸⁸

Unlike the Jerusalem of Jeremiah’s time, the Bride of CHRIST faithfully prepares for her wedding day by consistently walking in the way of purity and holiness. She is content with the natural beauty GOD has given her, and she feels no need to vainly enhance it. She adorns herself in modesty, virtue, and righteousness, and *her righteous acts are her adornment*, not ornate hairstyles, fancy clothing, a painted face, or expensive jewelry.

Young men, if you are seeking a godly wife, look for such a pure and holy woman, and be pure and holy young men. Young women, if you are seeking a godly, CHRIST-like husband, conduct yourself in a way that reflects the values of your heavenly King, and the right young man will find you. And we must all apply these words to our outward appearance: **Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves.**¹⁸⁹

True beauty is not defined by the world, it is not outward, it is not fleshly, and it does not come from a store. No, true beauty is defined by the LORD, it is inward, it is spiritual, and it

¹⁸⁶ Jeremiah 4:30 (“adornment” - https://greek_greek.en-academic.com/201049/%CF%89%CF%81%CE%B1%CF%8A%CF%83%CE%BC%CF%8C%CF%82)

¹⁸⁷ 1 Peter 3:3

¹⁸⁸ Revelation 19:7-8

¹⁸⁹ Philippians 2:3

flows out of obedience to GOD's Word! So, we can tell a lot about a book by the cover it chooses for itself.

Fleshly people are concerned with fleshly expressions of beauty. Spiritual people are concerned with spiritual expressions of beauty. And Scripture warns: **For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.**¹⁹⁰

Vanity, immodesty, and other outward expressions of fleshly thinking should be warning signs that repel a Christian from a spousal candidate. Meanwhile, outward attractiveness is typically what draws fleshly-minded worldly people towards each other. So, beware of thinking like the world, and beware of connecting yourself to anyone who thinks like the world. If they are fleshly-minded, they cannot please GOD, and they will lead you away from Him.

For these many reasons, the Bible is clear: **Allurement is deceitful and beauty is passing, but a woman who fears the LORD, she shall be praised.**¹⁹¹ Plus: **the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not look at his appearance or at his physical stature, because I have refused him. For the LORD does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."**¹⁹²

Chapter 8: The Most Exclusive Type of Love

To review what we have discovered so far about human-to-human relationships, life itself causes us to experience relationships with our parents and families. Geography causes us to experience relationships with our neighbors and our government. Biblical faith causes us to experience relationships with the family of GOD in His Church. Likewise, Biblical faith should also inform our choices regarding who we choose as friends. And finally, our Biblical faith must guide our decisions when we choose a spouse. But we must recognize that the spousal relationship is very different from all of the rest of the relationships we are permitted by GOD to experience.

In the English language, we only have one word for love, but in the Greek language the Bible was recorded and/or preserved in, there are three words associated with love. And those three forms of love must be considered "relationship-specific". The word "**agape**" refers to the self-sacrificial love we are to show by our actions to everyone, even our enemies. The word

¹⁹⁰ Romans 8:5-8

¹⁹¹ Proverbs 31:30

¹⁹² 1 Samuel 16:7

“**phileo**” refers to the “familial” love we are to show to our natural families, our spiritual family, and our friends by prioritizing the way we spend our time in ways that favor them. And the word “**eros**” refers to the physical and romantic love we must only ever show to our spouse, and only after we enter the life-long covenant of marriage with them.

Many have rightly compared eros love to fire. When fire is kept in the proper place, such as a fireplace, it brings warmth, light, and usefulness, while it sustains and enriches the lives of all who experience it. But if you kindle a fire outside of a proper, designated fireplace, it will burn your house down and leave you hungry, cold, and without shelter in the darkness of night. Truly, it is the same with eros love.

In the divinely created fireplace of marriage, eros love brings life and it enriches the phileo and agape love a husband and wife have for each other. But outside of the marital fireplace that GOD instituted in Genesis chapter 1, eros love will burn your life down to the ground and send you careening towards the flames of hell!

Scripture warns: **Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge.**¹⁹³ Fornicators are those who kindle the fire of eros love before they are married. Adulterers are those who kindle the fire of eros love after they are married, with someone other than their spouse. And every single fornicator and adulterer who does not repent and turn to JESUS by turning away from sexual immorality to obey GOD’s commandments (especially regarding eros love¹⁹⁴), will end up in hell!

This means that, until we have a spouse and we officially covenant with them (as part of the second most important decision we will ever make in life), we must not play with the fire of eros love, lest we get burnt! Just as we would not kindle a fire outside of a fireplace, we must not kindle the flames of eros love outside of the safety and sacred protection of the marriage covenant!

Please consider: how young is too young for romantic kissing? Some people might say one age, others might disagree. For example, should twelve-year-old children be allowed to romantically kiss other children? How about 14-year-old children? Would 16 years old be old enough? How about 18 years of age? Can you see that basing a kissing standard on age is arbitrary?

Have you ever wondered why there is a moment in a marriage ceremony when the minister says: “You may now kiss the Bride”? Obviously, all Christians at some point in the past understood that the couple was not permitted to kiss up until that moment when they were

¹⁹³ Hebrews 13:4

¹⁹⁴ 1 Corinthians 6:18-20

officially married! And like so many other things in life, that statement is a remnant of a much more Biblical time from the past.

We should mention at this point that even though in some locations kissing another person on the cheek can be a holy¹⁹⁵ and normal cultural practice, it is obvious that, in any culture, kissing another person we are attracted to on the lips is a form of eros love. Ask anyone who is passed the flower of youth¹⁹⁶ about kissing someone they find attractive, and they will admit that it kindles the fires of eros love! So, unless we are sharing something like a holy kiss with a parent or a sibling as seen in Genesis 33:4, romantic kissing must not be something we engage in until we are married to the person we are kissing.

