

TONY EVANS

ONE
FAMILY
UNDER
GOD

Bible Study & Member Book



Tony Evans shows in practical terms what God's kingdom agenda is for your family and how it will nurture healthy, happy relationships within it.

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INTRODUCTION: IS THIS BREAKDOWN FIXABLE?

After decades of failed social programs, the once stable American family is rapidly deteriorating. Couples live as if they were wed by the secretary of war rather than by the justice of the peace. We are still hearing the figure of a 50 % failure rate for new marriages. Materialism has become more important than maintaining marriages, and personal happiness has taken priority over family unity.

In the inner city, the disintegration of the family is even greater. More than seven out of ten black children are growing up without a father. Two-parent families are now the exception in the inner city. The devaluation of women through the curse of pornography and the glorification of violence on television and in the movies have fueled family breakdown. In such an environment, it is no wonder that gangs flourish in our cities—and yes, they have moved to the suburbs too. There is no longer any such thing as fleeing the problem.

However, dear friend, don't let all of this bad news discourage you. The family is fixable. Your willingness to learn about God's kingdom agenda and His plan for kingdom families is a wonderful step toward that end. It is my hope that God will use this study to educate and inspire you in your walk with Him and in your family relationships. As you develop in your spiritual life through this study and apply it to the kingdom institutions of family and church community, I think you will find yourself entering into a whole new realm of spiritual life and see how the kingdom perspective applies to all of life.

Our national ministry, The Urban Alternative (TUA), has a number of resources to help you further understand and appropriate the principles learned in this study. Call TUA and ask for a complimentary copy of our monthly devotional magazine. Our toll-free number is 1-800-800-3222. Or visit us online to discover new resources to equip you at TonyEvans.org

May God use this study to transform your life and encourage you to live all of life by the kingdom agenda.

Dr. Tony Evans



WELCOME

...to an exciting study of the challenges, joys, and rewards of kingdom living. In the pages to come, you'll discover what it means to live as a kingdom citizen in your family (and therefore in your church and community too). In addition, you'll have the opportunity to meet weekly with others who desire the same kind of renewed life and transformed relationships.

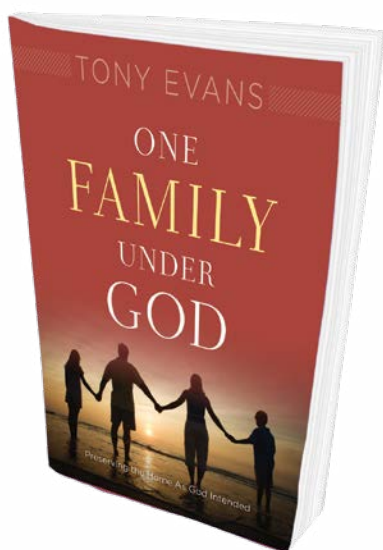
USING YOUR MEMBER GUIDE: A DAILY OPPORTUNITY

Use your Kingdom Family Member Guide on a daily basis. Don't just read it through in one sitting. As you take up this book during a quiet time in your day—each day—you'll focus on a particular aspect of God's kingdom agenda for you and your family. Then you'll be invited to reflect on this truth and its related Scriptures, considering how the biblical principles apply in everyday life.

As you record your responses to questions in the book, the ultimate goal, of course, is a deepening fellowship with God. As you are open, the LORD will lead you into truth and a growing desire to please Him in every way. And as you are transformed, that spiritual renewal will flow into your family relationships, your church fellowship, and ultimately influence the entire community around you. This is the primary theme Dr. Evans has been preaching over the years: that God's kingdom agenda is world transforming. Yet it starts with each individual becoming a dedicated disciple of Jesus. And that starts by spending daily time with Him.

Specifically, what does the member guide material include? You'll find these main sections in each day's readings:

The booklet,
One Family Under God
by Dr. Tony Evans makes a perfect
companion piece to this Bible Study.



Find it and many more resources at:
TonyEvans.org

MEETING WITH OTHERS: A WEEKLY FELLOWSHIP

Spiritual growth is best accomplished in the context of fellowship with other like-minded believers. The most important element of that is, of course, attending worship services with fellow believers. But small group studies can provide much opportunity for mutual edification. That's why this course involves a two-part process: individual readings during the week, and a small group meeting once per week.

Using this Kingdom Family Member Guide, you will study your daily readings in preparation for a weekly group meeting. There you'll offer your insights, comments, questions, and prayer requests. In other words, as you record your responses and reactions to the various questions, you'll be adding to the lively discussion in your weekly group meeting. Just bring your filled-in member guide to the group with you, so you can refer to your thoughts and share them with others. Your group leader will be depending on you to participate fully in the group discussions, drawing upon all you've thought about and learned in your daily readings.

Finally, remember that the compelling daily readings are adapted from Dr. Tony Evans' books *The Kingdom Agenda: Life Under God* (Moody Press, 2013) and *One Family Under God* (Moody Press, 2013). Dr. Evans is a well-known and beloved pastor and radio minister filled with a deep felt passion for the church. He longs to see a transformation in society at large. But he knows that it can only begin with the individual—with a renewal of commitment in each believer to live all of life under God. If that is your desire, read on.

A vintage wooden chair with a high back and spindle details is positioned in a field of tall grass and small white flowers. The background is a soft-focus forest. The text 'SESSION ONE' is overlaid on the chair's backrest in a white, serif font.

SESSION ONE

THE KINGDOM FAMILY

I have a beautiful bronze statue on my desk that represents the family. It's a statue of a family of eagles. The mother is on a mountain, with her eaglets tucked safely under her wings, while the father hovers above with his wings outstretched to protect and preserve his loved ones.

That statue represents God's design for the Christian family. Sadly, we are living at a time when the family is constantly under attack, and the only way we are going to be able to protect our families from the enemy's onslaught is by seeking help from our God and from His Book.

In Genesis 18:19, God spoke to Abraham about the essential steps in guarding his family: "For I have chosen him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing righteousness and justice; in order that the LORD may bring upon Abraham what He has spoken about him."

Abraham learned that there are three things that are necessary to protect the family:

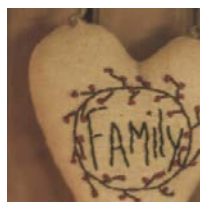
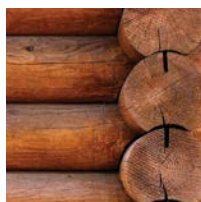
First, Abraham had to give his family a sense of destiny. This world is full of distractions but very little purpose. We must be able to see beyond ourselves to future generations and instill in our children the kinds of goals that would honor God.

Second, God told Abraham that he would have to discipline his children, commanding them in the way of the Lord. There is a direct link between the unruliness of this generation and the absence of spiritual leaders in the home. Unless this trend is reversed, there's bad news for family.

Finally, Abraham was to offer his children a sense of dignity by teaching them righteousness and justice. I never want my children to forget that they're recipients of God's grace. Our children need to understand that they are to be servants to others, especially to those who are hurting and to those who have never had the privilege of living with a mother and a father. Before we can expect this of them, however, we as a family must actively give grace to others. So not only must we protect our families from the influence of the world, but we must also equip them to help change the world.

Dr. Tony Evans





THE KINGDOM FAMILY BEGINS WITH A COMMITMENT TO GOD

We're not at the ideal. There are broken hearts, broken lives, people who have made mistakes, and people who have done wrong things in families throughout our churches and in our land. Yet the ideal must be what we aim for. It must be what we're pointed toward. It must be what we're looking at. So let's begin looking at the ideal, God's painting—His portrait—His picture of the family the way He intended it to be.

Psalms 128 lays it out very plainly. This must be our goal. This must be where we're pointed.

Psalms 128:1-4

"How blessed is everyone who fears the LORD, who walks in His ways. When you shall eat of the fruit of your hands, you will be happy and it will be well with you. Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine, within your home, your children, like olive plants around your table. Behold, for thus shall the man be blessed who fears the LORD."

The first thing the psalmist says in verses 1 and 2 is that the kingdom family begins with a personal commitment to God. In verse 3, he begins talking about family. But before he starts talking about the family unit, he talks about the people who make up the family unit. Why? Because in order to have a contented family, you must first have contented people living there. Or in order to have a miserable family, you must first have miserable people living there.

When a person says, “My home is miserable,” he doesn’t mean the bricks are miserable or that the grass is miserable or that the utensils are miserable. He means that there are some miserable people living there. To try to have a happy home when you have unhappy people is impossible.

So the starting place for fixing the family is fixing people. And God says for that to happen, the members of the household must have their lives centered around God. If they are not centered around God, then the unhappiness of their lives will rub off on the other members living in the family.

When God says, “How blessed is everyone who fears the LORD,” He is saying, “Take God seriously.” To fear means “to be in awe of” or “to reverence.” If you don’t fear God, your lack of fear will show up in your family.

God is like the sun, and you are like one of the planets. You can only have your orbit straight if you stay within the gravitational pull. Pluto circles the sun between 2 billion and 4 billion miles away. The sun keeps it in its gravitational pull, or else it would be flung into outer space. It would leave our solar system. We have watched families leave the solar system, get flung off into space, and be utterly destroyed because the sun was no longer the controlling factor. God was no longer the center. If men are not men of God, if we don’t raise our children whom we impact to be children of God, then we shouldn’t be surprised if we are flung into outer space, so to speak, or if our lives spin out of control.

Because the husband is responsible for setting the tone of the family, he is the first focus in Psalm 128. Notice the words “your wife” in verse 3. When the husband is centered around God, fears God, and walks in the ways of God, an automatic response will come from his wife. We’ll look at this more deeply in the lesson on the kingdom husband, but let’s begin by looking at it briefly here.

Psalms 128:3

"Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine, your house, your children like olive plants around your table."

The image in this verse is of a grapevine, and a grapevine always clings. The atmosphere in a home is that a woman should be able to wrap her branches around her husband. A wife who hangs onto her husband and wraps around him totally is doing what God wants because God wants wives to be clinging vines.

Vines not only cling, but they also climb. When a man is the right kind of man, the wife wants to cling to him, and then she grows. She develops strengths, abilities, and skills. She becomes a better woman than she was before. If a wife is not growing, either there is nothing to cling to or the husband has not created an environment for her growth.

A grapevine also clusters and provides grapes for wine. If a husband lets his wife cling and climb, she'll cluster and make him drunk with her love. That love will naturally overflow, and the husband will be fulfilled.

The psalm continues, "Your children [shall be] like olive plants around your table" (Psalm 128:3). An olive plant takes 15 years to mature. The plant must be nurtured before it can become a tree and produce good oil. But once a tree matures, it can produce oil for 40 years. We need to nurture our children around the table. If the parents are never with the kids, don't expect the kids to grow up and be spiritually mature. Nobody should raise your kids but you. Anybody else is a bonus, not an essence. We must set aside time for our families to be together, reinforcing spiritual principles.





CONNECT

Luke 6:47-49

"I will show you what he is like who comes to me and hears my words and puts them into practice. He is like a man building a house, who dug down deep and laid the foundation on rock. When a flood came, the torrent struck that house but could not shake it, because it was well built. But the one who hears my words and does not put them into practice is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. The moment the torrent struck that house, it collapsed and its destruction was complete."

Genesis 2:22-24

"The LORD God fashioned into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man, and brought her to the man. The man said,

'This is now bone of my bones,
And flesh of my flesh;
She shall be called Woman,
Because she was taken out of Man.'

For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh."



FOCUS

"If you don't solidify the foundation you will forever be performing patchwork on the walls of your home. You don't only need a painter. You first need someone to work on your foundation."

Dr. Tony Evans



REFLECT

Read Psalm 144:15; Proverbs 3:13-14;28:20. What do these verses say about God's blessings?

Based on what you read, who receives His blessings?

What is your personal commitment to the LORD?

Have you moved away from that gravitational pull?

If so, what will it take for you to move Him back to the center of your home?

Where do you see big or small "cracks" in the structure of your marriage or family?

What foundational weaknesses may be showing up?

Pray and tell God about your concerns, and talk to your husband/wife about how you would like to see this study affect your family's life.



REVIEW

In our society today, many of our families have a foundation problem. Because of this, the majority of them are spending their time dealing with the cracks on their walls. They are trying to plaster and patch up an argument here, or a fight there, or rebellious children, or any number of things. They spend all of their time and money focusing on the fissures rather than solidifying the foundation. It is clear today that because of this there is family chaos in our world. . . .

If and when we seek to build our families on anything other than the stable foundational principles of the Word of God, they will not last when life's trials and challenges come upon us.

my notes _____



THE KINGDOM FAMILY IS MAINTAINED IN A COMMUNITY OF BELIEVERS

Let's go back to Psalm 128 and continue with the rest of that chapter,

Psalm 128:5-6

"The LORD bless you from Zion, and may you see the prosperity of Jerusalem all the days of your life. Indeed, may you see your children's children. Peace be upon Israel!"

Zion was the city of God. It was Jerusalem. And it was the place where a father would lead his family to the worship of God. The author of Hebrews picked this up,

Hebrews 12:22

"But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God."

What is Mount Zion for us today? It's not the city of Jerusalem. It's the church of the living God. You remember that old saying, "The family that prays together, stays together." It's true. The family that is centered around God, and that gathers with God's people to be affirmed and reaffirmed in the things of God, will stay together. In other words, men, if we are serious about having a long-term family, then we have to be equally serious about leading our family in worship. My father worked very hard all of his life. For 35 years, he was a longshoreman, and he had to lift heavy boxes. He would be very tired when he came home, because he had to carry stuff on his back all day. But every Sunday

DAY TWO

morning, even if he had to work all night Saturday, he'd wake us up to get ready to go to church.

"But, Dad, I'm tired." I would say. To which he would reply, "No, son, I'm the one who's tired. But we are going to church, because as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."

God told Israel to keep the Sabbath holy. They weren't supposed to work. They were to enjoy God, to worship God, and to enjoy His creation. It was a family day in Israel. If we enjoy God on Sunday and put Him in His right place, He'll take care of us on Monday.

When families are centered around God, when husbands and wives turn to Him to fix their problems, and when children are raised among other believers, the family unit is strengthened. Strong families make strong churches, and strong churches can have a powerful impact on society.

"The LORD bless you from Zion, and may you see prosperity of Jerusalem all the days of your life. Indeed, may you see your children's children. Peace be upon Israel!" (Psalm 128:5-6).

There was well-being in Jerusalem because the family in this psalm was right with God. Fixing our community starts with our walk with God, then moves to our relationship with our families and our involvement in the church. Then, suddenly, the city's not the same. Remember, God is the manufacturer of the family, and He will always stand by His product. He will honor His warranty, His guarantee. If you want Him to stand behind you and your family, then you'd better keep taking it back to Him. If you'll only do that, your satisfaction is guaranteed.





CONNECT

Genesis 1:26-27

"Then God said, 'Let Us make man in Our image, in Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock and over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground. God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.'"

1 Timothy 3:2-5

"An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not addicted to wine or pugnacious, but gentle, peaceable, free from the love of money. He must be one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity. (But if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?)"



FOCUS

The importance of the family cannot be overstated. This is so because whoever owns the family owns the future.

Dr. Tony Evans



REFLECT

Read Psalm 128:5 again. What did the psalmist say would come from Zion?

What is your commitment to your church community and how is that revealed in your actions?

Are you willing to lean on other believers for support, or would you allow yourself to be used of God to minister to others? Write down an example of when this has happened.

What are some ways you can lead your family in worship?

What do you think a “godly husband” looks like?

What does a “godly wife” look like?

In what ways does your life reflect / fail to reflect God's image?

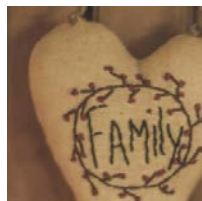
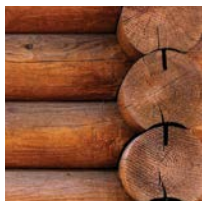


REVIEW

Oftentimes, the well-being of the home is determined by whether the man is reflecting God's image in his role, or the woman is reflecting Him in hers. Once that mirror gets broken, the reflection that is supposed to happen in the relationship gets broken with it. Virtually every time there is a family breakdown, it is because one or both parties are functioning outside of the covenantal bonds of marriage. They are functioning with a broken mirror, and as a result, they are failing to actualize the rulership God has given to them.

What Satan tries to get us to do is to either relinquish our rule by handing it over to him through deceiving us into believing that he has authority, or he tries to get us to rule poorly based on our own judgments and distorted worldviews. It isn't until we rule with wisdom under the comprehensive rule of God that we will become the rulers He intended. It is then that we enter into the complete realization of the divine design for a family under God.

my notes



THE DIVINE PURPOSE OF THE KINGDOM FAMILY

We live in a day of cheap imitations, of synthetics and plastics. There are substitutes for everything. And now one of the areas we are faced with today is the synthetic family. People want to redefine the family in their own terms. They want to turn it into something other than what the Creator had in mind.

God has His own definition of the family. He is its architect. Satan wants to destroy the family. He must destroy it if he wants his plan to work, because the family was uniquely set up by God to accomplish His plan in history. Satan is after the family because if he can get that basic institution of society on his side, he can control everything else from there. The family is the essence of civilization, the hope for the future. Crime is a result of the breakdown of families; and until that connection is made, you can't build enough prisons to house the criminals that will come from broken homes. The family is the core of everything. The family is God's idea, and what God made is good.

Genesis 1:26-27

"God said, Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness And God created man in His own image ... male and female He created them."

