

Practical Tips for Family Life

(Adapted from *Path to Righteousness* by Linda Poitras)

“My son, keep thy father’s commandment, and forsake not the law of thy mother”
(Proverbs 5:20).

Introduction

We have already understood that God has a specific plan for all His creation, including men, women, and children. He did not create any of us with the idea that we would be poor, downtrodden people with no hope or purpose. He even planned to give us many wonderful gifts (Matthew 7:9-11). Why is it that human nature tends to believe that God has hidden the best things from us because He does not want us to know His best and greatest? This was the lie the serpent used to deceive Eve. Man has been falling for the same lie for centuries.

God wants to bless us. He wants us to know joy, peace, happiness, prosperity, and all the good things He has created. But He cannot bless us when we continue to make our own path instead of following His “Path to Righteousness.” What are some of the “good gifts” He wants to give us in our families?

A Successful and Happy Marriage

The happiness of any marriage depends on the love and commitment between husband and wife.

Love for God and His Word comes first – it is the road map to determine the whole relationship (1 John 2:3-6).

Love for the other person comes next – we should be more concerned with the needs and desires of our partner than our own (Ephesians 5:23).

Following the perfect example – Paul, in his writings to the church at Ephesus, gives this clear picture: husbands love, wives submit, and both care for the other more than themselves, just as Christ gave Himself for the church (Ephesians 22:33).

Encourage one another – a Christian husband should be very careful to help his wife fulfill her God-given role - both in and out of the home – in the community and church. A submissive wife will not be a troublemaker or gossip, but will support and bless the work her husband is trying to do for the kingdom of God (Ecclesiastes 9:9; Proverbs 5:18).

- He should praise her good points and not criticize her in front of others.
- He should let her know he enjoys her cooking and appearance.

- She should endeavor to keep his clothes clean and neat so he presents a fine picture to the public.
- She should be careful with meal preparation, both the times he will require feeding, and also the most economical way to provide for such. She should not be a waster of his hard-earned money (Proverbs 31:14-15).
- Each partner should be careful to show respect and love to the other, both in and out of the home (1 Peter 3:7). Any problems they have should be discussed in private – not in front of the children.
- Paul wrote to his “son” Timothy, admonishing him in proper conduct. His indictment toward men who did not take care of their families was quite severe: *“But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel”* (1 Timothy 5:8). Husbands need to take a careful look at this Scripture, as it is not talking only about food, clothing, and shelter. Paul had been speaking to Timothy about the attitude and spirit of some of the brethren. He was speaking about the care of the whole person, not just the physical. Fathers/husbands, do not just give money and forget about the rest. Your job is much more demanding. The way you care for your family includes the time you spend training them in the things and ways of God.
- Keep the family circle tightly closed. You should never share the intimate details of family life with anyone, not even your parents. You do not need a third party to listen to your problems and make a decision about what you should do. They cannot possibly understand all the details that make up your daily lives. Satan uses the intimacy of sharing with others to cause severe breaks in relationships between men and women who were supposed to have complete confidence and trust in each other.
- There is a wise saying: “The family that prays together stays together!” Prayer is one of the best ways you can possibly find to bind your family unit together in love. It is difficult to have contention with someone who you pray with daily. God knows how to keep us loving and kind to others. Why not follow His plan?

“No man has a right to talk to his children about God until he has first talked to God about his children.” – T. F. Tenney

The Blessing of Children

God’s Word makes it clear that children are a blessing and heritage from the Lord (Psalm 127:3; Genesis 33:5; 48:4). This blessing and heritage can become a curse and hurt if we forsake the ways of the Lord. Joshua reminded the children of Israel:

“And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD” (Joshua 24:15).

In this same chapter, he spoke of what happens when God's ways are abandoned. *"If ye forsake the Lord, and serve strange gods, then he will turn and do you hurt, and consume you, after that he hath done you good"* (Joshua 24:20). Just because God blesses us with children does not mean that we are free to do with them as we wish. Yes, we choose our path, but we also choose our consequences. What are some things we should be careful about with our children?

Before pregnancy – The wife/mother should be concerned and careful about her state of health before, during, and after pregnancy. This concern will actually have a bearing on the health of her children. If the mother is careful about her health, this habit will make it easier to look after her children. Personal and general cleanliness are the foundations for good health habits.

During pregnancy – The wife/mother should use every available resource of medical attention during pregnancy.

- The pregnant wife should make periodic visits to the clinic or hospital where she plans to deliver. This will help ensure a safe delivery and healthy baby.
- Any necessary supplies used by the doctor or midwife should be gathered as early as possible.
- It is also during this time that she should begin preparing the supplies she will need for her child. She should not wait until she is ready to deliver, since it is less costly to look, plan, and prepare before the time arrives.
- During this period, she should do her best to work and save some things, as she will need a time of rest and recovery before returning to her normal activities. She should do her best to save some of the following:
 - Money
 - Fuel
 - Firewood
 - Non-perishable food items, such as corn, rice, dried cassava, pepper, salt, and any others that the family is accustomed to using

This pre-planning will be a great help when the baby arrives.

After delivery – A mother must be careful to keep her child immunized to prevent childhood diseases. She should listen to the advice given to avoid malnutrition and sickness in her children. Clinics and maternity homes usually have good advice about the things available that will help with feeding and prevention of disease for the whole family. She should take note of this advice and make them habits in her home.

- Caring for the baby is important, especially keeping the napkins clean and dry.
- Washing will become a daily chore, so be sure there is plenty of soap and water available. Simple cleanliness can prevent such life-threatening diseases as cholera, diarrhea, and food poisoning – all killers of small children.