Imagine how grateful your future spouse will be to have a wife or a husband who saved their first romantic kiss for the covenant of marriage! Imagine how thankful you would be to know you were the first romantic kiss your spouse ever experienced! You see, holding hands, sitting extra close, and other expressions of intimate *physical* love expressed between non-family members who are romantically attracted to one another is like playing with fire because *eros* is *physical* romantic love! So, reserving all forms of physical romantic love for marriage is the wise and Biblical choice. After all, it was the wicked, immoral woman of proverbs who caught and kissed a man who was not actually her husband.¹⁹⁷ Meanwhile, Mary and Joseph only shared a promise before they were officially married!

Additionally, verbal expressions of romantic eros love prior to marriage will cloud the judgment of both parties just as physical expressions do, because both expressions build eros bonds that should only exist between those who have entered into the binding, holy covenant of marriage. Expressions of agape or phileo love are appropriate before marriage because we are to show agape expressions of love to everyone and phileo expressions of love to our brothers and sisters in CHRIST. But eros expressions of love are only for husbands and wives to share.

Therefore, a good test of an expression of love is this: would I express my agape or phileo love to every member of my church in the same way I am considering expressing my love to this person? We show our love by giving of our time, our talents, our treasure, our tongue, and our touch. And all appropriate expressions of such love are appropriate in almost any situation.

For example, if a brother or sister in CHRIST visits you when you are sick, they have shown you love by giving of their time. If they show their love by fixing your car, they have shown their love through the gift of their talent. If they give you gifts of food, clothing, or even money, they have loved you with their treasure. If they encourage you by building you up, letting you

¹⁹⁵ Romans 16:16, 1 Corinthians 16:20, 2 Corinthians 13:12, 1 Thessalonians 5:26

¹⁹⁶ 1 Corinthians 7:36

¹⁹⁷ Proverbs 7:13

know you are in their prayers, or telling you how they are grateful for the gifts GOD has given you, they have shown you love with their tongue. And if they lay their hand on your shoulder to pray over you, or greet you with a holy hug, they have shown you love with their touch.

In general, these methods of showing agape and phileo love are approved in all relationships, and we show them to everyone in the Church freely, without reservations. But would we hold hands with every member of the Church or kiss them romantically? Certainly not! And until we enter the binding covenant of marriage, these things should be reserved and set apart as holy expressions of romantic eros love.

It is up to each one of us to sanctify marriage and keep ourselves pure for our spouse. If we have fallen short before we came to a knowledge of this truth, the blood of JESUS will cleanse the truly repentant person. But: **If we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries. Anyone who has rejected Moses' law dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace? For we know Him who said, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. And again, "The LORD will judge His people." It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.**¹⁹⁸

Meanwhile, none of this means that eros love is a bad thing! No GOD invented eros love, but He absolutely insists it must be reserved exclusively for marriage. GOD made eros love to be a blessing, and through that blessing, children are born, life is created, and joy is found. But like a fire, it must be enjoyed in the proper place, at the proper time, or it becomes incredibly and eternally dangerous.

So, now that we understand the dangers of sexual immorality, we understand why the Bible shouts: **Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.**¹⁹⁹

Sexual immorality both physically and spiritually defiles a person, much like idolatry does. So we must flee from all forms of sexual immorality like we would run from a group offering

¹⁹⁸ Hebrews 10:26-31

¹⁹⁹ 1 Corinthians 6:18-20

sacrifices to satan or drinking blood! However, we must always understand that there is a vast difference between sexuality between a husband and his wife and sexual immorality.

Just as worship is good, righteous, and holy when people are worshipping the LORD but it is evil, wicked, and abominable when people are worshipping other gods, sex is similar. Between a husband and wife, sex is righteous, good, and designed by GOD. But outside of that lifelong covenant relationship, sex is immoral, defiling, and eternally deadly. Therefore, great spiritual danger lurks in the background when two unmarried people who are attracted to each other physically spend time with one another unsupervised.

Chapter 9: Dangerous Dating or Christian Courtship

Despite the spiritual hazards of premarital romance, since the 1890s, the worldly culture around us has been practicing a new and risky method of romance and spousal selection typically known as “dating”. Meanwhile, several sources report that dating was originally viewed as similar to hiring a prostitute.²⁰⁰

In an article entitled: “Why early dating was often confused with prostitution”, author Reena Karasin summarizes the work of Moira Weigel, a doctoral candidate at Yale and the author of the book *Labor of Love*, explaining: “Dating as we know it isn’t that old. Weigel says that the concept emerged around 1896, when the term was first used. Before that there was courtship... Courtship also typically happened in private spaces and was supervised by parents or other authority figures.”

Similar to a person trying on shoes before purchasing them, the idea of dating generally involves entering into multiple, sequential, unsupervised, romantic relationships with another person with little to no spiritual qualifications, exclusivity commitment, parental oversight, clearly stated objectives, or well-defined boundaries.

To initiate the dating process, when person A is romantically attracted to person B, they ask them out on what is called a “date”. This term is typically referring to a romantic (or an exploratory, pre-romantic) appointment that is agreed to by both parties. When person A desires a romantic relationship with person B, they might say: “Hey, do you want to go to the dance with me on Saturday evening?”. Then, if person B is mutually interested in engaging in or exploring a romantic relationship with person A, they say “yes”. If they are not romantically interested in person A, or if they already have other plans, they say “no”.

Typically, if the issue is only a scheduling conflict - not a lack of romantic interest on the part of person B towards person A - person B will make it clear that they are open to setting a different date but they cannot accept the date offer proposed. But eventually, if there is a

²⁰⁰ <https://theworld.org/stories/2016-08-25/why-early-dating-was-often-confused-prostitution>

mutual romantic interest, an initial date is set, and the couple meets for their romantic appointment.

If their romantic interest in each other persists, they meet for additional dates. Meanwhile, the entire process revolves around two people who are romantically attracted to one another meeting together in ways that are unsupervised, unchaperoned, unregulated, without clearly stated goals or boundaries; and each meeting is intentionally orchestrated to heighten their romantic interest in each other.

Parents of children who date think that their child will be safe if they ask where they are going and tell them to be home at a certain time. But, because they are following aimless worldly patterns²⁰¹ that have nothing to do with GOD's Word, they would never even dream of chaperoning the date, supervising the couple, investigating the beliefs and practices of the person their child is dating, or objecting to the encounter on theological grounds.