To whom was God speaking? God was speaking to the other two members of the Trinity. God created the family in order to give a picture of the Trinity. The Trinity includes three coequal Persons who form one

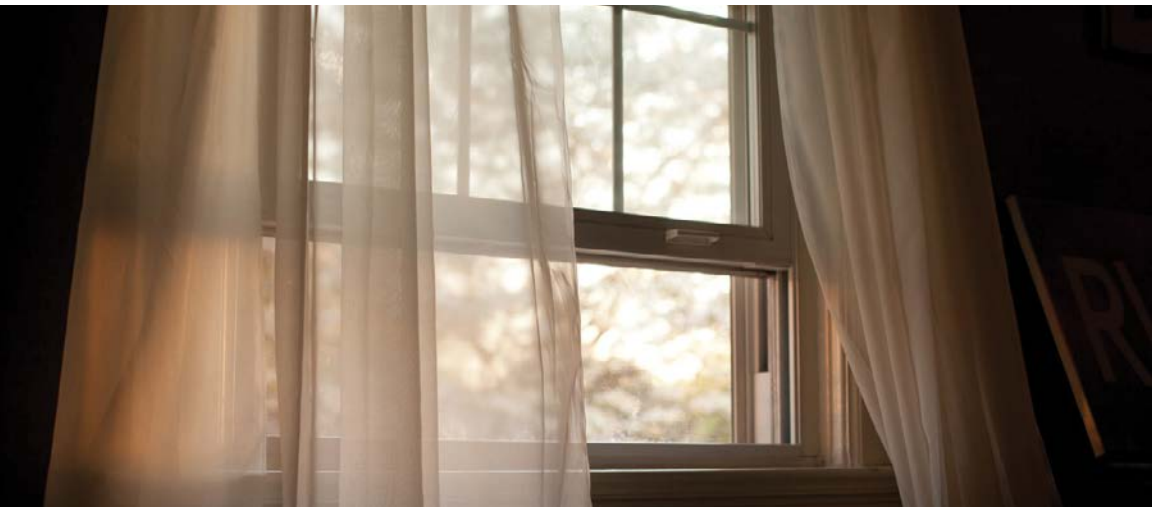
DAY THREE

unit—the Godhead. What’s a family? A mother, a father, and children—three realities who all partake of the same essence to form one unit. If you really want to see what God looks like, find a family that works.

Adam and Eve were to partner together to fulfill God’s plan of filling the earth. God said, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth” (Genesis 1:28). God did not give children to parents just so we could have look-alikes. God gave children so that they can be raised and sent out to establish new families. Those new families will represent God in a new place.

The greatest challenge today, the greatest frustration, the greatest joy, and the greatest burden is trying to raise children who will take God to their new families. When our children move away from home, they should take God with them. When they have relocated and established their own family, God’s goal is to reproduce pictures of Himself and the way He has chosen to do that is through the family.

When a family fails or quits, it is not simply an indictment on that family, but it is an embarrassment to God. Our happiness is important, but it is secondary to God’s purpose, which is to proclaim Himself and His glory to the world. Family was created for God’s purpose, and we are like runners in a relay race, passing the baton. You need to keep your family together for the sake of God. The ideal doesn’t always happen, but the ideal is what we’re shooting for. If you were raised in a nonideal family, don’t keep hell going. Start heaven over again.





CONNECT

Genesis 1:28

"God blessed them and said to them, 'Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves on the ground.'"

Ephesians 5:22-33

"Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body."



FOCUS

Simply put, the family's mission is the replication of the image of God in history and to carry out His divinely mandated dominion ("let them rule.") Personal and familial happiness is to be a benefit of a strong family, but it's not the mission. The mission is the reflection of God through the advancement of His kingdom and rule on earth. Happiness becomes the natural benefit when this goal is being actualized.

Dr. Tony Evans



REFLECT

What qualities does a family possess that accurately portray what God looks like?

Which of these qualities does your family share?

If you have children living in your home, what elements of the Christian faith are you confident they will be able to pass on to their children?

What do you most want your children to know about God, and how can you impart this to them?

What are your most important life responsibilities (your garden)?

Think of the regular activities you engage in. In what way(s) do those activities show the importance of family? In what ways do those activities focus time and attention on things you don't consider top priorities?



REVIEW

God never blesses just to bless. There is always a reason, a purpose, for His provision. Notice the order in the following verse relating to the purpose of the establishment of the family. It says,

Genesis 1:28

“God blessed them; and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth.’”

First, it would help to define a blessing. A blessing is the capacity to experience, enjoy, and extend the goodness of God in your life. It is never just about you. While it includes you, it is also intended to extend through you to others somehow. Too many Christians today want God to bless them without being willing for God to bless others through them.

When God established the family in the garden, He told them to be fruitful and multiply. He blessed them. Then He enabled them to extend the blessing He had given them throughout the land, and to those who came after them. In addition, God also blessed them through resourcing them with what they needed to carry out the rule He had given to them. A blessing is when God provides all that is needed for you to accomplish all there is under your rule.

Secondly, it is important to note that after the blessing came the instructions. God blessed, but then followed that up with the commission of Adam and Eve to be fruitful and multiply and to rule over that which He had placed under them. They were to serve as managers over the garden that had been given to them.

One of the worst things in the world is to live your life and miss your garden. The true tragedy is to mismanage the sphere of responsibility God has prepared for you.

This image shows a single page of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.



THE FOUNDATION OF MARRIAGE

And Adam said,

Genesis 2:23

"This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman as she was taken out of Man."

The word for "man" in Hebrew is *ish*. The word for "woman" is *ishshah*. Adam gave Eve his name because she was like him. The beginning of his statement, "This is now," reveals much emotion and is difficult to translate. To put it in modern-day terms, Adam said, "Oooooooh, Yes!"

God creates the marital match for His purposes, and in His power. Not only did He create the two—Adam and Eve, but He also brought them together. Now, if Adam wanted his rib back, he would have to go to Eve because she had the other half of him. And when he got Eve, he also got some stuff he never had before.

If Eve wanted to understand herself, she had to hook up with Adam, because the other side of Adam is what made her who she was. So she got more of what she didn't already have. Not only did the two complete each other, but they also extended each other beyond what they originally were as individuals. That's how the family was designed.

For a marriage relationship to flourish, first there must be a cutting. A cord must be broken in order for a family to be strong.

DAY FOUR

Genesis 2:24

“For this cause a man shall leave his father and his mother.”

So the relationships with the parents must be severed. Now, this does not mean that we no longer honor our parents, but we are no longer tied to them as our primary commitment. They become secondary to another relationship. Some of us are messed up because we have never left our other families. Some of us are dragging the past into the present. This new relationship of marriage cannot be properly sealed if the parents are still strongly in the picture.

Second, a clinging must occur. When a man leaves his parents, he “shall cleave to his wife” (v. 24). The word “cleave” means “to stick like glue.” It means an irrevocable attachment. The biblical principle is “til death do us part.” The man is to stick like glue to his wife. He is to be there for her, never forsaking her, never walking away from her. No matter how tough things get, man is responsible for cleaving to the woman and reassuring her that he will not abandon the marriage.

The husband is to overload his wife’s circuits with love. What happens when a circuit gets overloaded? Sparks begin to fly. Too many men want sparks without being plugged in. If you want sparks, you must provide the circuits. A wife ought to be running into her husband’s love every time she looks up.

Third, there must be conforming. “They shall become one flesh” (v. 24). “One flesh” means unity, embracing oneness of purpose. Now that



the woman is on the scene, the two cleave and become one flesh. This means that the wife must respond to the husband's efforts. For a wife to resist the husband, who is trying to leave and cleave, is to resist God. A woman who rejects her husband's efforts to love her is committing sin.

Finally, there must be communication.

Genesis 2:25

"And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed."

This is the intimate communication God intended for marriage when He created it. Notice that intimacy was mentioned last in this passage, not first. Most sexual problems in a marriage are really relationship problems that show up in sex. Physical or emotional intimacy cannot take place until the leaving, cleaving, and conforming take place.

Marriage is all about becoming one flesh. Men and women are very different, and we have to learn to be compatible. If both were the same, one of us would be unnecessary. The whole point of marriage is to blend those differences together to make a stronger whole. Otherwise, those differences can turn into conflicts until we truly learn to become one flesh.



CONNECT

Mark 10:6–10

"But at the beginning of creation God 'made them male and female.' 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.' So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate."

Malachi 2:13-14

"This is another thing you do: you cover the altar of the LORD with tears, with weeping and with groaning, because He no longer regards the offering or accepts it with favor from your hand. Yet you say, 'For what reason?' Because the LORD has been a witness between you and the wife of your youth, against whom you have dealt treacherously, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant."



FOCUS

When you got married, the preacher asked you up front, "Will you love this woman [or man] in sickness and in health, for richer or poorer, as long as you both shall live?" We preachers ask that because we know you haven't seen the whole deal in marriage yet, so we want an up-front commitment that you're going to stick it out—a kingdom-level commitment.

Dr. Tony Evans



REFLECT

Do you and your spouse look to each other as your primary emotional attachment?

What role do your in-laws play in your family dynamics? Is anything from the past infringing on your present?

DAY FOUR

Are you satisfied with the state of communication in your marriage? Read Psalm 127 and think of your family as you read it. Is the LORD building your house?

What is one tangible way you can demonstrate love for your husband or wife this week?

If you're married, what do you know about commitment now that you didn't know on your wedding day?

If you're not married, what would you find most challenging about keeping the traditional marriage vows?

Reread your wedding vows (or the standard wedding vows included here), and pray for God's renewed strength to keep them.



Standard Wedding Vow

(First Person), will you have this woman/man as your lawful wedded partner, to live together in the estate of matrimony? Will you love him/her, honor him/her, comfort him/her, and keep him/her in sickness and in health; forsaking all others, be true to him/her as long as you both shall live? (I will).

(Second Person), will you have this man/woman as your lawful wedded partner, to live together in the estate of matrimony? Will you love him/her, honor him/her, comfort him/her, and keep him/her in sickness and in health; forsaking all others, be true to him/her as long as you both shall live? (I will).

The ring

Behold the symbol of wedlock. The perfect circle of love, the unbroken union of these souls united here today. May you both remain faithful to this symbol of true love.

Please join hands and repeat after me (first person, while placing ring on proper finger).

I,(name) take (name), as my wedded partner, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better or for worse, for richer or for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, till death do us part.

I,(name), take (name), as my wedded partner, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better or for worse, for richer or for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, till death do us part.

For as much as (name) and (name) have consented together in wedlock, and have witnessed the same before this company of friends and family, and have given and pledged their promises to each other, and have declared the same by giving and receiving a ring, and by joining hands.

By the authority vested in me by (name of state or country), I pronounce this couple to be united in marriage.



REVIEW

Our marriages today are deteriorating at such a high rate not because we no longer get along, but because we have lost sight of the purpose and prosperity of what marriage is supposed to be. Marriage is not merely a social contract; it is a sacred covenant.

Most people today view marriage as a means of looking for love, happiness, and fulfillment. Make no mistake about it, those things are important. In fact, they are critical. They are just not the most important, or the most critical. Yet because we have made second things first, as important as second things seem, we are having trouble finding anything at all.

It is imperative that each of us learns to view marriage and family from God's perspective. As I just mentioned, marriage is a covenantal union designed by God in order to strengthen the capability of each partner to carry out His plan in their lives.

Malachi 2:13-14

"This is another thing you do: you cover the altar of the LORD with tears, with weeping and with groaning, because He no longer regards the offering or accepts it with favor from your hand. Yet you say, 'For what reason?' Because the LORD has been a witness between you and the wife of your youth, against whom you have dealt treacherously, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant."

This passage specifically identifies the marriage union as a "covenant." The term "covenant" used to be regularly attached to the concept of marriage. However, the word has gotten lost in our contemporary language today even though it is the biblical description of marriage used throughout Scripture.

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THE DIVINE CENTRALITY OF FAMILY

Joshua 24:1

“Then Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem, and called for the elders of Israel and for their heads and their judges and their officers; and they presented themselves before God.”

Joshua called the meeting, but God was the audience. Joshua gathered the people together to give his closing benediction of life after 110 years. His message was simple: Families, don't forget God. Why did he have to tell them to choose God? Because the culture was telling them not to choose God. Much like our culture today, their culture was telling them to choose pleasure, idolatry, independent fulfillment, personal significance, money, and power, and then give whatever was left over to God.

Joshua's context for choosing God is history. The reason you ought to choose God is because of what He has done for you. The reason you should stick with God tomorrow is because He stuck with you yesterday. Joshua speaks on God's behalf by saying,

Joshua 24:2-3

“Thus says the LORD...I took your father Abraham from beyond the River, and led him through all the land of Canaan, and multiplied his descendants and gave him Isaac.”

DAY FIVE

Abraham didn't just go; God took him. Abraham didn't just have a baby; God gave him Isaac. All through the text, God asserts that He was the one who made things happen. He sent Moses and Aaron to Egypt (v. 5). He brought the Israelites out of Egypt (v. 6). He covered the Egyptians with the Red Sea, and He got the Israelites through the wilderness (v. 7). In verse 7, He says, "And your own eyes saw what I did in Egypt."

The reason the Israelites were where they were was because many of their forefathers had chosen God and hung in with God when the going got tough. The reason many choose God today is because they have seen what God can do. Now, some don't have that history with God. They don't know whether they can trust Him tomorrow, because they didn't see Him yesterday.

Our problem is that we have forgotten who has done what. We think we have made it this far in our lives by our ability, our good hands, our knowledge, and our brains. No, we made it this far by the grace of God. Whenever we lose sight of God's grace, whenever our families lose sight of God's grace, we're going to stop choosing Him, and we're going to start creating false gods.

Joshua's gathering took place at Shechem. He chose precisely where he wanted to call his church service. Shechem had a history. In Shechem, Abraham got his promise from God about a seed that no one could number and about a promised land (see Genesis 12:6-7). Jacob buried the false idols of his family members in Shechem (see Genesis 35:2-4). Joshua rewrote the law for the people of God in



Shechem. This was a place where people had heard from God. Joshua called a meeting in this place where God revealed Himself and said, “Choose God.”

Joshua told them,

Joshua 24:14

“Now, therefore, fear the LORD and serve Him in sincerity and truth; and put away the gods which your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD”

He challenged them to get rid of a drive-thru religion. A drive-thru requires little from you. You don’t have to cook or do anything; just drive. And the food is quick, tasty, and loaded with fat. Too many of us have transferred fast food into our spiritual life. We want a drive-thru God. We want a God who makes us feel good with fat, yet with no nutritional benefit whatsoever. We want a God we can take a bite out of and catch when we’re on the run. We don’t want a God who expects much of us. We don’t want a God we have to cook for. Rather than filling up on God, some of us are filling up on idols and wondering why we’re sick.

Choosing God is an act of faith. The Bible doesn’t spend any time proving there is a God. The Bible says that a person must become a fool in order to not believe in God. Anybody who asks you to prove there is a God can be asked to prove there isn’t one. It takes faith to believe in God or to not believe in God. But when you have a history with God, you have a faith that you can point to. You can say, “I can’t prove to you there is a God, but I can prove to me there is a God. Let me tell you what God did for me.”

Choosing God means you worship and serve Him. God doesn’t measure whether you have chosen Him by hearing you say “I choose God.” Talk is not choosing God. When you choose God, you look for opportunities to worship and serve Him. When Abraham was told by

God that he was going to be a great nation, he built an altar right on the spot and worshiped God (see Genesis 12:7). Worship is when all that you are reflects all that He is. It recognizes that it is not by our might, not by our power, but by the LORD. When worship becomes a lifestyle, God becomes real and we have a history with Him.

Choosing God also means getting off the fence. Joshua said,

Joshua 24:15

"If it is disagreeable in your sight to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves today whom you will serve..."

Joshua couldn't make the choice for them. These families had to choose for themselves.

Not only do you choose your God, but your choice determines whether God works on your behalf or not. Choices are not made by leaning from one side to the other. Choices are made definitively. They are not first an act of emotion; they are first an act of will. Even if you don't feel like going to work in the morning, you choose to go because the benefits are worth the choice. God says, "Choose." He does not want you to spread your faith around. He wants a targeted, unrelenting, committed, determined choosing of Him.

You must be willing to influence others with your choice, rather than being influenced by others with their choice. Joshua told the Israelites they could choose whomever they wanted

Joshua 24:15

"But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."

He didn't take an opinion poll. He didn't ask what they were going to do before he decided what he was going to do. His family was going to serve God whether they did it along with the Israelites or whether they did it alone.

This is not a decision to be taken lightly.

But Joshua told them,

Joshua 24:16

"Far be it from us that we should forsake the LORD to serve other gods."

Joshua was telling them that choosing God means more than nice spiritual talk. Choosing God is more serious than applauding or showing up for the meeting.

Joshua 24:19

"You will not be able to serve the LORD, for He is a holy God. He is a jealous God; He will not forgive your transgression."

In verse 23, Joshua told them what they needed to do if they were serious.

Joshua 24:23

"Now therefore, put away the foreign gods which are in your midst, and incline your hearts to the LORD, the God of Israel."

If you're serious, you have to get rid of something. Joshua knew that they still had gods hidden at home. In public they were saying "I choose God," but at home they had backup gods or other things to which they pledged their allegiance.

Anything that mesmerizes you is your god. Anything that has first appeal in your life is your god. The way you know you're worshiping something other than God is when God loses out because of it. It may be your job, your money, your car, your television. Whatever or whoever takes you away from God is what you must give up if you choose God.

When you choose God you get everything God has coming for you in your inheritance.

Joshua 24:28

"Then Joshua dismissed the people, each to his inheritance."