- Breastfeeding is the best method of nourishment – it is the God-given choice. It is also the healthiest. However, if you do not have proper milk for some reason, be sure your baby is well-nourished from a bottle.
- You should begin training your baby in the things of the Lord immediately after birth. Children may not be able to repeat what they hear at this age. However, they will absorb the words, songs, and spirit of love that comes from Bible stories, songs, and Scripture that they hear.
- Be careful not to neglect the father after children come.
 - Do your best to make him a part of your quiet times of loving and feeding the children.
 - Have the father pray and read Bible stories while the mother holds the small child.
 - Give the father a special place of honor where he holds the child and bonds with it.
 - Any time the father is holding the child, prepare something special for him to eat.
 - Use your imagination, but include Dad.

School age children – Just because your children enter nursery school at ages 2 ½ to three years does not mean you are finished with the responsibility of training them in the things of God. You must keep a watchful eye for their progress as they interact with other children, and are exposed to methods and practices of family life other than their own.

- Find out about their progress at school.
- Make time to play with them, sing songs and tell Bible stories.
- Listen to your children’s account of their activities and ideas.
- Teach them to say simple prayers with the understanding that you talk to God the same way you talk to Mommy and Daddy.
- Make sure their uniforms are clean and neat daily.
- Do your best to supply their school needs. You may even include them in this process. When older family members (grandparents, aunts, uncles) give gifts to your children, help them learn to use their resources to buy their needed items.
- Food is important at this growing stage in a child’s life. Do not just give them money to spend, but prepare nutritious and healthy meals for them at home. Make sure that any money given is used well, as children always like to buy sweets.
- Take time to organize their free periods. It is a good idea to begin the responsibility of small, simple chores around the house during this time. Children need to understand they are part of the family in more ways than receiving.
- Know the type of playmates or friends they have. Peers play an important part in every child’s life.
- Let your children know they are important. Every effort they make is valuable.

Discipline of Children – most parents do not enjoy this, but it is an essential part of family life. One of my favorite African proverbs says:

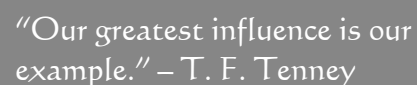
“A young tree can be easily bent. But if you try to bend an old tree, you will break it.”

This supports the understanding from God's Word that discipline must begin early in every child trained to follow God's way (Proverbs 22:6). The Bible gives many guidelines about discipline of children. Wise parents study and follow this advice carefully.

- Who disciplines? It is a serious mistake to tell a child, "When your father comes, he will punish you for what you have done." If your children deserve correction for some wrong thing they have done, you must correct them in love. This gives them the message that both mother and father agree they cannot do bad things and get away with it. You love them and want them to be good Christians and law-abiding citizens. Tell them Bible stories that support this understanding; Jesus is not happy with those who do wrong (sin).
- Children have to be trained to love, honor, and respect authority. This is best shown in their attitude towards their father. It should include older adults of all stations, including schoolmasters, policemen, government officials, and especially their pastor. This is a vital point, since your child usually adopts your attitude towards such authority types. Do you speak well or evil of these people?
- Children need to understand that your love for them is only as strong as your desire to help them know the law of God and the land. You do not want them to commit crimes against their nation or their God and say, "But Mommy and Daddy never told me it was wrong!"
- Never discipline your child in anger. Always have a spirit of love and concern for their well-being and happiness. Pray with them after discipline times, and make sure they understand why they have been punished (Proverbs 13:24; Hebrews 12:6-7).

Conclusion

In every aspect of family life, Love is the key. Husbands, *love* your wives. Wives, submit to your husbands because you *love* them. Children, obey your parents in *love*. Discipline happens because of *love*. Without *love*, there can be no ideal family unit.



"Our greatest influence is our example." – T. F. Tenney

A time of family devotions is a vital. Deuteronomy 6 gives a clear understanding of the necessity of time spent with our family leading them in the laws and promises of God. When we set a good example, and our children see our love of God, it becomes a natural thing for them to work toward the same goal – *to please God*.

Example is always the best teacher and it will draw followers. Set the correct example for your family, and God will surely bless and reward you according to all His good gifts and plan. Let us lead the way for our families as we follow Christ down His "*Path to Righteousness*."

"But as for me and my house. . . we will serve the Lord!" (Joshua 24:15)

Study Questions

1. What does the happiness of any marriage depend on? _____

2. List and briefly explain (with Scripture reference) four (4) characteristics needed for a successful and happy marriage.

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

4) _____

3. List eight (8) things the husband and wife can do to encourage each other.

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

4) _____

5) _____

6) _____

7) _____

8) _____

4. What should the wife/mother be concerned about before pregnancy, with regards to her children? _____

5. List four (4) things the wife/mother should be careful about during pregnancy.

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

4) _____

6. During pregnancy, the wife/mother should do her best to save what four (4) things?

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

4) _____

7. After delivery, what should a mother be careful to do medically? _____

8. What four (4) habits/regular activities need to be practiced in the home after delivery of a new baby?

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

4) _____

9. List five (5) ways to prevent neglect of the father after children come.

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

4) _____

5) _____

10. List ten (10) practices that will help you keep a watchful eye for the progress of your school age children.

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____
- 4) _____
- 5) _____
- 6) _____
- 7) _____
- 8) _____
- 9) _____
- 10) _____

11. List four (4) points to consider about the discipline of children. Support with Scripture where possible.

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____
- 4) _____

12. Write the African proverb used in this lesson about the discipline of children. _____

13. How does this proverb support our understanding from God's Word about discipline?