Then, because children are left to fend for themselves under the worldly "dating" model, according to polling research that was reported on a foul, heathen website²⁰²: the average woman will kiss 15 men, have her heartbroken twice, have been in "love" twice, and she will have lived with one partner, and fornicating with at least four people on her way to finding her husband. In comparison, they state that the average man will face being stood up twice and having a half-dozen sinful encounters before finding a wife.

Obviously, all of this sin leads to hell; but on the way there it also leads to premarital pregnancies, the murder of unborn children, the destruction of innocence, rampant divorce, broken hearts, and the weakening of the institution of marriage.

Yet, even though dating typically leads to such devastating consequences, dating is currently the world's sinful way of making life's second most important decision. This is happening because the world has failed to properly make life's most important decision. Yes, because the world does not love GOD, fear GOD, or keep GOD's Commandments, the world treats searching for a spouse like searching for clothing or a car.

However, those who know what the Bible teaches about family, friends, marriage, fornication, romance, and GOD's Commandments should not do things that way. Instead, they should involve their godly Parents, their Pastors, and most importantly their GOD in the process. They should approach it like someone would approach the second most important decision they will ever make in their life! And historically, those who approach romance and spousal candidacy in this way have called the process "courtship".

²⁰¹ 1 Peter 1:18

²⁰² <https://www.her.ie/life/whats-your-number-study-finds-the-average-number-of-dates-and-relationships-before-we-find-the-one-90330>

According to Etymology.com, the word “courtship” is the result of combining the Latin word “cortem” with the Anglian term “scip”. “Scip”, which became “ship”, meant “state, condition of being.” Meanwhile, the Latin word “cortem”, which became “court”, meant: “enclosed yard”. Therefore, etymologically, the term “courtship” means: **“the state of being within the enclosed yard of another”**.²⁰³

We must also note that the Bible uses the Greek equivalent of the Latin word “cortem” in passages such as Exodus 27:9, 1 Kings 7:9, and Revelation 11:2. Those passages discuss the Tabernacle and later the Temple of our GOD, and they use the Greek equivalent of our English word “court”, which is “ow-lay”. This term means: “an uncovered space around the house, enclosed by a wall”²⁰⁴. So, for many ages, the word “court” has been pronounced differently, but it has long meant “a walled-in, or enclosed space around a house.”



Now, you might be wondering: “What do these definitions have to do with courtship and developing a romantic relationship in a Biblical way?”, and the answer is found in the imagery such words are trying to convey. You see, the house in the definition represents the household, or “family” in modern terms. The wall represents the Commandments of the LORD that separate that family from the ungodly world around them. And the “court” represents the protected yard outside the family home where Commandment-keeping visitors are received.

Now, with this “court” imagery in mind, we can see that the only way a family should allow someone into the metaphorical, protected “court” of their household is if they can verify that they believe in keeping the Commandments of the LORD as they follow JESUS CHRIST. As we have learned throughout our time in GOD’s Word, we are to **“have no fellowship with the**

²⁰³ <https://www.etymonline.com/word/courtship>

²⁰⁴ <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lexicon/g833/kjv/tr/0-1/>

unfruitful works of darkness²⁰⁵. So, a Biblical family must first verify that anyone they welcome into the “court” of their home knows GOD’s Word and believes it should be obeyed.

Then, if they do receive someone into the court of their household, they must confirm that they consistently live in obedience to the Word of the LORD. As JESUS commanded in Matthew 7, they must get to know the fruit of those in the “court” of their household through the varying seasons of life²⁰⁶, and because the court of every Biblical family is the place where they discern (or judge) the fruit of those who desire to associate with their family, the term “court” eventually developed a judicial context²⁰⁷.

On a larger scale, Biblical cities had walls, gates, and a court inside the walls just beyond the gate. In each city, the judges sat at the gate²⁰⁸ to determine who could enter, plus they heard cases of dispute among the people and judged them according to the Word of the LORD.²⁰⁹ In a similar way, Parents are appointed by GOD to judge who is welcome into the court of their household according to His Word. At the same time, they are to teach their children how to judge the beliefs and the conduct of all people by that same Word. And by doing this, Parents protect their family like shepherds protect their sheep from wolves, dogs, and other untrustworthy predators.

Meanwhile, since the covenant of marriage would simultaneously join an outsider to the family and take one of the members of the household out from the direct spiritual protection of the Parents, even more care must be taken to examine the “fruit” of a spousal candidate. To protect the family, a spousal candidate must spend a significant amount of time in the court of the family as the process of “fruit” examination was underway.

During this time, the Parents and their young-adult offspring who were considering marriage would discuss the beliefs and choices of the spousal candidate together and pray together seeking GOD’s wisdom and will. But, since the etymological definition of the term “courtship” means: “the state of being within the enclosed yard of another”, we can see how this process developed that name.

Whether a romantic interest develops between someone in the family and someone who has *already* been received into the family’s court, or a romantic interest draws a *newcomer* to the family’s court, the conduct of every spousal candidate has to be carefully evaluated according to Biblical standards. Also, both the family of the potential bride and the family of the potential groom would be examining the conduct of the other spousal candidate that was

²⁰⁵ Ephesians 5:11

²⁰⁶ Matthew 7:15-20

²⁰⁷ Zechariah 3:7

²⁰⁸ Deuteronomy 16:18

²⁰⁹ Deuteronomy 1:16-17

going to be joined to their family by marriage. Yes, in both families, the Parents and the young-adult offspring should be analyzing and discussing the words and actions of the spousal candidate compared to the Bible, while praying to GOD for wisdom, so that His will would be known to them.

So, instead of a dating process that may or may not define marriage as the primary target, the purpose of courtship is always marriage. No one who understands the courtship process would enter it hoping to achieve a sexually immoral goal, because they would know from the outset that chaperones, supervision, parental involvement, and protective measures would always exist until the wedding day.