The Israelites' inheritance was the allotment of land they were given by tribes as they entered the promised land. Your allotment is to have the will of God worked out in your life so that you get everything you have coming to you. You may be fighting for something God wants to give you, but He can't give it to you because you have another god.

You also get approval from God on your life.

Joshua 24:31

"And Israel served the LORD all the days of Joshua and all the days of the elders who survived Joshua."

Joshua is noted for serving the LORD. He came to his death with divine approval because he served the LORD. And because Joshua chose God and because Joshua served his God, he was able to influence his generation to serve God as well.



CONNECT

Deuteronomy 11:19

"Teach them to your children, talking about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up."

Joshua 24:15

"If it is disagreeable in your sight to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves today whom you will serve: whether the gods which your fathers served which were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."



FOCUS

God instructed Abraham to train his children, along with his entire household, to live their lives under God. In essence, God asked Abraham to live like Joshua, “As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.”

Dr. Tony Evans

Tony Evans



REFLECT

Read 1 Kings 18:21. How do you know when you or someone else is straddling the spiritual fence?

Read Joshua 24:8-13. List the rest of the things God did for the Israelites.

What is your history with God?

DAY FIVE

Take a step back and look at your attitude. How much do you credit your life today to yourself or your family? What do you give God credit for?

How has God used your family history for His kingdom purposes? (Remember that God can use even elements that are sinful or bad in His purposes.)

What role do you see for your family in God's historical plan right now? How can you fulfill that role?





REVIEW

When the entire world had become corrupted and it was destroyed in the great flood, God chose to start the re-creation of the world's population through the institution of the family. In this case, it wasn't Adam and Eve—rather, it was Noah. Noah's three sons became the basis for the restoration of civilization.

When God wanted to build His own nation and raise up a people who were holy and set apart for Him, He started this through the divine institution of the family. He chose Abraham, along with Abraham's wife Sarah, as the vessel through which to create an entire nation. In fact, God's intentions for blessing the entire world came through Abraham and the seed of his family. We read in Genesis 18,

Genesis 18:18–19

“Abraham will surely become a great and powerful nation, and all nations on earth will be blessed through him. For I have chosen him, so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing what is right and just, so that the LORD will bring about for Abraham what he has promised him.”

God validated the importance of family to Abraham when He said that His promises to him related to nation-building were directly tied to Abraham's influence on his own children. Abraham's greatness as the father of a nation didn't simply come by virtue of who he was. God instructed Abraham to train his children, along with his entire household, to live their lives under God. In essence, God asked Abraham to live like Joshua, “As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.”

God so values the family that He would regularly remind His nation that it was built on family when He would speak about His plan in history to them because He would regularly communicate it in terms of family. He would refer to Himself in familial descriptions such as, “I am the God of

Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.”

Likewise, when God expanded His kingdom in the New Testament through the church, He would regularly do it with family terminology as well such as “household of faith,” “brothers,” “sisters,” etc. The family motif for the advancement of His kingdom is all throughout Scripture. Only as we maintain the foundation of the family can we see the expansion of God’s kingdom in the world as it was designed to be.

my notes _____

WEEKLY MEMORY VERSE

Joshua 24:15

"But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve...But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD."

TALK-IT-THROUGH

With a partner or small group, consider the application questions below. Your leader may direct you to focus on particular questions. Be ready to discuss a summary of your answers—along with any key insights—to the whole group when you regather.

DAY ONE

According to a statement in Day 1, if we build our families on anything other than the stable foundational principles of the Word of God, they will not last when life's trials and challenges come upon us. What happens when we elect not to follow the roles described in the Bible?

DAY TWO

Day 2 discussed God's design for the family. How can a husband and wife align their family under God's authority?

DAY THREE

In Day 3 Dr. Evans discussed the family's mission. How can a proper focus for the home result in greater harmony and happiness? What hard decisions can you see yourself making in order to be sure your own "sphere of responsibility" receives its proper focus?

DAY FOUR

Day 4 looked at the covenant of marriage. What is significant about marriage being a covenant and not just a contract or an agreement? How does this affect your own marriage?

DAY FIVE

Day 5's reading discussed the importance of family to God's story. God chose marriage as an image of Christ's love for His own bride—the church. What truths do you think we can draw from the biblical importance of marriage and family and such imagery?

What other concepts, insights, or applications would you like to raise from your week of study? (Feel free to talk about meaningful Scriptures you've read in "Reviewing the Word.")

WATCHING TOGETHER

DVD SESSION ONE



SHARING TOGETHER

Group discussion and insights

PRAYING TOGETHER

Prayer requests for myself and my family

Prayer requests for others

group notes

A dark brown leather tufted armchair with a high back and curved legs, sitting on a light-colored wooden floor. The chair is the central focus of the image. The text "SESSION TWO" is overlaid in the center of the chair's backrest.

SESSION TWO

THE KINGDOM HUSBAND

The Greek word for live means to “to live in close harmony.” The word indicates an intimate dwelling. The kingdom husband’s role is to work with his wife in creating an intimate environment in the home.

When someone stops by our home to visit, we say, “Make yourself at home.” We mean more than “Sit down and be comfortable.” We mean we want them to be at peace, to be restful. The husband’s job is to make sure that, as much as is humanly possible, his home is not a place of strife.

Women don’t marry men for a paycheck; they marry men to get a husband. A wife does not want to trade her husband’s presence for a bankroll. Husbands, if you’re measuring the quality of your role as a husband by the trinkets in your house, you have missed out. Whenever the things you do for her replace your presence with her, then you are not living with her anymore.

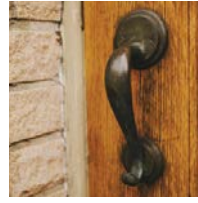
A husband is not living in close harmony with his wife if he is married to his job or his promotion. When a man comes home, he comes home to his first job. When a husband views his responsibilities to his home at the same level that he does his work, and even higher, he may take them more seriously.

The husband’s most important responsibility in the home is maintaining a spiritual relationship and atmosphere for his wife to embrace. Without that, the marriage can never become the dynamic relationship God intended for it to be. “Grant her honor as fellow heir of the grace of life so that your prayers may not be hindered.”

A husband and wife are heirs together of the grace of life. God is not going to do anything for the husband if the wife cannot be included. If that husband’s wife is not included, then his prayers are a waste of time. Now that two have become one flesh, the husband does not just have a singular relationship with God. When God looks at you, He now sees two people instead of one. Every spiritual thing a husband does should involve his wife. Spouses need to pray together so that they can enjoy spiritual riches together.

Dr. Tony Evans





A HUSBAND'S PROPER ALIGNMENT

A large portion of the rights and authority that comes through biblical manhood has been forfeited simply because men do not understand, nor live according to, the theological perspective on what it means to be a man of God. When a man does not live according to the biblical definition of manhood, it shows up not only in his own life, but also in the lives under his influence and care.

Not too long ago I took my car into the dealership for its routine changing of the oil as well as other normative maintenance that needed to be done. Shortly after I had dropped off my car, I got a call from the dealership telling me that they had discovered another issue that was wrong with my vehicle. What they had discovered was that my tires were not wearing evenly.

The problem, though, wasn't with my tires. My tires were fine. In fact, my tires had been top of the line, quality tires. My problem, as the mechanic explained it to me, was with my vehicle's alignment. He told me, "Even if I replace your tires, Tony, if I don't fix the alignment—you will end up with the same problem on your new tires."

In other words, the problem with my tires wasn't caused by my tires. Addressing my worn-out tires by replacing them would not have solved my problem. All that would have done is absorbed more money in purchasing more tires which would ultimately wind up in the same condition, if not worse. The problem with my tires was that my car was

no longer aligned properly, which in turn caused unnecessary wear and tear on my tires.

When we look around at our world today, we can see a lot of wear and tear. There is a lot of wear and tear on women who are being misused, abused, or neglected. There is a lot of wear and tear on children who are being forgotten, misled, or turned loose. Yet, we cannot resolve any of these issues without addressing the cause of them first. The root cause of them stems from a husband's improper alignment underneath God.

Paul writes concerning alignment,

1 Corinthians 11:1,3

"Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of a woman, and God is the head of Christ."

You can't get much more clear than that. Christ is the head of every man. The man is the head of a woman. And God is the head of Christ.

Unfortunately, though, too many men want to cover (be the head) over their wives without aligning themselves underneath Jesus Christ. Yet a man covers a woman because Christ covers a man. To hold a woman accountable to something that you yourself are not willing to do is a double standard, and is one of the major reasons I have witnessed as causing the breakdown of the family.

If a man is expecting a woman to be answerable to him, she should see that same principle being modeled by him being answerable to his Headship as well. In my years of counseling, I more often than not come across men who expect everyone else to answer to them without them having to answer to anyone. What many men do is get out of their lane in respect to the headship of Christ, but expect the woman living with them to be in her lane with respect to his headship over her. Yet, when everyone starts getting out of their lanes, there is

bound to be a collision. God rules His world representatively. While He is the ultimate Ruler and sovereign over all, God has historically ruled through representatives such as judges, prophets, kings, and in the age of the new covenant. Yet when headship is not aligned properly, the flow of His presence, power, and authority in His representatives is compromised or lost.

One way you can tell when a man is not under divine Headship is when he rarely, if ever, brings God's point of view into the discussion. His decisions, or the decisions of the family, do not reflect God's decisions. Yet, just as a reminder, whoever ultimately makes the decisions will be the man who is held responsible.

Remember that it was Eve who talked to the devil in the garden and chose to eat the fruit. But it was Adam who was blamed for sin entering the world. We read in the New Testament that "in Adam all die" (1 Corinthians 15:22a). Why Adam? Because he was responsible. To be the head over someone means that you are responsible.



CONNECT

1 Corinthians 11:3

"But I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God."

1 Corinthians 7:33

"...but one who is married is concerned about the things of the world, how he may please his wife."



FOCUS

It is his falling in line under his Leader, the Lord, that a husband models for his wife how she is to fall in line under him.

Men bear a responsibility to align themselves under God before they ever ask their wife to align herself under them. When men do that, God covers both him and his home with His covenantal protection.

Dr. Tony Evans



REFLECT

How many reasons can you think of for why marriage is good?

What reasons does God give us for marriage and family?

Husband: Would your wife say that you operate and lead your family according to God's definition of responsibility?

Wife: Do you encourage your husband in his leadership responsibilities, or do you try to direct your family to follow your own leadership instead? What aspect of this responsibility is most appealing to you?

DAY ONE

How can a husband ensure that his leading lines up with God's Word?

How can a wife encourage her husband's attempts at godly leadership?

Husband: What is one way I can help my wife feel more secure under my leadership?

Wife: What is one way I can better follow my husband's leadership and desires for our home?





REVIEW

The best thing that a man can do in leading his home and cultivating his marriage is to raise the question, "What is the mind of Christ on this matter?" and then follow it. Once you have done that, you will have your wife's full attention, and submission. Because now she is no longer arguing with you and your opinions. Now you have brought Christ and His Word into the equation. Eventually she will rest when she sees that you are under an Authority that can be trusted.

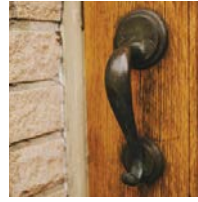
One of a woman's greatest needs in marriage is for security. A woman needs to feel safe, and that is why she will sometimes ask her husband to hold her. Most men misinterpret that as a request for physical intimacy, but if the emotional need for security is on her mind, she is not thinking about physical desires.

A wife needs to feel secure. A man must align himself under the Word of God to offer an environment that causes her to feel that way. When he does that, he will be demonstrating what it means to be a truly spiritual leader over her.

my notes _____



DAY TWO



A HUSBAND'S COSTLY LOVE

Unfortunately, what goes under the name of love these days often has little to do with love. The word love has been devalued. People say they love their jobs or their homes or even chocolate cake, but what they're really saying is that they like what those things do for them. Our homes make us feel comfortable, cake satisfies a sweet tooth, and work satisfies career needs.

But when the Bible talks about love, it is referring to the sacrifice one makes for the betterment of somebody else. We can only measure love by our sacrifices, not by our enjoyment.

Ephesians 5:25

"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her."

To talk about love is to talk about a cross. We have a Deliverer in Christ, and wives ought to have a deliverer in their husbands. The Bible never commands a woman to love her husband. She is commanded to respect him, but her love is a response to his salvation. Jesus Christ didn't die for us because we were lovable. Likewise, a man loves his wife to transform her into somebody he will want to love.

The measuring rod of a lover measures only the size of the cross the man is carrying. God split open Adam's side in order to create woman. Christ bled and died in order to give birth to the church. And in order

for a wife to move to where she needs to be, her husband must first take a trip to Calvary. The husband must decide if he is willing to pay whatever price of inconvenience or pain is involved to commit himself to his wife's fulfillment. It's a high price to pay, but it's the price tag of love.

Until a man has paid the ultimate price of death, he is not exonerated from love. No matter how we act, Jesus Christ is not going to walk away from us. A husband's attitude should be: "If this marriage ends, you're going to have to leave me because I'm not going anywhere."

The husband is to be both a savior and a sanctifier. At the heart of that is sacrifice. If there is no sacrifice, there is no love. Ephesians says,

Ephesians 5:26

"...that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word."

The word sanctification means "to set apart for special use." The husband is responsible for taking his wife from where she is to where she needs to be. This process is called sanctification, or spiritual growth. When the wife begins to have problems, the husband should become Mr. Fix-It. If our sink backs up, we don't throw away the kitchen—we fix the drain. The husband's job is to cleanse his wife.

Not everything the wife brings to the marriage is pleasant, and God knew this when the Bible was written. Something in her past may have affected her in a negative way. But just as Christ sanctifies the church so that "He



might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing” (Ephesians 5:27), a husband is to sanctify his wife. We will look at this principle more deeply on another day.

The husband is also to satisfy his wife.

Ephesians 5:28–29

“So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church.”

Just as a man works out to make his body look good, he is to work out his wife so that she is looking good, fulfilled, and strong. There are too many dissatisfied wives because there are too many unsatisfying husbands.



CONNECT

Ephesians 5:31–32

“For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh. This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church.”

1 Peter 3:7

“You husbands in the same way, live with your wives in an understanding way, as with someone weaker, since she is a woman; and show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers will not be hindered.”



FOCUS

The theological equivalent of a husband's promise to love his wife no matter what, as long as he lives, is the doctrine called eternal security. This truth says that no matter what comes—good, bad, or ugly—because we are God's children, He is not going anywhere. We are His forever.

Dr. Tony Evans

Tony Evans



REFLECT

How does a woman open her heart to her husband—what softens her? What can close her heart?

What does God say to either or both parties in dealing with conflict?

Read Paul's "prayer list" as recorded in Colossians 1:10–14. He prayed these things for the Christians of Colosse. What is your prayer list for your spouse's spiritual growth?

First Corinthians 7:33 describes the husband's role in a marriage.

Husbands: Is this how you see your responsibility? Why or why not?

Husband: What is currently the “costliest” aspect of my love for my wife?

Wife: In what area of life do I allow my husband to “pay” in terms of suffering that I could relieve if I chose?

Husband: What is one way I can—and will—show Christ's love to my wife this week?

Wife: What is one way my husband demonstrates Christ's love for His bride?



REVIEW

So a husband is called to love his wife no matter what. We can't wait until she gets everything right, just as a wife is to respect her husband even when he doesn't have it all together.

This gets very practical. A husband's love cannot say, “She's meeting my needs. Therefore, I will love her.” No, you love her even when

she's not meeting your needs. You love her until she learns how to meet your needs.

Most men date in order to marry, when the biblical principle is marry in order to date. Most men shower a woman with love to get her to say, "I do." But the biblical idea is to have her say, "I do," so we can spend the rest of our lives showering her with love.

Every man likes to think of himself as a lover. But the measuring rod for a biblical lover is the size of the cross he is carrying. Christ loved the church to death.

When Adam was created, God opened his side and took out a rib to create Eve. Adam had to bleed to get Eve. Christ had to bleed in order to birth the church. If a wife is going to grow from where she is to where she ought to be, her husband has to take a trip to Calvary.

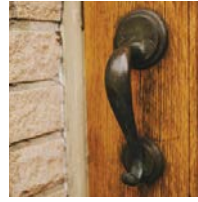
Now remember, I'm not talking about eternal salvation here at all. The idea is that a husband is called to give himself up for his wife. That's first on God's agenda for us husbands.

Husband, you need to decide, "I am willing to pay whatever price it takes to bring my wife to fulfillment. I am willing to go the distance to bring her from where she is to where she ought to be spiritually and every other way."

my notes _____



DAY THREE



A HUSBAND, HIS WIFE'S SANCTIFIER

When a man marries a woman, he also marries her history (this works both ways, of course). He has to accept the good parts of her past and her family as well as the bad parts. The good parts he enjoys. The bad parts he often doesn't get to see until after the honeymoon.

The husband doesn't get to see it all before the wedding. You may only get to see your future wife with her makeup on and with those eyelashes you thought were real. You only see her on her "social behavior," so it may be only after you're married that you hear yourself saying, "I didn't know you fussed like that. You didn't fuss when we were dating."

But if you love your wife, you will be her sanctifier. What is the purpose of a sanctifier? According to Ephesians 5:26, Jesus' purpose is to cleanse the church. A husband is the wife's "cleanser." His love is to be a sanctifying agent to help cleanse and heal the things she brings into the marriage that may not be right.

Maybe she was abused by her father. Or maybe she was raised by a domineering mother. The consequences of that won't disappear just because the husband comes on the scene. Our wives need our sanctifying love.

What this means is that when your wife needs strength, you are her strength. When she needs encouragement, you are her encouragement. When she needs joy, you are her joy. When she needs

peace, you are her peace. The result is that no matter how old she gets, your wife is kept eternally young because she's got a sanctifier in the house.

The husband says, "Well, if she hadn't screamed at me, I wouldn't have screamed at her." This is not tit for tat. What I'm talking about is showing strength. Husband, you say you're the leader. You say you're the strong one. Then be that. Be your wife's sanctifier that she might be cleansed. The true purpose of leadership is not domination but glorification. If it is our goal to glorify and beautify our wives, then we will not abuse them but embrace them.



CONNECT

Ephesians 5:25–26

"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word."

2 Corinthians 5:17

"Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come."





FOCUS

A man who is determined to satisfy his wife won't stop even if his efforts are not met with equal love. The first thing on a husband's kingdom agenda is to love his wife.

Dr. Tony Evans

Tony Evans



REFLECT

Read Genesis 29:1-30. What price tag did Jacob put on his love for Rachel?

What kind of price tag do you put on your marriage relationship?

Read Ephesians 5:26. Ponder and write down some ways a mate can cleanse or sanctify the other partner.

Do you struggle with blaming each other in arguments or do you take personal responsibility for attempting to bring about a resolution.

Provide an example of when your partner tried to bring about a resolution to a conflict by withholding blame that could have been attached to you.

Husband: What does my wife need most from me right now for her to be set apart for the future God has in store for her?

Wife: Where do I most need my husband's strength and his sanctifying love?

Communicate to your spouse what you wrote above, and take time to pray with and for each other.



REVIEW

The purpose of sanctification is to take someone from where they are and turn them into what they ought to be. For example, when you and I got saved, our problems did not disappear. Our mistakes did not disappear. In fact, even our sins did not disappear. What happened was that we entered into a process of transformation which is called sanctification.

To sanctify someone or something means to set it apart from common or ordinary usage for a special purpose—to make it holy. In the Bible, people or things were set apart for God’s use. They may have been common objects or ordinary people, but once they were sanctified they became very special.

Sometimes people in our church ask me to dedicate their house to God’s glory. Many people also dedicate their infant children to the LORD. These are examples of sanctification.

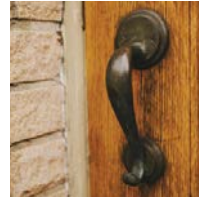
When a person is sanctified, he is set apart from his past unto his future. This has application to marriage because when a man marries a woman, he sets her apart from her past and unto a future that he has promised to her.

Most new husbands make glorious promises about the future, and those promises don’t always come to fruition. But the point is that there is a setting apart, a disconnection from the past and a new connection with the future.

my notes _____

DAY THREE

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UNDERSTANDING THE WOMAN YOU MARRIED

Men are told to study two things: the Bible and their wives. Why? Because both can be difficult to interpret.

1 Peter 3:7

"...Live with your wives in an understanding way."

A woman is complex. That's why the Bible says, "Know her." You cannot study something without investing time in it.

God created a complex network in the woman that includes hormonal changes all month, every month. A husband ought to know his wife's calendar in order to understand what's going on with her moods and sensitivities. He will then know when she needs that extra tenderness. Women love to be understood. They want their husbands to understand their fears, their cares, and their disappointments. Husbands need to be willing to listen so that they can learn to understand. They need to give their wives some undivided attention.

You can't study something without giving time to it. When your wife wants to talk, she's giving you the opportunity to know her, because many times we as men are meeting needs that our wives don't have. You say, "So how do I know what my wife's needs are?"

Ask her and then listen to the answer. She'll tell you if she knows you really want to hear the answer. Knowing your wife means you have to make some adjustments. You may have to give up some

television programs or get your news from somewhere besides the evening newscast.

When that happens, good things will start happening in your marriage because women love to be understood. They want someone with whom to share their fears, their cares, their hopes, and their disappointments. When they feel loved and understood, they are better able to respond in love.

A husband should also treat his wife better as a result of knowing her more fully.

She is not another woman; she is a treasure to be honored, appreciated, and placed in a position of significance. What's sad, but true, is that many of us men do for other women what we will not do for our wives. We used to open the car door for her every single time, and now she's lucky to get in before the car drives off. We used to walk on the side of the curb so that if a car went off the curb, we'd get hit first. Now we not only put her on the curbside, we nudge her to the gutter.

When chivalry dies, a marriage dies. Other women can get in the car by themselves, but not a man's wife—she is special.

The husband can make his wife feel like he knows her with his word choices. She wants a call during the middle of the day to let her know you're thinking about her. She doesn't need a new car; just the fact that you want to take her for a ride in the old one will do. You need to surprise her—birthdays and anniversaries are too predictable, so bombard her with notes, gifts, and phone calls at other times.

Husbands are also to honor their wives with the knowledge they have gained of her. She is a partner in the marriage relationship, and husbands need to know how she feels about the situation. If the husband decides to go a different way than the wife thinks they should go, then she should at least be able to say, "He has my best interests at heart." And if you're a husband who's going your way and then realize she was right, you need to reverse your decision.



CONNECT

1 Peter 3:7

"You husbands likewise, live with your wives in an understanding way."

Proverbs 20:5

"A plan in the heart of a man is like deep water,
But a man of understanding draws it out."



FOCUS

I tend to put a greater emphasis on the role of a man when I talk about marriage. I do this for two reasons. One, because men are the head of the home and therefore held responsible. And two, because men often have the ability to control the climate in their home. Husband, you're the spiritual thermostat in your marriage and home. You control the temperature. Your wife is the thermometer. She'll tell you how it reads.

Dr. Tony Evans



REFLECT

How much time do you spend in quality time each week communicating in a way that will help you understand each other? Is there a way that you could improve in this area?

Consider something to share with your spouse that you have never told them before that will reveal a part of you that they may not fully know. Write down the concept here.

Husband: What is the best way for you to learn more about your wife?

Wife: What would be one practical way for you to encourage your husband as he seeks to know you and lead you?

Husband, set aside some significant time to talk with your wife without interruption. If you aren't both available this evening, then schedule a time (on the calendar) within the next day.



REVIEW

Remember, your wife didn't marry a paycheck, a car, or a job title. She married you. Whenever you measure the quality of your marriage by the number and size of the trinkets you own, you've missed it.

I know we men have the responsibility to provide for our families. I'm not overlooking that. What I'm telling you is that whenever the things

you do for your wife replace your presence with her, then you are not living with her in the way 1 Peter 3:7 describes.

For a husband, making the commitment to live with his wife may mean making some hard decisions about work, hobbies, or other involvements. But imagine what it would mean to a wife to have her husband tell her, “I’m committed to you. If I have to give some things up or back off at work, I’ll do it.”

my notes _____

[illegible]



LOVING YOUR WIFE COMPLETELY

We're learning that when it comes to the ways a husband needs to care for his wife, the Bible is rich with instruction. That includes Ephesians 5:29, where we are told,

Ephesians 5:29

"No one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church."

The word "nourish" means to feed in order to mature. Jesus provides all that we need at salvation so we can feed on Him and grow into mature disciples. When we got saved Jesus didn't stop feeding us. That's when He started.

This is why we should marry in order to date instead of the other way around. Our culture has it backward, especially us men. We nourish and cherish that special person, we lavish her with love and attention, and we bend over backward to serve her, as long as we're trying to win her. But once we're married we stop doing all of that because we figure the chase is over and we won the prize.

But marriage is when the nourishing and cherishing should begin for real, not end. Your wife should be blossoming under your care. She should be better off now than she was when you married her because you are investing so much to help her grow into her full potential as a person.

That doesn't happen all at once. To nourish someone suggests an ongoing process. You have to eat the right things every day in order to grow, not just once a month or whenever you feel like it. Nourishing involves continuing to do the things that made your relationship with your wife blossom in the first place. Briefly, here are five ways a husband can nourish his wife.

1. Words of affirmation. A husband should be his wife's biggest cheerleader. A lot of wives would settle for a "thank you for dinner" for starters. But we can do better than that. You shouldn't have to look very far to find things your wife is doing right that you can affirm.

A husband may say, "I'm not very good at that." You must have been pretty good at it when you were dating! Maybe you've just quit trying. We're not necessarily talking about a Shakespearean sonnet, just some thoughtful and well-chosen words that communicate love and value to your wife.

2. Quality time. It takes time to nourish your body, and the same is true of your marriage. "Quality time" can be a misnomer for some people who take it to mean giving someone the best five minutes of their day.

But the only time investment that qualifies as "quality" is a substantial investment in the life of another person who has priority in your life. Now don't go out today and tell your wife that you are going to invest in time with her so you can listen to her, understand her, and talk with her. The shock might be too great for her system. Just start doing it and she'll get the message that she really matters to you.

3. Giving gifts. Taking the time to bring your wife a gift, even a small one, is another important way of telling her how much she means to you. Even more than the value of the gift is the idea that she was on your mind and that you had to get her something that says, "Just because I love you."

4. Acts of service. We've already talked about the importance of serving our wives. This may involve doing the unexpected, like taking

on a job that your wife normally does as a way of expressing your love. You could make the bed, which only takes a few minutes, or stop and fold some clothes the next time you pass by the laundry basket.

5. Physical touch. This is nonsexual touch that simply says, "I want to be close to you. I want to hold your hand and put my arm around you." This is another element of nourishing that too often falls by the wayside as the years go by.



CONNECT

1 Peter 3:7

"Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers."

1 Corinthians 14:35

"If they desire to learn anything, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is improper for a woman to speak in church."





FOCUS

It is part of a husband's kingdom agenda to make sure, as much as humanly possible, that his home is a place of peace. That means he has to be present to be the leader.

Dr. Tony Evans



REFLECT

Husband, how does your wife feel loved? Is it through words, gifts, time? If you do not know, ask her and write it down.

Spouse, if you could choose a way for your mate to express love to you and the following choices were the options—two hours of talking, a personal and thoughtful gift, kind words, a backrub or cleaning the kitchen—which would be? Discuss your answer with your spouse, and listen to his/her answer as well. Try to apply this in your life this week.

Husband: How can you demonstrate fully loving your wife and family this week?

Wife: How does your husband show his love in your home? How can you encourage his successes in this area?

Husband, take time to ask your wife two things for which she is thankful and two prayer requests. Pray for her out loud.



REVIEW

The fifth and final way a kingdom man becomes a real kingdom husband is found in the last phrase of 1 Peter 3:7: “That your prayers may not be hindered.”

This may be the last item on our list, but it’s the most important. If there is no dynamic spiritual relationship between you and your wife, there won’t be much dynamic to your relationship at all. If the two of you don’t have a heavenly foundation, you’ll wind up with a hellish relationship.

The key to this is found in the concept we just discussed, the fact that you and your wife are fellow heirs of God’s grace. Do you know what Peter is saying? He’s saying that God is not going to do anything for you if your wife can’t be included.

In other words, your prayers are a waste of time if she isn’t included. You don’t have a singular relationship with God anymore, because you became one flesh with your wife. So if you’re not treating your wife the

Since this is true, it has to be said that one of the great sins today is that men are not praying with their wives.

Husbands need to pray with their wives, so the two of them can enjoy the spiritual riches of God's kingdom plan and His kingdom inheritance together.

my notes

WEEKLY MEMORY VERSE

Ephesians 5:25-26

“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word.”

TALK-IT-THROUGH

With a partner or small group, consider the application questions below. Your leader may direct you to focus on particular questions. Be ready to report a summary of your discussions—along with any key insights—to the whole group when you regather.

DAY ONE

In Day 1 husbands were challenged to align themselves under God’s authority. What does it look like for a family when that happens?

DAY TWO

In Day 2 husbands, in particular, were challenged to love their spouses with Christ’s sacrificial love. When have you seen a husband’s sacrificial love win his wife’s heart or make a difference in a family?



DAY THREE

On Day 3, we looked at Ephesians 5:25–26: “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word.” How can a husband be prepared to sanctify his wife in love?

DAY FOUR

In Day 4, understand is the key word. How did you respond to the Reflect questions?

DAY FIVE

The Day 5 reading encouraged the spiritual growth of a spouse. What do you see as the husband's or wife's role in maintaining an active prayer life together? How can a husband learn to lead his wife and family spiritually?

What other concepts, insights, or applications would you like to raise from your week of study? (Feel free to talk about meaningful Scriptures you've read in “Reviewing the Word.”)

In week two, we begin with a look at the man God has given to lead your family—the husband. If you are a woman without a husband, remember that God Himself plays that role of protector and provider in your life. This page gives you a place to jot down notes, comments, and prayer requests during the group session.

WATCHING TOGETHER

DVD SESSION TWO



SHARING TOGETHER

Group discussion and insights

PRAYING TOGETHER

Prayer requests for myself and my family

Prayer requests for others

group notes

A photograph of a window with heavy brown curtains. The curtains have a decorative valance with tassels at the top. A floral-patterned chair is positioned in front of the window. The text "SESSION THREE" is overlaid in the center of the image.

SESSION THREE

THE KINGDOM WIFE

One of the questions married couples often ask themselves is: “What happened? What went wrong?” What they mean is: “How did we go from the excitement of those early days to what we have now?” And the second part of the question is: “Can we recapture what we once had?”

The basic answer to the question of what happened in a marriage is this: the honeymoon ended. That early period of euphoria where you felt like you were never going to land came to an end as you and your mate encountered the realities of daily life. But that’s okay because the early euphoria of marriage isn’t supposed to last. However, what a lot of married couples do is fail to go to the next step and build on that honeymoon feeling. What they do is let their marriages slide into sameness and boredom.

But one thing you can do as a kingdom wife is remember who you are in Christ. He has created you as a beautiful partner with depth and richness to offer to your marriage. Cherish the times in your marriage where you both have become comfortable enough to truly be yourselves. Sure, the masks are off and the best behavior has been put on the shelf sometimes, but to truly know someone and to love them at that time is a much deeper love than that which comes when you are both on your best behavior. It can be exciting to discover that the wonderful person you thought you married really is wonderful—just in ways that you never imagined.

The encouraging thing is that any marriage will work well when the people in it say to God, “You tell us what to do and we’ll do it. I’ll be the kingdom husband or the kingdom wife You have created me to be.” Yes, it takes work to build a kingdom marriage and a kingdom family but just like anything worthwhile, it will bring huge dividends in carrying out God’s will in your life. Kingdom wife, live in the fullness of the calling He has created you to fulfill as an important partner in your home.

Dr. Tony Evans





HER HUSBAND'S PRIMARY SUPPORTER

Some of the fancy department stores on Fifth Avenue in New York City are now using live models in their windows instead of mannequins. I was walking along Fifth Avenue one time when I paused by a store window and saw a live model standing as still as a mannequin, except that she blinked.

Other people must have seen it too, because they were making faces and knocking on the window, trying to get her to mess up. But she held her ground and stood motionless, because there was something more important to her than pleasing the people on the other side of the glass. She was pleasing her employer who was paying her to stand in that window.

Women who want to please the LORD in their marriages often must ignore the people on the other side of the glass. That's because what God is telling them in His Word may go against what many of their friends are telling them and what the television is telling them. But none of us is here to please the onlookers.

Just as a woman often makes an effort to see that everything is in place with her hair, face, and clothing, so a wife is to adorn herself with that which has deeper value than external beauty. In the context of 1 Peter 3:3-4, that adornment includes the support she shows to her husband—the way she honors and encourages him with both her words and her actions.

This not only makes a wife attractive to her husband, but it also carries great value with God. Peter described this inner beauty as “a gentle and quiet spirit” (v. 4), which God calls “precious.” A woman who wants to please God displays this kind of spirit and regularly checks her “makeup” in the mirror of God’s Word to keep herself looking good.

A Christian wife who may be looking good on the outside, but who cuts her husband with her words, runs him down to her friends and family, and dishonors him in the children’s presence is not beautiful by God’s definition. If the inner adornment of a woman’s spirit is missing or messed up, no amount of jewelry or clothes or any other store-bought beauty enhancement can ultimately hide the ugliness.

Ladies, you are to be your husband’s greatest cheerleader. When the world around him tells him that he cannot do the vision God has placed on his heart, you are there to encourage him to keep the faith and seek God’s will and way to achieve that which the LORD has impressed upon him to do. Your words and actions carry more weight with him than you’ll even know. Use them for good and watch God open up doors taking him, and you, to greater heights than you even dared to dream.



CONNECT

Genesis 2:18

“The LORD God said, ‘It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.’”

Proverbs 31:11

“The heart of her husband trusts in her,
And he will have no lack of gain.”



FOCUS

If being a helper is a position of strength and honors God while building up the marriage, why aren't more women doing this? Because they aren't hanging out with the holy women. Instead, they're getting their input from their unholy girlfriends, watching unholy television, listening to unholy radio, and reading unholy books. Peter said that a woman who wants to get this marriage thing right needs to be spending time in the right company.

Dr. Tony Evans



REFLECT

Read 1 Peter 3:3-4 and list several ways you can demonstrate beauty as a kingdom wife.

What kinds of "help" does a husband need from his wife?



Husband: Where do you most need your wife's assistance/ support/ help?

Wife: What are the top three ways you can aid your husband?

Wife: Who do I know who can encourage me as I learn better how to be a godly wife?

Husband: How can I build up my wife and encourage her for the support she offers me?



REVIEW

Marriage is a means to greater dominion over the life God has given you. In order to carry out the greatest influence in your life, it is important for both partners to work together.

Adam was to offer leadership through being the provider, protector, and the priest. Eve was fashioned for her own personal dominion by

being a helper in the process. God said of Adam's need for a mate,

Genesis 2:18

"I will make him a helper suitable for him."