Also, because the courtship process flows out from the Biblical worldview, and the Biblical worldview has always included the concept of *headship*, romantically interested Christian singles who practice the courtship process expect to interact with the parents and family of the person they are romantically interested in on an ongoing basis. Courtship and Biblical headship (which we will learn more about later) is where the procedure of asking a father for his daughter's hand in marriage originated. However, in courtship, the father's permission was actually requested *first*, when the romantically interested young man asks if he might be permitted to "court" that father's daughter under the watchful supervision of the father and the entire family.

Also, unlike dating, because courtship always has marriage as its stated goal, courtship is always an exclusive process. Single Christians who are courting don't even begin the process unless they are willing to explore the life-long covenant of marriage with each other, so an exclusivity commitment is fundamental and implied when parental permission is sought to "court".

If appointments are made for the couple to meet outside the home, it is expected within courtship that such outings will be chaperoned. After all, Christian parents know that Scripture warns us to "flee from sexual immorality"²¹⁰, that our conduct should be "above reproach in GOD's sight"²¹¹, and GOD always provides a path of escape from temptation.²¹² Meanwhile, any reasonable person can affirm that fornication requires privacy much like fire requires oxygen. By depriving a potentially romantic relationship of privacy and secrecy, the fires of eros love are extinguished until the proper time, when they can be lit sinlessly within the marriage covenant.

Now, since we have mentioned the word "**chaperon**" several times, it is time that we define that important word that plays such a key role in the courtship process. According to

²¹⁰ 1 Corinthians 6:18

²¹¹ Colossians 1:22

²¹² 1 Corinthians 10:13

etymology.com, the noun “**chaperon**” originated in the French language, and it means “**protector**”; but that definition developed from the Old French word “**chaperon**” which meant “**head covering**”. Therefore, they concluded about the word “**chaperon**”: “The notion is of “**covering**” the socially vulnerable one.”²¹³

When it comes to romantically attracted single people, privacy and secrecy almost always lead to sin! Every young man or young woman who stumbles into the dating model of spousal selection is left to fend for themselves in dangerous, secluded situations. But those who choose the Biblical method of spousal selection can’t be taken advantage of by seclusion, rohypnol, or any other evil scheme. They get to know the person they are “courting” in the presence of others, always protected by a least one chaperon. However, a true **chaperon** is meant to provide much more than just physical protection by their presence!

We will learn more about the role of the chaperon later, but first, we should sum up what we have learned so far about courtship. In summary, courtship is all about getting to know each other personally, socially, spiritually, and morally before romance even appears on the radar. Under the watchful eye of Parents (or stand-in spiritual mentors when godly parents are unavailable), romance and eros love are left out of the equation while the couple learns if they would be equally yoked as Brother and Sister in CHRIST. Then, they discover if they can be life-long friends in the LORD before they allow romance to cloud their judgment.

Yes, clouded judgment is one reason why courtship does not involve *romantic* physical or verbal interactions! Likewise, courtship does not try to imitate marriage with the exchanging of romantic gifts or romantic pre-betrothal promises. Serious spiritual decisions are being made of the highest order when marriage is being considered, and romance should only be added into the equation after all of those spiritual decisions and evaluations are complete and the couple is married.

If the couple finds that they are spiritually, personally, socially, and morally compatible without romance clouding their judgment, they then seek the counsel of their Parents and the LORD to see if they are ready to enter a betrothal promise. If the LORD, their Parents, and the couple agree after all of them have prayed, fasted, and sought the LORD on the union, then they can begin their betrothal, and it will be the first romantic promise the couple will ever share. Then, at the end of that betrothal, romance will officially begin when an appointed Pastor of GOD’s flock informs the Groom “You may now kiss the Bride.”

Chapter 10: The Doctrine of Headship

The Bible is very clear that GOD created marriage to join together one genetically-identifiable male to one genetically-identifiable female for life: **Therefore a man shall leave his father and**

²¹³ <https://www.etymonline.com/word/chaperon>

mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.²¹⁴ But the Bible has a lot to say about relationships between the only two genders GOD created: male and female, as well as how they must act in the various roles they might experience in life, especially as husband and wife. This is why the definition we saw earlier for the word “chaperon” was so Biblically significant.

If you search the Scriptures for the word “head” and the word “covering” appearing together, you will immediately be taken to 1st Corinthians chapter 11. There, Paul taught: **Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonors his head. But every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head, for that is one and the same as if her head were shaved. For if a woman is not covered, let her also be shorn. But if it is shameful for a woman to be shorn or shaved, let her be covered. For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God; but woman is the glory of man. For man is not from woman, but woman from man. Nor was man created for the woman, but woman for the man. For this reason the woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels.**²¹⁵

Remnants of the influence of this passage are still visible in American culture every time the national anthem is played. Everyone stands and men take their hats off while the Star-Spangled Banner’s lyrics echo throughout stadiums around the country, but most people know very little about the origins of this practice.

According to U.S. Code, Title 36, Subtitle I, Part A, Chapter 3: “During a rendition of the national anthem” “men not in uniform, if applicable, should remove their headdress with their right hand and hold it at the left shoulder”.²¹⁶ So, in the United States of America, it is illegal for a man who is not wearing a military uniform to leave his hat on his head when the Star-Spangled Banner is played. It is considered a sign of *respect* and *submission* for a man to remove the hat from the head during the anthem, while intentionally leaving on a hat during the anthem is considered to be a sign of *disrespect* and *rebellion*.

Because of these beliefs, an army veteran named Curt Brockway brutally assaulted a 13-year-old boy at a rodeo in Montana, when the boy refused to take off his hat during the anthem. According to media sources: “His injuries were so serious he had to be airlifted to a hospital two states away.” And: “After the assault, Brockway insisted to the people at the scene that he had done the right thing because the boy was disrespecting the anthem.”²¹⁷

²¹⁴ Genesis 2:24

²¹⁵ 1 Corinthians 11:4-10

²¹⁶ <https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/36/301>

²¹⁷ <https://www.upworthy.com/national-anthem-controversy>

Obviously, that veteran's actions were outrageously wrong, but that terrible story proves that head coverings, respect, submission, and authority are all still connected in even the most confused minds. Likewise, the law we cited earlier proves these connections, plus it demonstrated that head coverings on men during the anthem are specifically prohibited. Therefore, there is a *gender* element to head coverings in the Bible as well as in US law. Yet somehow, many modern Christians no longer understand the importance of Paul's teaching to the Corinthians about head coverings!

Paul specifically wrote: "the woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head". Paul implied that a head covering signified that a woman was submitted to her husband or father. Paul made it clear that a woman praying or prophesying with her head uncovered dishonored her head, which would be her husband if she was married or her father if she was unmarried. And Paul appeared to teach that the head covering offered spiritual protection for the woman, especially when it came to angels.

Despite these clear teachings, R.C. Sproul once stated: "During my high school years, I never saw a woman in my mainline church whose head wasn't covered with a hat or a veil. That is one of those customs that has simply disappeared for the most part from Christian culture." Did you notice that R.C. Sproul called head coverings a "custom"? That is incorrect, and a key part of the heresy that has spread like leaven in the Church on this issue! Head coverings are a biblical command, not a "custom". Also, they are not part of "Christian culture", they are biblical, apostolic, and theologically permanent.

Therefore, in the 13th Century AD, Thomas Aquinas reasoned: "It pertains to a man's dignity not to wear a covering on his head, to show that he is immediately subject to God; but the woman should wear a covering to show that besides God she is naturally subject to another." Like Paul, Thomas Aquinas provided theological, Bible-based reasoning to support Paul's injunction regarding feminine head coverings. And theological, Bible-based reasons are never only "customs".

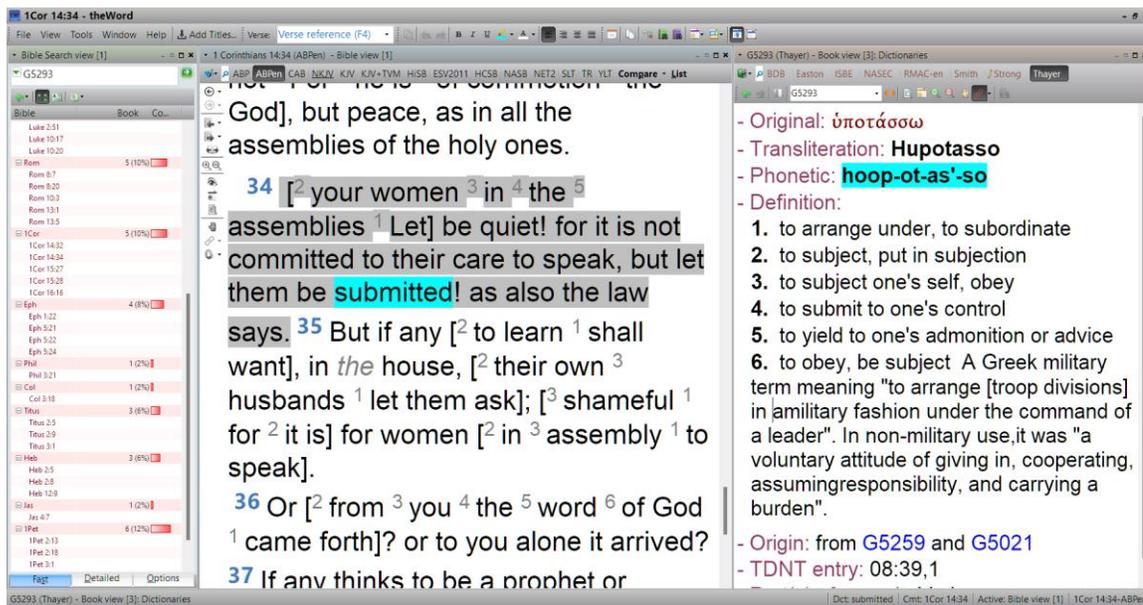
Professor Mary Kassian, of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, recounted: "It is only in the past three or four decades [since the 1960s] that its observance has slipped away — particularly in Western society." Not long ago, Christians everywhere obeyed Paul's instructions on the issue of head coverings, but the lawlessness that spread through western culture since the 1960s has infiltrated the Church.

Meanwhile, when we consider the origins of the word "chaperon", and what Paul taught in 1st Corinthians 11, we can see there is a clear connection. The chaperon was originally a person in a position of authority over one or both members of the courting couple. The chaperon provided physical protection by their presence, but they also provided spiritual protection by using their GOD-given authority to guard the couple from sin.

Such protective authority, however, does not end when the couple is married. No, similar to how Parents are to have an authoritative leadership role over their dependent children, from Genesis onward, Scripture is clear that the Husband is to have authority over his Wife. GOD said to Eve: **“I will greatly multiply your pains and your groanings; in pain you shall bring forth children, and your submission shall be to your husband, and he shall rule over you.”**²¹⁸

Later, Paul referred to that specific passage when he wrote: **Let your women keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak; but they are to be submissive, as the law also says. And if they want to learn something, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is shameful for women to speak in church.**²¹⁹