When some men hear the word "helper," they think of someone who is going to cook, clean, do the laundry, and keep the kids quiet while he watches his ball game.

Television sitcoms are full of these marriage portrayals, and the programs usually get a lot of laughs. But there's nothing funny about a husband who interprets "helper" simply as a maid, cook, and baby-sitter. A woman doesn't have to be a wife to fulfill any of these roles. You can hire people to do these tasks.

Now don't misunderstand me. This doesn't mean a wife can neglect her responsibilities at home. There is no substitute for her touch in the home—either through carrying out the responsibilities herself or overseeing others who carry them out, but if that's all her role consists of then something is wrong because this is not the primary way that a wife serves as a helper in God's kingdom.

my notes _____

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.



A WIFE'S PROPER AUTHORITY

Submission is a good word, and it has nothing to do with inequality. After all, Jesus—who is equal to the Father—submitted Himself to the will of the Father in order to accomplish our salvation. Women and men are joint heirs (see 1 Peter 3:7) and should be treated as equals. However, when it comes to the program, submission is necessary.

Submission does not mean the wife agrees with her husband about everything. Rather, it means she recognizes his position of leadership to accomplish the program of the family. When a person submits to an employer or a judge, he is not submitting to a person; he is submitting to that person's position of authority. God has called husbands to the position of head of the home. He is not to be a dictator, but to give direction to the family. Therefore, the wife is to place her strengths under his authority to follow him as he follows Christ.

When a man walks away from the LORD, he is no longer qualified to be the head. In other words, a wife should never disobey the LORD in order to follow her husband. Our greater allegiance is to the LORD. But if the husband is trying to serve the LORD, then the wife should not work against him. He needs an assister, not a hindrance.

The woman who is able to submit to a boss she does not like is able to submit to a husband she does not like. Submission is not about liking your husband; it's about obeying the LORD. Husbands get beaten up

outside the home all day. They should come home to someone who's going to love them, hug them, affirm them, strengthen them, and treat them with dignity.

Peter raises the question of women whose husbands aren't right by telling the wives to be submissive so that the husbands "may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives" (1 Peter 3:1). God doesn't call the wife to be her husband's pastor and preach at him. When a woman preaches to a man, she messes with his ego; and that's one thing he won't let you mess with.

How did Jesus deal with suffering? He didn't threaten, and He didn't manipulate. He "kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously" (1 Peter 2:23). A wife does not change her husband by fussing at him. She changes him by asking God to change him and by behaving the way God wants her to behave. She shocks her husband by her helpfulness and submission, and she allows God to take care of the rest.

A godly woman adorns herself with inner beauty instead of beauty you can put on and take off. There's no sense in getting beautiful on the outside when you're ugly on the inside. Fix the inside too.



CONNECT

Titus 2:3–5

"Older women likewise are to be reverent in their behavior, not malicious gossips nor enslaved to much wine, teaching what is good, so that they may encourage the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be sensible, pure, workers at home, kind, being subject to their own husbands, so that the word of God will not be dishonored."



1 Corinthians 11:3

"But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of a woman, and God is the head of Christ."



FOCUS

Titus 2:5 gives us the ultimate motivation for wives to help build godly marriages for those who are in a relationship with a man who is seeking after God and His ways. God isn't concerned about a woman pleasing her society friends or her co-workers. His concern is the honor of His Word and the glory of His name. When marriages are out of alignment with God's will, disaster is waiting to happen. God's name is at risk of being dishonored.

Dr. Tony Evans



REFLECT

What, if any, difficulties does the husband in your family encounter during his day?

Does he come home to more difficulties, or is home a place of restoration for him?

What steps can be taken to ensure that he feels worthwhile in his own home?

Read 1 Peter 3:3-5. Compare it to Matthew 6:19-21. How are these imperishable things related?

When Sarah revered her husband, God was able to do things Abraham couldn't do. (See Genesis 18:1-14 and 1 Peter 3:6.)

Wives who reverence their husbands allow God to turn men's lives around. Record your thoughts about this concept.

First Samuel 25 tells the story of Abigail. Abigail married a fool. Still she revered him and she saved his life. He died of a heart attack and she ended up marrying David the king because of her actions. God honored her because of her godly behavior. Even if you married a fool, stay a woman of God. Reflect on Abigail's situation and write your thoughts.



REVIEW

Since no husband and no marriage is perfect, the issue of alignment is a difficult one for many wives. That's because God calls a wife to respect and submit to her husband even when he may not be worthy of her respect or when there is a difference of opinion and the wife has a valid point. She must honor her husband's position as her biblical head, even if she disagrees with his perspective, in order to achieve a common goal.

"But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of a woman, and God is the head of Christ" (1 Corinthians 11:3).

Paul says that he wants us to understand that there is an order to how God operates. That order clearly designates that God is the head of Christ. It also states that Christ is the head of every man. And that the man is the head of a woman—not all women—I want to point out, but *a* woman. The principle of alignment does not state that all men are over all women, nor that this arrangement applies in a work environment or other relationships. This is clearly talking about alignment in marriage because it says "a woman."

I know that submission is an unpopular word. But when we understand submission from a biblical perspective, we will see that it is a positive force to accomplish good, not a negative force to subject someone to an inferior status. The Greek word for submission means to place oneself under the authority of another.

my notes _____

[illegible]



BEING A HOLY WOMAN

How does a kingdom wife become a truly holy woman? By allowing herself to be transformed by God's glory. In other words, a woman who wants to please God and become truly holy to her husband must be a woman who is in passionate pursuit of God, seeking to be in His presence so she can be transformed into the image of His glory.

When God is your focus, ladies, He will give you the "imperishable quality" that the Bible calls "a gentle and quiet spirit." This doesn't refer to the quantity of your words but to the quality of your communication. Does that mean a wife won't ever get frustrated or have a bad day or say something she wishes she hadn't said? Of course not. If these were the criteria for holiness, none of us would make it. We all fail, but a woman who exhibits this kind of spirit has a demeanor of kindness. It is said of the woman in Proverbs 31 that "the teaching of kindness is on her tongue" (v. 26).

You say, "Well, I could be like that if I had all the things going for me that this woman had going for her." No, God wants wives who will honor Him whatever their circumstances, and He offers each woman the power to pull this off in the middle of her imperfect setting.

We're talking about a woman's inner holiness which exudes an internal beauty. This is something she can't daub on at the last minute the way she might put on makeup before going to a party. By that I mean that a holy, gentle spirit has to be woven into a wife's inner being so that kindness is

“on her tongue”—the first thing that comes out, in other words.

You see, a person can hide inner ugliness behind a nice smile, nice clothes, and a fresh layer of cosmetics. But what’s inside will come out eventually, and God’s concern is that what comes out of a godly woman is a spirit that reflects His glory.

A geode is a rock with beautiful crystals inside. These are formed as water that is high in mineral content flows through the rocks. As minerals become trapped in the rock and the water continues to flow, the crystals are formed. And the more the water flows, the more beautiful the crystals become.

Now the external rock begins to wear and weather over time. But inside, the crystal is getting more beautiful as the water continues to flow. That’s the picture of a woman in whom and through whom the Spirit of God is flowing. Her external appearance may age, and wrinkles may begin to show, but she grows more beautiful inside with each passing year as God polishes the holiness within her.



CONNECT

1 Peter 3:1–2

“Wives, in the same way submit yourselves to your own husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives, when they see the purity and reverence of your lives.”



Proverbs 31:25–29

"Strength and dignity are her clothing,
And she smiles at the future. She opens her mouth in wisdom,
And the teaching of kindness is on her tongue. She looks well to the ways
of her household,
And does not eat the bread of idleness.
Her children rise up and bless her;
Her husband also, and he praises her, saying: 'Many daughters have
done nobly,
But you excel them all.' "



FOCUS

Conflicts arise because everyone tries to live according to their own opinions. Yet Scripture clearly instructs us that we are not to live that way. Rather, we are to live life based on divine revelation, and not personal inclination. Whatever issue is causing friction in your marriage, or whatever decision needs to be made—whether it be financial, personal, or professional—you must discover God's viewpoint on the matter and align yourself under Him.

Dr. Tony Evans



REFLECT

How is proper submission a strength and not a weakness?

Husband: How do you need your wife's strong support?

Wife: In what way can you willingly submit your strength in service to your husband?

How does a holy woman relate to God?

How does she relate to her husband? (Does this change if her husband is not a believer?)

Wife: In what way can you demonstrate your trust for God by trusting your husband's leadership?

Husband: How can you demonstrate Christ to your wife and make it easier for her to trust your leadership?

Who in my life needs my example of godly marriage?

How can I provide an example or teach this person / these people?



REVIEW

In this no-absolutes, no-rules generation, it's getting harder and harder to find real-life examples of what God designed marriage to be.

In one sense this shouldn't surprise us because we see in Proverbs 31 that an excellent woman is rare, like a precious jewel (v. 10). And I might add that excellent men are just as rare, if not more rare these days. But in the context of 1 Peter 3, an excellent, or holy, woman is someone who trusts in God and is submissive to her husband, truly honoring and respecting him.

Let's make sure we understand what's being said here. A woman who disrespects her husband and dishonors his position cannot be considered a holy woman in God's sight. By disrespecting him, she is disrespecting God. "Holy" means set apart for God, which is an internal, invisible, spiritual commitment that is made in the heart.

But the Bible also says that we can tell what is in people's hearts by their words and actions. These women of old who trusted God and were set apart for Him demonstrated their faith by the way they honored their husbands through both their words and their actions.

The point is inescapable. Ladies, you cannot say you are close to

DAY THREE

God while you are in rebellion against your husband's leadership, putting him down and battling him for control. The Bible says that the women who were set apart to be "rare" and "holy" didn't do that. They respected their husbands even if they didn't always agree with them. They did this because they trusted God.

my notes



A GODLY WIFE HONORS HER HUSBAND

A holy woman is also someone who trusts in God and is submissive to her husband, truly honoring and respecting him. A woman who disrespects her husband and dishonors his position cannot be considered a holy woman in God's sight. By disrespecting him, she is disrespecting God. "Holy" means set apart for God, which is an internal, invisible, spiritual commitment that is made in the heart and one way this comes about is through showing honor.

The Bible says that we can tell what is in people's hearts by their words and actions. These women of old who trusted God and were set apart for Him demonstrated their faith by the way they honored their husbands through both their words and their actions.

The point is inescapable. Ladies, don't tell me you are close to God while you are in rebellion against your husband's leadership, putting him down and battling him for control. The Bible says the women who were set apart to be "rare" and "holy" didn't do that. They respected their husbands, even if they didn't always agree with them. They did this because they trusted God.

In some cases, mothers are setting their daughters up to dishonor their future husbands by offering them an example of this through their own lives.

The marriage covenant was designed by God to strengthen the capability of each partner to rule the sphere where God has placed

them. Marriage is a means to greater dominion over the life God has given you. In order to carry out the greatest influence in your life, it is important for both partners to work together. It is essential for the kingdom wife in a marriage to not only model honoring her husband in front of her children, but to cherish that virtue deep within her so that it comes out naturally in all that she does.

Honor is at the heart of showing respect. Ladies, even if your husband at times is not deserving of your honor, you are to honor his position. You can disagree and share your heart and thoughts fully while still being respectful in the tone of voice you choose to use, or in your demeanor. A heart of honor will bring blessing even when there is conflict.



CONNECT

Proverbs 12:4

"A wife of noble character is her husband's crown, but a disgraceful wife is like decay in his bones."

Isaiah 30:15

"For thus the LORD God, the Holy One of Israel, has said,
'In repentance and rest you will be saved,
In quietness and trust is your strength.'
But you were not willing."



FOCUS

Satan doesn't want wives to know that they don't have to fight anymore for that position of headship. He doesn't want wives to discover that if they will honor

God by respecting and submitting to their husbands, they can stop struggling to fill a position they were never designed to fill and begin enjoying peace in their hearts, even if their husbands don't respond properly to their submission.

Dr. Tony Evans

Tony Evans



REFLECT

Wife: In what ways have you been praying (or complaining) about your husband? In other words, what concerns do you have concerning him?

Husband: In what ways have you made it difficult for your wife to follow your leadership (or failed to provide leadership when you should have)?

Turn this issue over to God right now, and ask Him to help you/your husband address this issue.

DAY FOUR

Wife: How (in words or actions) can I willingly come under my husband's leadership, choosing to honor his position whether or not I agree with him?

Husband: Do you feel honored by your wife? List the things she does that make you feel honored, and the things you would like her to do to express this to you.

One thing I need to do to grow in reflecting God's kingdom agenda in my home is:

For greater accountability, the main thing I need to discuss with my spouse/share with my group about this is:





Before you go to war to get back what you surrendered, consider what can happen when you make it a priority to honor your husband's position and willingly recognize that position even though you may disagree with his perspective. What can happen is that when you are lined up properly under God, you get yourself out of the way so God can deal with your husband.

my notes _____

[illegible]



A FEARLESS WIFE

Now we're ready for what may be the best part of being a kingdom wife. There is freedom from fear awaiting the woman who is willing to cast herself and her marriage upon the LORD.

For most of us, surrender and freedom don't go together. After all, what happens when a fugitive or a soldier surrenders? He loses his freedom and goes either to jail or to a prisoner-of-war camp.

But the reverse is true for a woman whose desire is to be a kingdom wife. When she makes the determination to surrender to God's plan by honoring and respecting her husband, she discovers true freedom. The second half of 1 Peter 3:6 says this,

1 Peter 3:6

"...you have become her [Sarah's] children if you do what is right without being frightened by any fear."

What fear is this referring to? It's the fear of a wife who says, "I'm afraid to submit to my husband because I'm afraid he will take advantage of me and use my submission to LORD it over me. So I'm going to hold on to part of the control so he won't run over me."

This kind of reaction is very natural. It's scary for any of us to think about giving up control and surrendering our rights and our preferences to another person.

But we're not talking about having a natural marriage here. We're talking about a supernatural marriage. Anyone can have a natural marriage, meaning one in which the husband and wife are in conflict and there is a constant battle for control involving "my rights and what I want."

But God has a word of assurance for a wife who is willing to do things His way. "You have nothing to be afraid of, because I see your heart and I know where you are. You are in My sight and in My care. I can deal with your husband if you will align yourself with My will."

Remember Sarah. She was tucked away in a tent in the middle of nowhere in a desolate land to which she had come with Abraham. She was married to a man who had his moments of weakness even though he was a great man of faith.

What's more, Sarah was far too old to have any hope of having a child, and Abraham was even older and less capable of fathering a child. But Sarah believed God could bring a baby out of two dead bodies. God saw Sarah's heart, He knew where she was, and she got her miracle.

You may say, "You've got that right. It would take a miracle for my husband to become the spiritual leader and understanding lover the Bible talks about. I want to see that happen, but I'm afraid to surrender."

God's answer is, "Do not be afraid. I see your heart, and I know where you are. Trust Me."

If your desire is to obey God by honoring your husband, you don't need to fear anyone or any situation. Don't let any fear keep you from experiencing God's best in your marriage. Be faithful and patient knowing that while you are trusting Him for a change in your marriage, He will change you to live well within it until the time comes for your miracle.



CONNECT

1 Peter 3:5-6

"For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to adorn themselves. They submitted themselves to their own husbands, like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her lord. You are her daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear."

Isaiah 41:10

"Do not fear, for I am with you;
Do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God.
I will strengthen you, surely I will help you,
Surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand."



FOCUS

What fear is this referring to?...It's the fear of a wife who says, "I'm afraid to submit to my husband because I'm afraid he will take advantage of me and use my submission to lord it over me. So I'm going to hold on to part of the control so he won't run over me."

Dr. Tony Evans



REFLECT

How does marriage reflect Christ's love for His bride, the church?

How do a man's faithfulness and a woman's trust reflect Christ's love and demonstrate the gospel, both to the couple and to others?

What are your fears that keep you from total surrender as a kingdom wife?

Are my life and my part in this marriage what they should be?

How could my place in this marriage better reflect what I have learned today?

Take time to pray about what you have learned through this study this week.



REVIEW

The key to pulling this off, the motivation that led the holy women of old to reverence their husbands, is that they "hoped in God" (1 Peter 3:5). God wants to know if a woman trusts Him and really believes His Word.

Focusing your trust on the LORD means that you recognize there is something bigger going on here than your respect for your husband. The Bible tells wives to submit to their husbands “as to the LORD” (Ephesians 5:22). When you submit as “to the LORD,” you are placing your trust in Him, not in your husband. You are holding God to His Word—letting Him know that by your actions you have chosen to believe Him. True, there may be things that you fear could happen if you surrender as a kingdom wife, but the LORD promises to watch over you and take care of you. God can correct your husband, or train him in godliness when you turn him over to the LORD. Will you give God the opportunity to do just that by demonstrating trust through loving fully and honoring completely without fear?

my notes _____



WEEKLY MEMORY VERSE

Titus 2:4-5

“Encourage the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be sensible, pure, workers at home, kind, being subject to their own husbands, so that the word of God will not be dishonored.”

TALK-IT-THROUGH

With a partner or small group, consider the application questions below. Your leader may direct you to focus on particular questions. Be ready to report a summary of your discussions—along with any key insights—to the whole group when you regather.

DAY ONE

Day 1 discussed ways a wife could help her husband. Can a woman “be all that she can be,” according to modern thinking, and still fulfill her role as a wife? Explain.

DAY TWO

Through Day 2’s teaching, we learn how a wife can be of further support to her husband. What is your overall reaction to this notion, particularly to the statement, “She must honor her husband’s position as her biblical head, even if she disagrees with his perspective”?