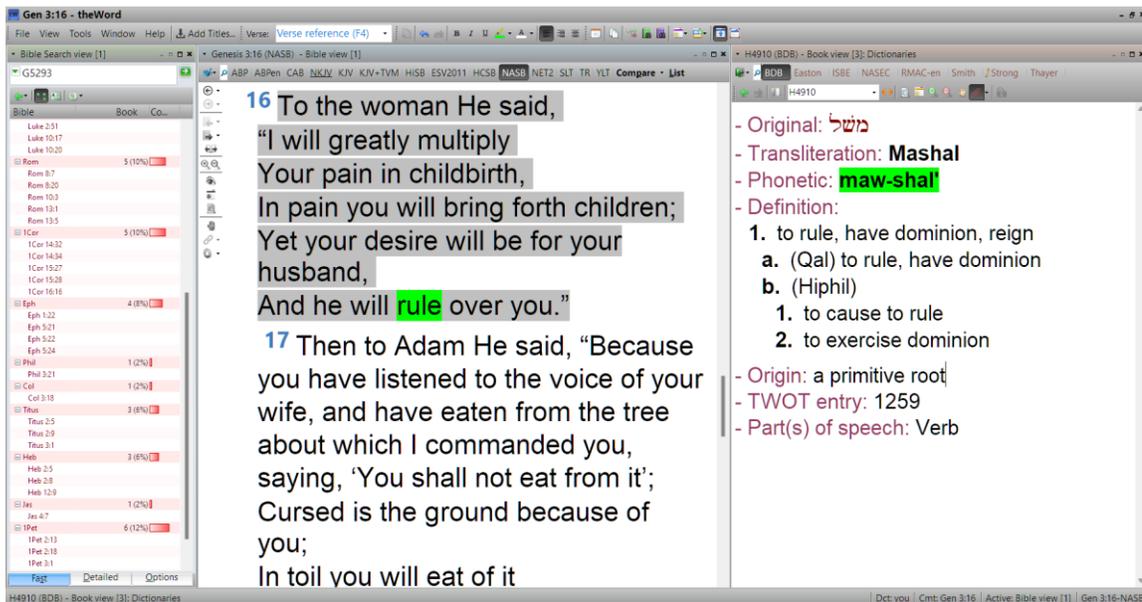
The Greek word Paul used, which was translated as “submissive” in English, is “hoop-ot-as'-so”, and it means: “to arrange under, to subordinate”, “to subject one's self, obey”, “to submit to one's control”, “to yield to one's admonition or advice”, and it was a Greek military term meaning "to arrange troops in a military fashion under the command of a leader".



Meanwhile, the Hebrew word the LORD used in Genesis 3:16 that is translated into English as “rule” is “maw-shal”, and it means: “to rule, have dominion, or reign”. Plus, that word was translated into Greek in the Bible the Apostles used (called the Septuagint) as the word “ko-ree-yoo'-o”, which means: “to be lord of, to rule, have dominion over”.

²¹⁸ Genesis 3:16

²¹⁹ 1 Corinthians 14:34-35



So, Paul also wrote: **I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence. For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression.**²²⁰ Citing specific Biblical examples that proved His apostolic, divinely-inspired reasons for this passage, Paul lays out an undeniable case for male leadership in the Church, the primary reason behind female head coverings during prayer and prophesy.

Similarly, Peter confirmed Paul’s interpretation of Genesis, by writing about husbands and wives: **In this manner, in former times, the holy women who trusted in God also adorned themselves, being submissive to their own husbands, as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, whose daughters you are if you do good and are not afraid with any terror.**²²¹ Using the same Greek word for submission that Paul used, Peter referred to Genesis 18:12 where Sarah called Abraham her “lord”.

Therefore, the Bible makes it clear that wives are to be submitted to their husbands, and this is why Paul said: **“a man indeed ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God; but woman is the glory of man. For man is not from woman, but woman from man. Nor was man created for the woman, but woman for the man. For this reason the woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head”**. A physical head covering in certain spiritual situations (such as during prayer) is commanded by Scripture for women and forbidden by Scripture for men. And these commands, as well as the Biblical principles behind them, help introduce the Biblical doctrine of “headship”.

You see, the doctrine of “headship” is the answer to the question: “How can two or more people with independent free wills function together in love, peace, and harmony as a

²²⁰ 1 Timothy 2:12-14

²²¹ 1 Peter 3:5-6

cohesive unit?”. And the Bible teaches that GOD solved this challenging problem by setting up a chain of command, or a hierarchy of authority in every relationship in life.

Children are to submit to their parents, citizens are to submit to their governments, litigants are to submit to their judges, saints are to submit to their pastors, slaves (employees) are to submit to their masters (bosses), younger people are to submit to older people, wives are to submit to their husbands, and all of us are to submit to GOD. Everyone has people in positions of headship over them in GOD’s system, and GOD is above everyone, in the position of ultimate headship.

Amazingly, even within the eternally existing family of GOD that some call the “Trinity”, there is a system of headship. GOD the Father is the head; so, on the night of His betrayal, JESUS prayed: saying, **“Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done.”**²²²

Likewise, about the HOLY SPIRIT, JESUS said: **“I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. “However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. “He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you. “All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare it to you.”**²²³

The Scriptures are clear that the HOLY SPIRIT issued authoritative commands to the Apostles and He supplies gifts to the saints according to His divine authority, but JESUS also made it clear that some of what the SPIRIT teaches to the Church is done under His and the Father’s authority. So, the Father is clearly the head of the eternal divine family, and JESUS and the HOLY SPIRIT submit to the Father’s authority.

In the Church, however, JESUS is very plainly described as the Head. So, Paul wrote: **[The Father] raised [JESUS] from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.**²²⁴ We are all members (or parts) of the LORD’s body, but we must all be submitted to Him to remain part of His Church.

When people follow popes or men like Luther, Calvin, Wesley, or Darby, in many ways they make those men the head of the organization they are members of. But when we seek to

²²² Luke 22:42

²²³ John 16:12-15

²²⁴ Ephesians 1:20-23

follow JESUS CHRIST as our Head, first and foremost, and allow His doctrine (and the doctrine of His Apostles) to be our ultimate compass, we find unity, cohesion, and clarity as the SPIRIT leads us into all Truth.

Meanwhile, parents serve in a headship role over their children, so Scripture teaches:

Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing to the Lord.²²⁵ But Paul, who had a headship role in the Church, taught fathers not to provoke or discourage their children by abusing their authority. **He explained: And you, fathers, do not exasperate**²²⁶ **your children, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the LORD,**²²⁷ and: **“Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged.”**²²⁸

Next, in that same passage, just after admonishing children and their fathers, Paul taught: **Bondservants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh, not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but in sincerity of heart, fearing God. And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ.**²²⁹

In other passages, Paul made it clear that bondservants (i.e. servants/employees) should seek to become free, if possible²³⁰, and he admonished masters to treat their servants fairly. He wrote: **Masters, give your bondservants what is just and fair, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven.**²³¹

Also, about relationships with age differences, Peter wrote: **You younger people, submit yourselves to your elders. Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for “God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble.”**²³²

Similarly, Paul taught: **Older women likewise are to be reverent in demeanor, not slanderers, not given to much wine, teaching what is good, so that they may urge the young women to be lovers of their husbands, lovers of their children, temperate, pure, homemakers, good, submitting to their own husbands, lest the word of God be blasphemed.**²³³

²²⁵ Colossians 3:20

²²⁶ par-org-id'-zo - to rouse to wrath, to provoke, exasperate, anger

²²⁷ Ephesians 6:4

²²⁸ Colossians 3:21

²²⁹ Colossians 3:22-24

²³⁰ 1 Corinthians 7:21

²³¹ Colossians 4:1

²³² 1 Peter 5:5

²³³ Titus 2:3-5

Paul admonished older women to set a good example, and to teach the younger women, urging them to walk in the way of the LORD. Loving their husbands and children, and submitting to their husbands, so the word of GOD would not be blasphemed by their conduct.

And since that last passage brought us back to wives submitting to their husbands, we should note here that Paul explained the extent of that submission by writing: **Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything.**²³⁴

From Genesis to Revelation, the theme of submission and authority is consistent. In every type of differential relationship, GOD has appointed someone as the leader or head of that relationship and bestowed on them some form of authority. First, there are positional differentials, when GOD appoints certain people to positions of authority over others. Second, if there is a gender differential, GOD appoints the authority to the man. And third, if there is an age differential, in general, GOD appoints the authority to the elder person. But with each position of authority, there is great responsibility and accountability.

Parents must read, study, understand, and teach all of GOD's Commandments to their children while emulating their Father in heaven. Pastors must read, study, understand, and teach all of GOD's Commandments to their congregations while emulating their Shepherd in heaven. Judges, Kings, Presidents, Governors, Police, and every other person in a position of authority and headship in society must read, study, understand, and operate by all of GOD's commandments in their roles while emulating GOD in all their conduct. Masters/Employers must read, study, understand, and operate within all of GOD's Commandments in all their relations with their employees to be fair and just while emulating their Master in heaven. And Husbands must operate in similar ways to all of these leaders while emulating the Church's Bridegroom in heaven.

So, Scripture commands the Husband: **Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church. For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh."** This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church.

²³⁴ Ephesians 5:22-24

Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.²³⁵

It is the head that must feed the body, receive inputs from every part, make sound decisions for it, and provide vision. Without a head, a body is aimless; it cannot eat or safely navigate the world around it. But sadly, so many wives and families today are walking around without a spiritual head to nurture the family, feed it from GOD's Word, and seek after GOD's vision while listening to and providing protection and guidance to every part. Husbands, that is your role, your responsibility; and you will be held accountable for how you performed that role just as Adam was held accountable for the fall of mankind.

JESUS teaches His Church (His body), and He feeds her with His Word. Husbands, do you feed your wife from GOD's Word when she is spiritually hungry? JESUS laid down His comfort, His desires, and even His life to save His Church, His body. Husbands, do you lay down the remote control, your favorite pastime, or your cell phone to tend to the spiritual health of your wife and children? Do you read, study, understand, and obey all of GOD's Commandments, and talk of them with your wife and family? Is that your priority? Do you make time for her and GOD's Word? These things are the LORD's priority!

Don't let the cares, riches, or pleasures of this present, fleeting life distract you from GOD's priorities and the fruit He wants you to bear²³⁶. Our Master taught us: **“Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.”**²³⁷

According to JESUS, the formula for eternal success is not complicated: **“Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness”**. Remove every form of sin from your life, seek after GOD, seek after righteousness, and put His Commandments first. If your job makes you work on the Sabbath, find a new job. If your job makes you work so many hours you have no time left for Bible study with your family, find a new job. If you think you have to keep that demanding job to pay for the current bills you have, find a way to reduce your bills.

Once we realize the eternal salvation or damnation of the souls of our families (and our own) are on the line, we evaluate things from the Biblical perspective. Don't let this present life distract you from living for eternal life in the kingdom of heaven. You are called to be the

²³⁵ Ephesians 5:25-33

²³⁶ Luke 8:14-15

²³⁷ Matthew 6:31-34

shepherd of your family with your wife at your side. You are your family's in-house pastor, their elder; and you are called to take up the WORD of GOD and lead as CHRIST would lead!

So, great responsibility is placed on husbands because of their headship role. And they will be held accountable before GOD for how they served their family in that role. Men you are called to a great and noble calling, to emulate JESUS in your home. Take a close look at our LORD, and what He has done for His Church, then go and do likewise for your family.

Meanwhile, for those wives who are still stuck with husbands who are failing to do their job properly, Scripture commands: **Wives, likewise, be submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives, when they observe your chaste conduct accompanied by fear.**²³⁸

Sadly, we live in a sinful, broken, disobedient world. We look forward in hope to a kingdom where only righteousness dwells, but that kingdom has not yet come to this earth. So, in the meantime, we each must walk in righteousness, purity, and holiness, even when our situations are not yet what they should be. So, a husband that does not obey GOD's Word is no excuse for a wife that refuses to submit to her husband. Nor is an ungodly, unsubmitive wife an excuse for a husband not to represent CHRIST to his bride. We all must do as we have been commanded, and we must wait in hope for JESUS to restore all things.

In the meantime, Paul has instructed: **If any brother has a wife who does not believe, and she is willing to live with him, let him not divorce her. And a woman who has a husband who does not believe, if he is willing to live with her, let her not divorce him.**²³⁹

Chapter 11. "No Condemnation" ≠ "No Conviction"

JESUS declared: **"It is impossible that no offenses should come, but woe to him through whom they do come!"**²⁴⁰ Paul taught: **All have sinned and fall short of the glory of GOD.**²⁴¹ And John explained: **If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.**²⁴² The bad news is: sin is a universal problem; JESUS is the only person who has ever walked on this earth without ever sinning.²⁴³ But the good news is, JESUS understands our weaknesses, He knows how much deception there is all around us, and He died and rose again so that we could be forgiven of our sins when we repent and decide to obey His Word.