DAY THREE

The concept of submission is shown in negative and positive ways in the Day 3 reading. Do you agree that “By disrespecting him [her husband], she [a wife] is disrespecting God”? Why or why not?

DAY FOUR

Honoring your husband is the topic for Day 4. When is this difficult for a wife?

DAY FIVE

During Day 5 we discussed a fearless wife. What can cause women to be afraid to trust their husbands? How can husbands encourage trust—both in God and in their own leadership?

What other concepts, insights, or application would you like to raise from your week of study? (Feel free to talk about meaningful Scriptures you’ve read in “Reviewing the Word.”)

WATCHING TOGETHER

DVD SESSION THREE



SHARING TOGETHER

Group discussion and insights

PRAYING TOGETHER

Prayer requests for myself and my family

Prayer requests for others

group notes _____

A wooden armchair with blue upholstery and a plaid cushion. The chair is made of dark wood and has a blue fabric seat and backrest. A square cushion with a green and white plaid pattern is placed on the seat. The chair is positioned in front of a large window with white curtains. The floor is made of light-colored wood.

SESSION FOUR

THE KINGDOM SINGLE

One of the most successful singles in Scripture is Joseph. In spite of the fact that he was born into a dysfunctional family, sold into slavery, falsely accused of rape and forgotten in prison—the refrain that we keep hearing about Joseph is that the Lord was with him and made him a success, even as a single (Genesis 39:2,3,21,23).

He had no partner in his life, and yet he was still successful. The key to his success is that phrase: the Lord was with him. But this word “with him” (omnipresence) was not in a general sense. After all, God was with everybody. But this phrase lets us know that God was specifically with Joseph in a unique way.

The key to your success as a single is this phrase. It is your intimate personal relationship with the Lord, and not just a general religious affiliation.

There must be a greater focus on that relationship than on the circumstances you are in or the marital status you desire to have, but do not have.

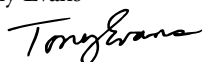
So powerful was Joseph’s connection with God that he was even able to forgive his brothers who had mistreated him.

The capstone of his life is stated in Genesis chapter 50:19-21 when Joseph said to his brothers that they should not be afraid because their action had taken him to where God wanted him to be. He told them that though they meant it for evil, God turned it around for good in order to bring about this present result to preserve many people alive.

Therefore during your ups and downs—or the roller coaster of your singlehood—make sure that you are practicing God’s presence daily. Make sure you are putting intimacy with Jesus Christ as your highest priority so that He can make you successful where you are, even in the midst of negative circumstances, knowing that He is using them to take you to your destiny. He is taking you to the place He has for you to glorify Him and to advance His kingdom for the benefit of others.

While negative circumstances during your singlehood can seek to push you down and keep you under, your intimacy with Jesus Christ is like a beach ball being forced under water. It is only being set up to be propelled higher. Stick close to Jesus as you wait for Him to unfold the fullness of His plan for your life.

Dr. Tony Evans





WAITING ON THE LORD

It's been my experience that while many single people are waiting, not all of them are waiting on the LORD. There's a big difference between simply marking time and purposely waiting on God to accomplish His will in your life.

If you're waiting on a person, that person may not come, or his or her arrival may prove to be a disappointment. But if you're waiting on the LORD to work His will in His time, He will never disappoint you and never arrive late. Paul told singles to take a good look at their circumstances while they are waiting.

1 Corinthians 7:25–26

Concerning virgins I have no command of the Lord, but I give an opinion as one who by the mercy of the Lord is trustworthy. I think then that this is good in view of the present distress, that it is good for a man to remain as he is.

Notice that Paul immediately tied singleness to moral purity. The reason this is important is that if you are going to wait on the LORD, then you need help from the LORD. And you won't get help from the LORD if you're compromising Him in your moral life. So as we said above, purity is high on God's kingdom agenda for singles. . . .

In fact, while you're waiting on the LORD, make sure that all of your thinking is straight. In what Paul wrote, he was trying to emphasize that

there were bigger things at stake in the Christian life than a person's marital status. This wouldn't be such a big deal for singles today except that we are guilty as a society and as a church of making single people feel like second-class citizens.

But God doesn't make any distinction between married and single people in terms of their value in His eyes. That's clear from what Paul said in 1 Corinthians,

1 Corinthians 7:27

"Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be released. Are you released from a wife? Do not seek a wife."

If singleness were not as perfectly acceptable to God as marriage, He would have commanded all Christians to get married, and Paul would probably have gotten married, or perhaps remarried, himself. The point is that singles are not worse off than married people.

Paul said if you are married, be content with that. And if you are single, be content with that too. Don't go mate hunting.

When Paul said, "Do not seek a wife," he wasn't saying it's wrong to desire to be married. Instead, his focus was on methodology. The idea is, "Stop man-hunting or woman-hunting. Don't spend all your time searching for the right one."





CONNECT

Psalm 27:14

“Wait for the LORD;
Be strong and let your heart take courage;
Yes, wait for the LORD.”

1 Corinthians 7:25-26

“Concerning virgins I have no command of the Lord, but I give an opinion as one who by the mercy of the Lord is trustworthy. I think then that this is good in view of the present distress, that it is good for a man to remain as he is.”



FOCUS

It is not only possible to be single and live a fulfilled life, it is sinful to be otherwise. That is, if you are single and unhappy in the role God has given you, you do not yet have a complete handle on God’s kingdom view of singleness.

Dr. Tony Evans



REFLECT

What is the difference between waiting for the LORD and waiting for a husband or wife—and why does it matter? Are you content in the place where God has you (including the spouse He has given you or your singleness)?

Singles: How can you entrust your present and future to the LORD?

How is sexual purity part of waiting on the LORD?

Marrieds: How can you encourage the singles you know or recognize their giftedness?

How can I better appreciate and fulfill the place God has me today, whether in marriage or singleness?



REVIEW

Singles may well have the same uncertainty one has when an airplane is in a long holding pattern. But the single is not independent; he is dependent on the LORD, and God has a divine purpose for each Christian single now. In the meantime, the single is free (not bound) and can serve Christ without the distraction of a mate.

Jeremiah 29:11

“‘For I know the plans I have for you,’ declares the LORD, ‘plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.’”

This verse can bring comfort when we sense that we’re somehow “incomplete” or unfairly treated because of where we are in life. We can rest assured that God has good plans for each of His people, whether we are single or married. In particular, a kingdom single can rest assured that God has a perfect plan for him or her and will reveal that plan in His perfect timing.

my notes _____

[illegible]



ETERNAL VALUES OF SINGLES

The Bible repeatedly tells believers to do everything we do and weigh every decision in light of eternity. So I am not trying to lay an extra burden on singles here.

But one reason singles need to view their marital status in light of the kingdom is that marriage will die when we die. That is, marriage has no place in eternity. Jesus said,

Matthew 22:30

"In the resurrection [people] neither marry, nor are given in marriage."

Marriage is only for history. It is only valuable in time. God calls us to have an eye that looks at eternity and not at time, to have an eye that sees things in terms of His kingdom. In this warning Paul also included earthly things, such as our emotions and our finances (1 Corinthians 7:30). Then he said,

1 Corinthians 7:31

"The form of this world is passing away."

What Paul advised us to do is to live life by eternal values because our time here on earth is short. That word means "condensed." Since

marriage is one of those things that is passing away, Paul didn't want us to fix our whole lives on it.

God has a purpose for singleness. If you are single and spending all of your time wanting to be married, then you are missing God's purpose for you. And that means you are not getting all that God has for you in the time He's given you.

Singles, it is better to wait longer for the right person than to be stuck with the wrong person. Marriage is a big enough challenge even when you find the right person. You don't need the headache and heartache of a bad relationship or even an unhealthy marriage.

There's nothing wrong with marriage, emotions, or finances, but they are short-term in comparison to the kingdom. A person who is waiting for the LORD can't afford to keep his or her eyes on these things too much. This person must keep his or her kingdom perspective sharp.

Many singles are not fulfilled because they limit their lives' agendas to marriage. If God's agenda for you right now is bigger than marriage, then marriage alone can't fulfill you. And if God hasn't given you a marriage partner yet but you decide to find one on your own, you will pay a high cost for that marriage.



CONNECT

1 Timothy 6:6

"But godliness with contentment is great gain."

Matthew 22:30

"For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven."



FOCUS

If you will view your marital status from the standpoint of His purpose for you rather than solely from the standpoint of your desires, it will help you discover a deep contentment and significance that many people go through this life never knowing at all.

Dr. Tony Evans



REFLECT

What are ways that singles can become fixated on marriage or romantic relationships and miss God's plan for them today?

Singles: Where is your life—including your thought life—focused? What aspects of your life show purity, and which ones are a struggle?

How can you encourage others who are struggling?

DAY TWO

Marrieds: Can you provide mentoring or encouragement to a single person you know who is fighting for purity and godly focus, but struggling? Pray for an opportunity to interact with that individual.

Where is my own life focused on earthly things and not God's priorities for me? How can I change this?

One thing I need to do to grow in reflecting God's kingdom agenda in my home is:

For greater accountability, the main thing I need to discuss with a friend or relative or share with my group about this is:





REVIEW

I want to acknowledge before we go deeper into singlehood that most people are probably not called to be single but they are single by default simply due to the sinful world in which we live (growing up in broken homes, not enough kingdom-minded mates available to marry). Paul makes it clear that if you are single, God can make your situation a blessing rather than bitter if you look to Him to do it.

If this is you, take courage and pride in your position because God Himself is your purpose. You have been made for Him. As He says in Isaiah,

Isaiah 54:5-6

"For your husband is your Maker, whose name is the LORD of hosts; and your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel, Who is called the God of all the earth. For the LORD has called you, like a wife forsaken and grieved in spirit, even like a wife of one's youth when she is rejected.' says your God."

my notes _____

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.



THE FREEDOM OF SINGLENESS

Another benefit of singlehood that Paul stated was freedom from concern. He wrote,

1 Corinthians 7:32

"I want you to be free from concern. One who is unmarried is concerned about the things of the Lord, how he may please the Lord; but one who is married is concerned about things of the world, how he may please his wife."

Then Paul brought home the point in verse 35:

1 Corinthians 7:35

"And this I say for your own benefit; not to put a restraint upon you, but to promote what is seemly, and to secure undistracted devotion to the Lord."

In the context of 1 Corinthians 7, singles are the free ones while married people are bound. Paul does speak of married people as being "bound" with no concept of "release" (v. 27). And freedom does mean liberty from bondage.

So single believers are to be free from concern in order to maximize their undistracted devotion to Christ. Paul said married people have a legitimate distraction in each other. But did you know that it is possible

DAY THREE

for a single person to live with the distraction of marriage? That's what happens when a single Christian fixates on marriage, or finding a partner, rather than on serving the LORD.

And when that happens, the single person squanders his or her opportunity for undistracted devotion to the LORD. God desires your undistracted devotion. He says, "I don't want to compete with anybody. I want you to see that your singleness is a unique opportunity for you to fully enjoy and experience Me as I fully enjoy and experience you."

A question I want you to consider if you are single is this: Why does God have you single? What is He uniquely doing in you, with you, and through you that can only be done now because when you get married you won't have the time to do it?

If you can't answer that question, and you're living a life of frustration, you're not on track for God's best in your life. God knows that once He gives you a mate, a distraction will come into your life and you'll never be able to return to the freedoms that come from singleness again. God is calling on singles to use their singleness for deeper commitment to Him and greater service for Him, and through this He promises His presence at a deeper level, and the abiding power of His peace.





CONNECT

1 Corinthians 7:32-33

"I want you to be free from concern. One who is unmarried is concerned about the things of the Lord, how he may please the Lord; but one who is married is concerned about things of the world, how he may please his wife."

1 Corinthians 10:31

"Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God."



FOCUS

The person who has the right perspective sees singleness as an advantage, not a disadvantage. It's an advantage from a kingdom perspective, not because marriage as its intended institution is bad but because it is distracting, sometimes disappointing, and brings with it concerns that a single person does not have.

Dr. Tony Evans



REFLECT

Singles: What distractions in your life are hindering you from the devotion that is due to the LORD?

Marrieds: In what ways do you find yourself distracted and living as if you weren't married, or wishing you weren't?

Singles: As Dr. Evans asks, "Why does God have you single? What is He uniquely doing in you, with you, and through you that can only be done now because when you get married you won't have the time to do it?"

Marrieds: What can God do in you, with you, and through you because of your marriage and your family, because of the people He has put intimately in your life?

How can I make better use of the place God has put me, and do a better job of loving the people He has placed in my life?



REVIEW

Everywhere singles turn today they find someone trying to fix them up with a prospect, whether it's over the Internet, at church, or in the family. Single people used to play "The Dating Game" on television. But some people play it in real life. As a result, singles end up trying to grab someone, or Google someone, or get someone at the club. Paul is saying that he doesn't want you to go around with the attitude, "Let me find a mate—I need to find a mate—I've got to find a mate!" Because he knows that if you go out there and "find a mate," you are also going to find some trouble. Due to that reality, you want to be very careful in the process of linking up with somebody.

Let me ask you a question by first making a statement. Statistics tell us that roughly 50% of all marriages end in divorce in America. A large part of the other 50% stay together for convenience, finances, or the children. Here is my question: If 50% of all airplanes crashed, wouldn't you be extra careful about flying? If you knew that one out of every two airplanes was going to go down in flames, don't you think that you would do a real careful investigation before getting on a plane simply because you wouldn't want to be one of those casualties?

The same answer should hold true for how you approach the potential of marriage. You need to be very careful before you link up with someone so that you don't end up as another statistic.

my notes _____

[illegible]



DIVIDED SINGLENESS

Paul's point in the passage we've been looking at is that a married person, by virtue of being married, is divided and thus unable to focus fully on his or her calling with regard to work. They have divided loyalties. They need to please their spouse, fulfill their purpose, and please God. They are constantly going back and forth between different focuses because the very nature of the relationship forces the division.

But a Christian single is undivided. Yet one of the reasons why there are so many frustrated singles today is that they are experiencing as a single what they should only be experiencing if they were married—they are divided. By being consumed with thoughts about marriage, dating, finding a mate—many singles today still live under the strain of divided loyalties. If God hasn't given you a mate to worry about yet—then my advice to you is to leave that person alone in your priorities, time, and thoughts. Because that person doesn't exist yet.

The moment that you are divided emotionally, spiritually, and even practically speaking—you have let your singlehood get in the way of God's kingdom purpose for your life and well-being. If you are spending an inordinate amount of your time thinking about marriage, looking at wedding dresses, watching television programs about people getting married—or who are married—and as a result feeling frustrated and distracted, then you have been pulled off course of a spiritual focus.

A successful single is one who seeks to maximize his or her singlehood for the betterment of self and others, the advancement of God's kingdom, and the manifestation of His glory.

When God made Adam, Adam didn't have a wife. He was single and satisfied. It wasn't Adam who said, "I'm lonely, let God make a mate suitable for me." It was God who noticed that Adam would fulfill his specific purpose better through the addition of Eve. Yet Adam was totally occupied with God's purposes, living as a fulfilled single. He wasn't distracted from his job of naming things, and carrying out his role in God's establishment of earth.

Here is the question that every single should ask: "God, how do You want me to use the state that I am in until You change my state for Your maximum purpose?" When God answers that question—even though the desire to be married may still remain—you will have a passion and a purpose that will supersede any dominating thoughts you once held for marriage.



CONNECT

Isaiah 26:3

"You will keep in perfect peace those whose minds are steadfast, because they trust in You."

Ephesians 2:8–9

"For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast."



FOCUS

Single men and women, if your personal foundation (humility before God, responsibility over that which He has assigned you, and an accurate understanding of God's Word) is not solid before creating a new family through marriage and children, your family's foundation will not be solid.

Dr. Tony Evans



REFLECT

What single people can you think of in Scripture?

How did God use their time (perhaps a limited time, perhaps a lifetime) of singleness?



What is “unfinished” in my life right now—in what area is God working?

How is my life “divided” between life priorities, interests, or people?

What are practical ways for the church (the family of God) to include singles, encourage them, and use their gifts?

Instead of worrying about marriage, what can a single person do, according to Matthew 9:35-38?



REVIEW

Too many singles are so hung up on getting married that they never get around to enjoying the whole garden of opportunities and service that God has for them. That’s the difference between a successful single and a defeated single.

Life is too short to focus all of your energies on something that may last thirty or forty years as opposed to the things of God that will last forever.

Now don't misunderstand. It's fine to pray for a mate, desire a mate, and anticipate the day when you will have a mate. If you want to be married, assume that God is going to allow you to be married at some point unless He changes your desire.

But don't forget that He is also preparing you for greater things than just being married. Paul said he had the right to marry a believing woman (see 1 Corinthians 9:5), and no doubt he had thought about it. We tend to canonize and sterilize Paul and forget that he was a man with normal human desires. But Paul surrendered his right to marry for the greater calling of the kingdom of God. God doesn't call everyone to do that, but He does call us to

Colossians 3:2

"...set [our] mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth."

If you are waiting, a proper focus will make the wait a lot easier.

my notes _____

[illegible]



A SATISFIED SINGLE

Let me give you a helpful formula for approaching single life. As a single Christian, you have three choices. Your first choice is to grumble about your lot and the lack of suitable potential mates and grumble that you aren't married because you can feel your biological clock ticking.

A second choice is to grab the next available person who comes along, regardless of that person's fitness for marriage. That's a bad choice, as we have seen.

A third choice for you as a Christian single is to grow in grace and in your walk with the LORD. You can say to God, "I am going to walk with You no matter what, and I am going to trust You and wait on You for Your timing in my life."

What will your choice be? Make sure you make your choice based on your true value and worth because only then will you be making the right choice.

A man one day was shopping at an antique store where the owner, a woman, had a beautiful table for sale. The price on the table was \$600 yet the man thought he would try and get a deal so he offered her \$400 for the table. They began having a conversation about the table, and she informed him that she wouldn't take less than the asking price for this table. The man continued to ask for the discounted price so the owner began telling him all of the unique qualities about this particular table.

Their conversation continued for some time, and then the man asked if she would be willing to take \$500. She said, “No, sir. In fact, we’ve talked so much about this table that I have been reminded of its true value. As a result, the price is now \$1000.”

Unfortunately today we have far too many single Christians who have forgotten their true value, and so they are willing to reduce themselves cheaply in their decisions, thoughts, and actions. What I hope you will do based on the time we have spent together looking at this important subject is to think long, hard, and biblically on your value. When you understand God’s view of singlehood and how much He cherishes and treasures you, you will hold your head up high while living single in His arms and care.



CONNECT

Proverbs 1:7

“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction.”

Genesis 39:7-9

“It came about after these events that his master’s wife looked with desire at Joseph, and she said, ‘Lie with me.’ But he refused and said to his master’s wife, ‘Behold, with me here, my master does not concern himself with anything in the house, and he has put all that he owns in my charge. There is no one greater in this house than I, and he has withheld nothing from me except you, because you are his wife. How then could I do this great evil and sin against God?’ ”



FOCUS

I couldn't control how long the pilot kept us in the holding pattern in the sky. But I could control what I did with the time that I was up there. Likewise, I do not know how long it will be before God addresses your singlehood. What I do know is that He does not expect you to be wasting your time while waiting. He wants you to wait on Him, sure, but to do so in the context of maximizing living single.

Dr. Tony Evans



REFLECT

What temptations might Joseph have faced to ignore God and His desires?

What does his story tell us about trusting God?

What aspects of your life currently require trust and patience?

How can you better understand “success” according to God’s standards?

What are the advantages of waiting for marriage, according to Isaiah 30:18 and 40:31?

How is the body strengthened by having both singles and married people in community with one another?



REVIEW

Let me remind you of Ruth, who was a widow and successful. Ruth determined to pursue God, even if it meant giving up the legitimate pursuit of a husband and the security of marriage.

Ruth went back to Israel with Naomi, assuming she would never get married again because she was a foreigner from Moab. But as she fulfilled her calling and served the LORD, the day came when she happened to glean in the fields of Boaz—and one of the Bible’s great love stories began to unfold.

Ruth was in an obscure position, and humanly speaking was about as far from having marriage prospects as any woman in her day. But when God was ready, He found her, or rather, He made sure that Boaz found her.

But let me point out that the story of Ruth is not the story of a single woman getting married. It is the story of two people who were used of God to carry on the line of the Messiah. Obed, the son born to Ruth and Boaz, was the father of Jesse, who was the father of David, through whom came Jesus Christ!

God may have you single right now, but He may be preparing you for something that is much bigger than you could imagine!

my notes _____

DAY FIVE

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are approximately 20 lines visible. The paper has a slight shadow on its right side, suggesting it's resting on a surface.

WEEKLY MEMORY VERSE

1 Timothy 6:6

“But godliness with contentment is great gain.”

TALK-IT-THROUGH

With a partner or small group, consider the application questions below. Your leader may direct you to focus on particular questions. Be ready to report a summary of your discussions—along with any key insights—to the whole group when you regather.

DAY ONE

Day 1 looks at “waiting on the LORD” as opposed to waiting for a mate. What does it mean to wait on the LORD?

DAY TWO

In Day 2 eternal values were discussed. What are these? How do they compare with the “earthly things” the apostle Paul mentioned? Why should we live life by eternal values rather than fixing our sights on earthly things?

DAY THREE

In Day 3, Dr. Evans made the remark that “the person who has the right perspective sees singleness as an advantage, not a disadvantage.” Would you agree? Why or why not?

DAY FOUR

Undivided focus is the topic for Day 4. How can singles have a divided focus? How can cultural ideas about singleness (e.g., a time for unfettered sexual license and immaturity) make it hard for Christian singles to keep a proper focus?

DAY FIVE

Day 5 focuses on a successful single, Joseph. How can the story of Joseph encourage a single person today? What other singles from Scripture offer godly examples to all of us, married and single?

What other concepts, insights, or applications would you like to raise from your week of study? (Feel free to talk about meaningful Scriptures you’ve read in “Reviewing the Word.”)

WATCHING TOGETHER



DVD SESSION FOUR

Sharing Together (group discussion and insights)

PRAYING TOGETHER

Prayer requests for myself and my family

Prayer requests for others

group notes _____

The image features two identical wooden chairs positioned side-by-side against a light blue wall. The chairs are made of dark-stained wood and have a classic design with a curved backrest, a horizontal middle rail, and a seat with a woven cane pattern. The legs are straight and slightly tapered, with a small footrest bar at the base. The floor is a neutral-toned carpet. The text 'SESSION FIVE' is centered over the chairs in a white, sans-serif font, with 'SESSION' on the top line and 'FIVE' in a larger font size below it.

SESSION FIVE

THE KINGDOM PARENT

The job of kingdom parents is to raise kingdom kids into kingdom adults, plain and simple. Your children are your successors and as such, you need to equip them in order to continue the carrying out of the advancement of God's kingdom well. In former days, when a king or queen turned his or her power to another, he or she at that time would decide how the vastness of power—the dominions—would be divided up.

Essentially, kingdom parents do no different. In preparing your children with what they need to function well in relationships, at work, and in society—you are contributing to the enablement of them to either live life with a greater dominion and vastness of power and authority, or a lesser—depending on how well you equip them through education, spiritual growth, emotional development, and more.

As we've discussed in our study together, every other institution in society is built and predicated upon the family. If the family disintegrates, then those institutions that depend on strong families disintegrate as well.

Once that happens, there is no law you can pass that will make up for the devastation. There is no program you can institute that will fix what happens to people's lives when a home is shattered. There is no politician you can elect who can bring harmony and social order when the family is decimated.

So it is no wonder that Satan is attacking our families. If Satan can get a father out of the home, then he can raise a little girl who never knows what real love is like by a man who honors her. So she looks for love through men who don't honor her.

Or if Satan can get a father to leave his family or be absent within his family, the enemy can raise a boy to be an undisciplined and irresponsible man.

The reason America is unraveling is because our families are unraveling. As we read in the book of Isaiah, God judges the nation that does not put Him first, and one way that is revealed is through chaos in the family. It says, "I will make mere youths their officials; children will rule over them. People will oppress each other, man against man, neighbor against neighbor. The young will rise up against the old, the nobody against the honored" (Isaiah 3:4-5). That's why there is no greater effort parents can make to restore our nation than to keep their families together and to keep them strong.

Dr. Tony Evans





THE IMPORTANCE OF STRONG FAMILIES

One of the greatest challenges of all is being a parent. Once our children are born, we must spend approximately 18 years molding, shaping, and fussing to try to raise them right. The reality is, when our children leave the house each day, there are systems at work trying to unravel everything we have tried to teach them. Their peers, many of their teachers, and the media will all give them a different story than we have given them at home. The family is the last bastion of hope.

If we are going to make it as parents, then we need to turn to our Bibles—because though society has changed, God never changes.

God created mankind so that man would be an image-bearer of God Himself: “Let Us make man in Our image.” The purpose of being fruitful and multiplying was not just to fill the earth with people, but to fill the earth with image-bearers. The goal of the family, then, is the replication of the image of God in history and not merely a happy place to call home. The purpose of children is not merely to have lookalikes in your ancestral line but to produce children who will reflect the image of God so that God’s image is spread throughout the world.

In establishing the kingdom institution of the family, God enabled the expansion of His rule in history.



CONNECT

Proverbs 29:15

"A rod and a reprimand impart wisdom, but a child left undisciplined disgraces its mother."

Isaiah 3:4–5

"And I will make mere lads their princes,
And capricious children will rule over them, And the people will be
oppressed,
Each one by another, and each one by his neighbor;
The youth will storm against the elder
And the inferior against the honorable."



FOCUS

Every other institution in society is built and predicated upon the family. If the family disintegrates, then those institutions that depend on strong families disintegrate as well.

Dr. Tony Evans





REFLECT

How can you choose to keep your family strong?

How can you rear your children to value the priority of family?

How can I better understand and fulfill my place as a parent, or as an adult ministering to others' children?

One thing I need to do to grow in reflecting God's kingdom agenda in my home is:

For greater accountability, the main thing I need to discuss with my spouse / share with my group about this is:



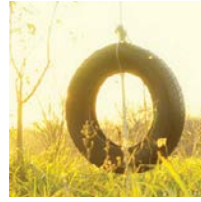
REVIEW

I don't have to tell you that raising children is a challenge. It reminds me of the lecturer whose favorite lecture was "The Ten Commandments for Parenting." Then he had his second child. Now he lectured on "The Ten Suggestions for Parents." Then he had his third child—and stopped lecturing altogether. It's a different story when you have to do it yourself.

I would like to suggest to you that if we're going to make it as parents, we need Scripture. Because while the schools, the government, and society have changed, neither children nor God and His Word have changed.

And since children have not changed and God has not changed, we had better deal with the unchanging truths of God's Word in the midst of a changing world.

my notes _____



THE IMPORTANCE OF FATHERS

The Bible has always recognized the strategic role of fathers. Ever since the inauguration of the human race, fathers have had an indispensable role, not to negate the strategic role of mothers, but it was the God-given task of fathers to oversee the generational transference of what the Bible calls the blessing. The way God designed a family to be led, particularly by a father, is around the table. A Jewish father in biblical times raised his family around the table. It wasn't just a place for eating. It was a place for nurturing. Food was simply the context for discipleship and relationship building.

When a Jewish father sat at the table, he was there to lead the family in devotions. To hear of any potential behavior concerns. To hand out work responsibilities within the home and check on whether what had been assigned had been completed. To discuss educational issues and establish strategies for achieving goals. To learn which peer groups his children were associating with and what information they were putting into their minds. To pour value and significance into his children by listening to them and being with them consistently.

It's not that there weren't other times for these things to be done, but they were always in addition to the family table. This is because children need consistent nurturing in order to grow and produce. Yet so many tables sit empty today. Men's schedules are full. Fatherhood has become an afterthought. In failing to prioritize the consistency of fathering well, we have a generation of children lacking strong, positive

male role models. As a result, these young people often set their consciences to the culture rather than to kingdom values.



CONNECT

Hebrews 12:7–9

“Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as his children. For what children are not disciplined by their father? If you are not disciplined—and everyone undergoes discipline—then you are not legitimate, not true sons and daughters at all. Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of spirits and live!”

Exodus 20:5–6

“You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing lovingkindness to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.”



FOCUS

It doesn't have to be fancy and it doesn't have to be formal. Just make it a priority to always be with your family.

Dr. Tony Evans





REFLECT

How does family breakdown affect a neighborhood or a larger community?

What do children need for stability?

What are two practical ways I can offer my children stable, secure love?

Fathers: How can I put my family above all my other priorities?

Others: How can I encourage and support my husband and/or other fathers in my life as they work to become better fathers?



REVIEW

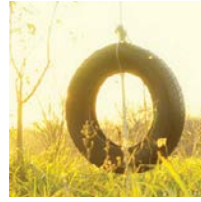
God views the father as the representative head of the home. He was the one through whom and to whom God would speak, and his job was to transfer God's teaching to his wife and children.

That's why Satan seeks to get rid of dads. When the father is gone, the primary representative at home is gone, placing an extra burden on the mother.

As I often tell the fathers in my congregation, if you are tempted to walk out on your family, think twice. The Bible says God will visit the sins of the father on the children to the third and fourth generation (Exodus 20:5). So when you neglect to live up to your biblical role of fatherhood, you don't abandon that role with your children. You abandon it with your grandchildren and great-grandchildren—maybe even your great-great-grandchildren...

I know it can be hard being a parent. But God says to parents, and particularly to fathers as His kingdom representatives, "You have the power of life and death in your hands. Generations are depending on you."...

my notes _____



ENCOURAGING OUR CHILDREN

It is the responsibility of the parents to raise their children well, and one of the first ways of doing this is by encouraging them. Scripture tells us,

Proverbs 18:21

"Death and life are in the power of the tongue..."

A parent who is not known for encouragement, but rather discourages their children speaks failure and curses into their future. Rather, as parents, we are called to give encouragement. Now, let me quickly distinguish between encouragement and praise. Parents praise their children a lot, but encouragement is different. Praise is tied to what a person did, or accomplished. It means that this child did something you want to acknowledge. And don't get me wrong, praise is good. But children also, and even more so, need encouragement. Encouragement is not tied to what they did, it is tied to who they are. It is tied to their identity in Christ and their inheritance as an image-bearer of God Himself and as a child of the King.

Have you ever seen a drooping plant, and then someone pours some water on it and you see it quickly perk back up? That's what encouragement does. Encouragement will take a droopy kid and perk him or her back up again. As the proverb tells us,

Proverbs 16:24

"Pleasant words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones."

Encouraging your child involves giving them the expectation of God's hand of goodness and favor on both their todays and their tomorrows. It is setting within their hearts an anticipation of a glorious future. It is sharing with them that they are fearfully and wonderfully made, have been gifted by God, and that God has a plan for them filled with both a future and a hope.



CONNECT

Colossians 3:21

"Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged."

Luke 2:52

"And Jesus kept increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men."



FOCUS

Parents, let your words reach deep into your child's heart with encouraging truths that allow them to know that you know their personality, dreams, hopes, and struggles and that it will all turn out okay because of who they are and to Whom they belong.

Dr. Tony Evans





REFLECT

What important aspects of a child's development are under a parent's oversight?

In what ways do I encourage my child and in what ways do I praise them?

How can I encourage my child on a more regular basis?

How can I better fulfill my place as a parent (now or in the future)?



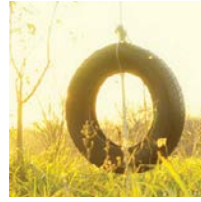
REVIEW

In addition to encouraging your children, don't "provoke" your children to anger as it is written in today's verse. Provoking them can come through several different ways such as disrespecting them in your words or actions. Comparing them to others, or even showing favoritism to one child over the others. We all remember what Joseph's brothers did when his father gave him the favoritism of the multicolored coat. Keep your treatment, time, and attention fair that you give to your children for they are all equally valuable to our heavenly Father, and each has his or her own perfect calling in God's will.

Being critical, finding faults, and setting up your children with negative thoughts about the future can also develop in them a spirit of frustration. These are things that have a profound impact on children, more so than we might even know or realize when it happens so be careful to always be mindful of whether you are speaking life into them, or discouraging them with your words and actions.

Above all else, encourage your children and build them up.

my notes _____



DISCIPLINING OUR CHILDREN

Discipline is a key factor in any victorious Christian life whether that is discipline toward money management, time spent, or even in disciplining personal morality. Job wrote during his distress that he had disciplined his eyes so as to not lust on a woman,

Job 31:1

"I have made a covenant with my eyes."

And Paul spoke of the discipline he had maintained so that he would finish his race strong.

1 Corinthians 9:27

"...but I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified."

Parental discipline, when done well, can not only prevent your children from making poor decisions later in life which will carry with them an even greater level of consequences, but it can also train your children on how to apply personal discipline as they grow older.

Discipline comes in a variety of different formats, and depending on the personalities of your children if you have more than one, what works for one may not work for the other. For some children, their greatest discipline might include being sent to their room alone. For another

child, though, that could be a reward. This is why it is so critical to understand and know your children in such a way that you raise them according to their personality and needs.

Discipline is not yelling at your child, that's venting. It must be coupled with love or your child will not see it for the good you hope to gain through it. Rather you will wind up provoking them to anger with your own. Discipline must flow out of a heart of compassion for their well-being and future.



CONNECT

Ephesians 6:4

"Bring [your children] up in the discipline...of the Lord."

Proverbs 13:24

"He who withholds his rod hates his son,
But he who loves him disciplines him diligently."



FOCUS

God always sets clear boundaries with us as His children, and we should do the same with our own.

Dr. Tony Evans

Tony Evans



REFLECT

Which of these passages resonates with you right now?

In what aspect of life is your child failing to honor you?

How can you—with the help of others if necessary—step in to redirect him or her?

How can I better discipline my child?

How can I support my spouse's discipline of our child?



REVIEW

Paul talks to us about this word “discipline” in Ephesians 6,

Ephesians 6:4

“Bring [your children] up in the discipline...of the Lord.”

Why is this so important? Because discipline is proof of two very important things. The first is love. According to Hebrews 12:6, “Whom the LORD loveth, He skinneth alive” (my paraphrase). The LORD “spank-eth” those whom He loves. Love is always demonstrated by discipline. If you love your child too much to correct him, God says you hate him.

Proverbs 13:24

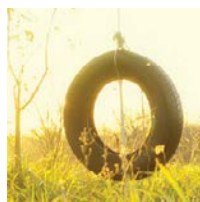
“He who withholds his rod hates his son,
But he who loves him disciplines him diligently.”

We'll get into the book of Proverbs in more depth below, because it is a manual on child discipline.

A second thing that discipline proves is sonship itself, the fact that a child belongs to the family. Hebrews 12:7-8 says that if God doesn't correct you, it's because you're the neighbor's kid. . . .