Imagine a world with no forgiveness, no cross, no savior, and no gospel. One sin, one deviation from GOD's commands, would mean there was no escape from the flames of hell. Every sinner

²³⁸ 1 Peter 3:1-2

²³⁹ 1 Corinthians 7:12-13

²⁴⁰ Luke 17:1

²⁴¹ Romans 3:23

²⁴² 1 John 1:10

²⁴³ Hebrews 4:15

would face inevitable condemnation. In such a world, there would be no reason to turn from sin and obey GOD's Word. It would be hopeless, and sin would be victorious over every soul GOD ever created. But thanks be to GOD, we do not live in such a hopeless, terrible world! No, through His cross, JESUS opened the way of redemption, so we can be forgiven and washed clean of our sins!

When we learn how we have fallen short of GOD's righteous judgments, and decide to change how we will do things in the future, the gospel is the best news ever! Yes, when we learn something new from GOD's Word about how we are to conduct ourselves in GOD's world, we don't need to feel overwhelmed, condemned, hopeless, or doomed. No, we simply need to ask GOD to forgive us for how we failed to do the right thing yesterday, and decide to do the right thing today!

JESUS died and rose again, to provide everyone who truly repents of their sins a full and complete pardon; and the power of the cross gives us the strength to keep on *learning* and *growing* in GOD's Word, even when we discover that we have been doing things the wrong way.

Sin is a universal problem, and none of us has lived a perfect life. So, as we learn GOD's ways from the Bible and hear new things, sometimes we feel **convicted**. That is a natural and normal part of the discipleship process since none of us are perfect yet! But there is a right and a wrong way to deal with conviction.

Satan will tempt us towards expressing attitudes of defeat, defensiveness, dismissal, or denial when we feel convicted, but these attitudes must be resisted. Instead, conviction during Bible study is a normal "growing pain". And we will welcome conviction when we see it is one of the primary reasons why we study GOD's Word.

You see, there is a big difference between conviction and condemnation. The Greek word commonly translated as "convict" is "**el-eng'-kho**" and it means: "to find fault with, or correct". But the Greek word commonly translated as "condemn" is "**kat-ak-ree'-no**" and it means: "to give judgment against, to judge worthy of punishment".

El-eng'-kho is the type of action a *teacher* performs with their student to help them correct an error and do better in the future. But **kat-ak-ree'-no** is the type of action a *judge* performs in a courtroom when they sentence a criminal to their inescapable punishment. Truly, only those who allow JESUS to become their "Teacher" in this life by becoming His disciples won't have to face Him as their "Judge" in the future. But every true disciple of JESUS will allow Him to "find fault with and correct" them, and they will zealously repent of whatever He corrects.

Therefore, conviction leads to correction and correction leads to life because of the cross of JESUS. But condemnation is hopeless, final, and inescapable. And all who refuse to repent of their sins follow JESUS as their Teacher and LORD, are already condemned.

About this, JESUS said: **“God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed.”**²⁴⁴

Did you know that the last word in that passage could be translated better? Literally, the Greek word JESUS used was a conjugation of “**el-eng'-kho**”, and it would be better translated as “corrected”. JESUS did not come to pronounce a final, hopeless, inescapable sentence on the citizens of the world, He came to save all those who would receive redemption and correction from Him!

Those who truly understand the purpose of the cross, invite the correction of JESUS along with redemption! With the Psalmist, they cry: **Search me, O God, and know my heart! Examine me, and know my paths! and see if the way of lawlessness is in me, and guide me in the way everlasting!**²⁴⁵ And with the prophet, they pray: **O LORD, correct me, but with justice; not in Your anger, lest You bring me to nothing.**²⁴⁶

Accepting **correction** is how we submit to JESUS and His Word, and grow into His glorious likeness. But rejecting His correction is rebellion, and it will lead to condemnation. So, this is why Paul wrote: **There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.**²⁴⁷

There are two diametrically opposed people living within every Christian on this side of eternity. There is the new, born-again, spiritually alive, obedient person who follows JESUS with their whole heart. But at the same time, there is the old, spiritually-dead, disobedient person that searches for reasons and excuses why it does not have to follow JESUS and obey His Word.

Paul calls that evil part of us that resists GOD’s Word, the flesh. And he wrote: **Therefore the mind of the flesh is enmity against God; for it does not submit to the law of God, nor indeed**

²⁴⁴ John 3:17-20

²⁴⁵ Psalms 139:23-24

²⁴⁶ Jeremiah 10:24

²⁴⁷ Romans 8:1

can it. And those that are in the flesh cannot please God.²⁴⁸ And Paul also explained: For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.²⁴⁹ So, Paul taught: Those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.²⁵⁰

To truly understand how to “put to death the deeds of the body”, we need to understand what it means to be “disciples” of JESUS. When we see the word “disciple” in the Bible, the Greek word that we translate into English as “disciple” is: “math-ay-tes”. This word means: “a learner, pupil, disciple”. Later, when that Greek term was translated into Latin, it became the term: “discipulus”, but it meant the same thing.

Meanwhile, in the language of Latin, the instruction a teacher provided to their disciples was called: “disciplina”. And this term eventually evolved into the concept of “discipline”, which means: “chastisement for the sake of correction”. So, the word “chasten” refers to “discipline”, and every disciple of JESUS should expect “chastening” from the LORD as they grow in their faith.

We crucified our flesh and buried it on the day of our baptism, but it still tries to take control and lead us astray from the narrow way of righteousness. So, we must repeatedly “put to death” all fleshly thinking that despises the correction and chastening every disciple of JESUS must face.

Hebrews explains: **“My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; For whom the LORD loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives.” If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons. Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness. Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.²⁵¹**

May we all accept correction from the LORD whenever conviction comes! He desires good for us and He knows best how we should conduct ourselves in every relationship! Conviction and correction are normal components of the Christian life, and those who resist the LORD's correction will only have themselves to blame when they face Him on judgment day.

²⁴⁸ Romans 8:7-8

²⁴⁹ Romans 8:13

²⁵⁰ Galatians 5:24-25

²⁵¹ Hebrews 12:5-11