We have a whole generation of kids running the streets who were never disciplined at home. Since they never got straightened out at home, they are under nobody's authority now. Nobody can control them—not the police, the government, or anyone. They don't understand that their actions come with consequences.

my notes _____



INSTRUCTING OUR CHILDREN

Instructing your children in the LORD means spending time with them so they can see how you live out the gospel. It means letting them see you in prayer and Bible study, and involving them in any ministry that you are doing, where they can be involved. When I was younger, my dad would normally take me along when he went downtown to preach on a street corner, or at the prisons. But instructing your children in the LORD doesn't mean you have to take them to the prisons or preaching on street corners. You can do this in your everyday activities.

By being with your children on a regular basis during normal activities, you can capitalize on the teachable moments that present opportunities for you to mentor your child in the faith. Something as simple as looking at the night sky together can easily lead to a discussion about the creation and how God knows every star and every hair on our heads. Playing games together can open up topics on the importance of integrity, communication, and focus. Watching a television show or movie together provides a natural conversation starter for an analysis of the character's motives, choices, and actions.

You don't have to sit your children down and have them sit up straight for you to teach them. They can learn with you while you are cooking, driving, studying, or going about your day. The goal isn't just to shape the way they think and believe, but it is to shape the way they live. Have you ever heard how when people try to learn a foreign language in a classroom that it often takes years upon years of study and

practice before they even get to a competent level, but when someone learns a foreign language by immersing himself in the other culture and language, they can pick it up within half a year, if not sooner? Instructing your children in the LORD ought to be in the immersion method, it ought to be a lifestyle.



CONNECT

Ephesians 6:4

"Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord."

Deuteronomy 6:1–9

"Now this is the commandment, the statutes and the judgments which the LORD your God has commanded me to teach you, that you might do them in the land where you are going over to possess it, so that you and your son and your grandson might fear the LORD your God, to keep all His statutes and His commandments which I command you, all the days of your life, and that your days may be prolonged. O Israel, you should listen and be careful to do it, that it may be well with you and that you may multiply greatly, just as the LORD, the God of your fathers, has promised you, in a land flowing with milk and honey. "Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one! You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates."



FOCUS

Instructing your children in the LORD isn't as concerned with how much they know, but with how much they can apply.

Dr. Tony Evans



REFLECT

What are some ways parents can be intentional about teaching their children?

What do you need to do differently in order to teach or train your children more effectively? Or where do you need help to determine how to do it better?



What do I want to teach my children that they do not yet understand?
How will I begin to do that?



REVIEW

We get upset because they have taken the Ten Commandments off the walls at school. But what I want to know is, are the commandments hanging on the walls of our homes? Are we teaching God's truth to our children?

God never commanded the school to teach your children God's Word. If the school does, that's a bonus. But we need to ask, are we doing the job at home?

Dad, if you are not sitting down with your family, opening the Word, and praying with your children, then don't blame the government or the school or the streets if your kids get messed up. Their instruction is our responsibility as parents.

What are we to teach? The basics are in verses 4–5 of our text. We are to teach them that there is only one true God and that we are to love Him with all of our being. How are we to teach these truths? The text suggests several ways. Teach them convincingly. Teach them consistently. Teach them compassionately.

my notes _____

WEEKLY MEMORY VERSE

Ephesians 6:4

“Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger; but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.”

TALK-IT-THROUGH

With a partner or small group, consider the application questions below. Your leader may direct you to focus on particular questions. Be ready to report a summary of your discussions—along with any key insights—to the whole group when you regather.

DAY ONE

Day 1 looks at the importance of strong families. What examples can you think of where families “dropped the ball” and the next generation suffered? What about examples of families that reversed generational damage by deliberately making different, healthier choices than their parents made?

DAY TWO

What happens in a family where the husband refuses to be the spiritual head? How can a wife encourage her husband to assume this role if he seems reluctant?

DAY THREE

Parents are encouraged to be encouragers of their children in Day 3. What struck a chord with you here? What's the fine line between investing in a child's life and living vicariously through the child?

DAY FOUR

In Day 4, a number of Scriptures were offered concerning discipline. Which were most meaningful for you? Why?

DAY FIVE

The value of instructing children in the ways of God is discussed in Day 5. How can a parent "spiritually mentor" his or her son or daughter? When is it appropriate to delegate part of that role to others? How can we be lazy and excuse passing off our own responsibility?

What other concepts, insights, or applications would you like to raise from your week of study? (Feel free to talk about meaningful Scriptures you've read in "Reviewing the Word.")

WATCHING TOGETHER

DVD SESSION FIVE



SHARING TOGETHER

Group discussion and insights

PRAYING TOGETHER

Prayer requests for myself and my family

Prayer requests for others

group notes _____



SESSION SIX

THE KINGDOM CHILD

Consider the kingdom agenda of children. It may seem unusual to you to talk about children having an agenda God wants them to follow. We tend to think of our kids as the ones being acted upon during their growing years rather than the ones doing the acting.

But the Bible is very clear on the part God calls children to play in the day-to-day operation of the family. If we are going to return the church to its rightful place as an influencer and shaper of culture, we have to build strong families.

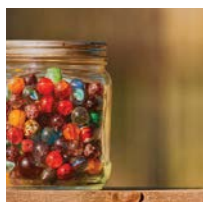
And in God's kingdom, everybody has a part to play. Children are key because they embody the essence of the kingdom. Jesus said, "Let the children alone, and do not hinder them from coming to Me; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these" (Matthew 19:14).

One thing that will help us think more clearly about the children's agenda in the kingdom is to remember that each one of us is somebody's child. So when we talk about a child's agenda, we don't just mean those preschoolers or elementary-aged children who are still at home.

We're all children, so the principles we are going to discuss apply in some way to all of us. As we will see, they are applied differently depending on our age and situation. But God's plan to build and display His kingdom in this world definitely includes children.

Dr. Tony Evans

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tony Evans". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.



A CHILD'S NEED TO LEARN OBEDIENCE

Paul lays out the agenda for children beginning with verse 1 of Ephesians 6: “Children, obey your parents in the LORD, for this is right.”

This verse always raises questions, such as, “How far does a child’s obedience go?” “What if my child is not living at home?” “What happens if my child decides not to obey my instructions?”

I’ll try to answer these and other questions as we go along. But first let’s consider why it is so important that children obey their parents. One primary reason is that in God’s kingdom, there is a fundamental distinction between children and parents.

Let me show you what I’m talking about by putting this in a larger context. One of the attributes of God is His transcendence. By that I mean He is distinct from His creation. God sits outside of and above His creation, although He is involved with His creation. God is in a class all by Himself.

Just as God is transcendent and distinct from His creation, so parents are different from children. Our problem is that we have not maintained that crucial distinction. So we have teenagers and even children today who are trying to look and act like adults and assume adult privileges, while the adults cower and bow before their children lest they upset them or lest the kids react negatively to the parents’ attempts at discipline.

As I said above, we have seriously blurred the picture. It's sometimes hard to tell who are the children and who are the parents. You can go into some homes and wonder who's in charge.

But when Paul said in Ephesians 6:1, "Children, obey your parents," he used a Greek word, *teknon*, that means "all offspring." This applies to all of us.

The reason God gives parents to children is so that the children might have a filtered life. That is, if you are a Christian parent, your job is to filter the culture in such a way that its evil influences don't dominate your kids' lives. And you are to filter out the sinful tendencies within them in such a way that you bend their will without breaking their spirit.



CONNECT

Matthew 19:14

Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these."

Proverbs 22:15

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





FOCUS

A child or teenager today is faced with a culture that says, “Rebel!” Even some people who are adults now are still living out the rebellious lifestyle they started when they were living at home.

Dr. Tony Evans



REFLECT

What are some reasons it is important to know a child's place in God's kingdom?

How does obedience help a child to have a better life?

What is one way you can emphasize the need for obedience in your home?

As a child, how can I learn what God wants from me?

One thing I need to do to grow in reflecting God's kingdom agenda in my home is:

For greater accountability, the main thing I need to discuss with my spouse / share with my group about this is:



REVIEW

No matter how cute your children are, they are sinfully cute. Foolishness and rebellion are built into the heart of a child (Proverbs 22:15). That's why children must learn obedience.

In Ephesians 6:1, Paul gives us an excellent reason why children are to obey their parents. It is found in the phrase in the middle of the verse: "in the LORD." Because this verse is so familiar, we might be tempted

just to rush over that phrase and miss its significance. That would be a tragedy because Paul is saying that for children, obedience to parents is comparable to obedience to God when what their parents are asking them to do agrees with God's instructions.

Let me say it another way. When a child rebels against his parents, God looks at that as rebellion against Himself. It is an attempted coup against the kingdom. So when a child raises his voice against his mother and father because he doesn't like their instruction and doesn't want to obey it, or when a child cuts off his or her relationship to a parent or parents, God looks at that as raising their voice to Him, or cutting off their relationship to Him.

my notes _____

[illegible]



THE IMPORTANCE OF OBEDIENCE

I want to give you some examples from the book of Proverbs that underscore the importance of obedience. Proverbs 1:8 says, “Hear, my son, your father’s instruction, and do not forsake your mother’s teaching.” Proverbs 3:1 is very similar: “My son, do not forget my teaching, but let your heart keep my commandments.”

Proverbs 4:1–4 shows the progression of godly instruction and obedience from one generation to the next:

“Hear, O sons, the instruction of a father, and give attention that you may gain understanding, for I give you sound teaching; do not abandon my instruction. When I was a son to my father, tender and the only son in the sight of my mother, then he taught me and said to me, ‘Let your heart hold fast my words; keep my commandments and live.’ ”

Proverbs 7:1–3 is another important passage, showing how seriously God wants children to take the issue of obedience to parents:

“My son, keep my words, and treasure my commandments within you. Keep my commandments and live, and my teaching as the apple of your eye. Bind them on your fingers; Write them on the tablet of your heart.”

The Proverbs also say that a disobedient child brings grief, unhappiness, and even destruction to his parents (10:1; 17:21; 19:13) and brings shame and disgrace to the whole family (19:26).

You get the idea. To God, obedience is no small thing. So children who are living at home under the authority of their parents must have this attitude: "Dad, Mom, unless you tell me to disobey God, I am going to obey you. I may not always like it, and I may not agree with it. But I am the child, and you are the parents. I want to please God by obeying you."



CONNECT

Ephesians 6:1

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

Proverbs 1:8

"Hear, my son, your father's instruction And do not forsake your mother's teaching; keep My commandments."



FOCUS

Paul is saying that for children, obedience to parents is comparable to obedience to God when what their parents are asking them to do agrees with God's instructions.



Let me say it another way. When a child rebels against his parents, God looks at that as rebellion against Himself. It is an attempted coup against the kingdom.

Dr. Tony Evans




REFLECT

Why is there such a strong connection between obedience to the LORD and to parents?

Parents: How can I communicate to my children that their obedience to parents is really obedience to God, and that we in turn are also under God's authority?

Children: How can I honor my parents even when I disagree with them?

Parent: Where have I chosen not to engage with my children's disrespect because it's easier to let it go? What will I do differently in the future?

Child: What is one area in which I've resisted my parents' counsel and/or failed to honor them? How can I make it right?



REVIEW

Ephesians 6:1 also tells us that this obedience thing is bigger than just parents and children. It has to do with the LORD. He has a deep interest in seeing that children obey.

Now of course, it's up to us parents to make sure we are raising our children "in the LORD." It's our responsibility to guide them in ways that are in harmony and not in contradiction with the Scriptures. We must give them the right target at which to aim their obedience.

my notes _____



DAY THREE



THE IMPORTANCE OF HONORING PARENTS

Another thing that children owe their parents is honor. The Scripture says, “Honor your father and mother (which is the first commandment with a promise), that it may be well with you, and that you may live long on the earth” (Ephesians 6:2–3).

The Greek word for honor means “to value highly, to hold in highest regard.” This, by the way, holds true at any age. There may be some areas of controversy and disagreement when it comes to obeying parents, but children never reach an age when they don’t owe their parents honor.

The reason we have so much disrespect in the streets and in the schools is that children have never learned respect in the home. If kids don’t learn to respect Dad and Mom, they may never learn to respect police officers, judges, or anyone else’s person or property.

Here’s another reason Satan wants to destroy the home: If he can do that, he can destroy honor in the culture.

How important is it to God that children honor their parents? We can answer that from Exodus 21. Verse 15 of this chapter says, “He who strikes his father or his mother shall surely be put to death.” According to verse 17, “He who curses his father or his mother shall surely be put to death.”

Lifting your hand against your parents or cursing them, both terrible forms of dishonor, meant death in ancient Israel. That's how serious God is about children honoring their parents. As I said, dishonoring parents is rebellion within God's kingdom.

Do you think the children in Israeli homes took the message seriously? Well, there is no record in all of the Bible of any child or young person in Israel being put to death for dishonoring his or her parents.

Why is that? Because these children understood the importance of honor. They knew this thing was real. You can believe that if they started to slide over into serious dishonor, they got things fixed real fast. You could not abuse your parents physically or verbally in Israel and live to brag about it.

There used to be a time when, if adults were walking down the street and met a group of kids coming the other way, the kids moved over. Now we see kids coming and we get out of the way. They are not afraid of us; we are afraid of them. Why? Because you don't know what these kids might do if you make them mad. Because parents don't take care of business in the home and allow their children to get away with dishonoring them, we all pay the price.



CONNECT

Deuteronomy 5:16

"Honor your father and your mother, as the LORD your God has commanded you, so that you may live long and that it may go well with you in the land the LORD your God is giving you."

Exodus 21:15,17

“Then the king of Egypt spoke to the Hebrew midwives, one of whom was named Shiphrah and the other was named Puah; ... But the midwives feared God, and did not do as the king of Egypt had commanded them, but let the boys live.



FOCUS

Because parents don't take care of business in the home and allow their children to get away with dishonoring them, we all pay the price.

Teaching children to honor is a long-term process. It has to be enforced and reinforced every day. Teenagers who are allowed to show disrespect to their parents are on a dead-end road. And the culture will eventually feel the effects of that rebellion.

Dr. Tony Evans

Tony Evans



REFLECT

What does it look like to honor one's parents?

Parent: How can you teach your children to honor you—and God?

Child: How can I honor my parents, both in ways they see and ways they can't?

How can I thank my parents this week for their place in my life (or honor their legacy, if they are no longer living)?



REVIEW

People in the church I pastor who are dealing with a rebellious adolescent have asked me, "What should we do? Do we call the police? We don't want to see our son locked up. What do we do?"

One thing you can do if you have a rebellious child is bring him to the church. The elders of the city would be comparable to the elders of the church today. If a child is living in your house yet won't obey and honor you, the parents, you should bring the child to the church so that the church can admonish him or her on the parents' behalf.

my notes _____



HOW CAN A CHILD SHOW HONOR

How do children honor their parents? Let me suggest several ways.

First, children need to honor their parents emotionally. This includes spending time with them and showing them some concern and love. Some mothers and fathers are wasting away in retirement homes and care centers for lack of attention and honor from their grown children.

Someone may say, “But you don’t know about my mother. She was a terrible mother.” Or, “My father was bad news.” But this person is still your parent. He or she must have done something right, fed you something good, because you’re still here.

I’m not saying that you have to honor what your parents did wrong. I’m saying you can still recognize and honor your parents for their position.

You can also honor your parents verbally. I told you about my parents’ home in Baltimore. When I go home, I don’t say to my father, “Hey, Art. How’s it going?” It’s “Yes, sir” and “No, sir.”

Paul told Timothy, “Do not sharply rebuke an older man, but rather appeal to him as a father” (1 Timothy 5:1). In other words, even if he’s wrong, you still speak to him with respect. A mother and father are not, “Hey, you” to their children. Parents are to be spoken to and about with honor.

God also calls children to honor their parents financially. Again in 1 Timothy 5:8 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.” Now go to verse 16: “If any woman who is a believer has dependent widows, let her assist them, and let not the church be burdened.”

As children, we have a financial responsibility for our parents when they can no longer take care of themselves. This means more than buying them a Mother’s or Father’s Day card. It means seeing to their well-being when they need our assistance. Maybe they cannot live with us because of the kind of medical care they need, but honor still demands that we look after their welfare.



CONNECT

Proverbs 10:1

“A wise son brings joy to his father, but a foolish son brings grief to his mother.”

1 Samuel 2:30

“Therefore the LORD God of Israel declares, ‘I did indeed say that your house and the house of your father should walk before Me forever’; but now the LORD declares, ‘Far be it from Me—for those who honor Me I will honor, and those who despise Me will be lightly esteemed.’”



FOCUS

The point is if the parents are making provision and giving protection, they have the right to say, “In my home, I want things done this way.”

Dr. Tony Evans



REFLECT

Why is it important to deal with a child's disrespect when it first shows up?

Where do I need the counsel or help of others in my parenting right now?

What needs in my family seem beyond my own resources? How can I ask others (my spouse, my group, others) for counsel or help?

Have I shown my parents honor recently? If not, write down two ways that I can do so this week.

Is it important to show honor even if the person has not lived up to your expectations? Why or why not?



REVIEW

In the case of many poor families in our generation, your mother may have boarded a bus every day to go to the other side of town and scrub other people's floors so you could eat, have clothes, and go to school. Your dad may have worked like my dad did, until he was so tired he could hardly walk home. That kind of sacrifice deserves to be honored.

The father of one of the elders in our church left his family when this elder was a child. But when this father fell ill not long ago, our elder went to the hospital regularly to be with his father, even though none of the other kids would have anything to do with him.

This elder was showing his father honor, not because he was a great dad, but because his position as father deserved respect. And who knows? This man's honor may win his father to Christ.

my notes _____





THE RETURN OF HONORING YOUR PARENTS

Honoring parents brings blessing.

You were wondering when I was going to get to Ephesians 6:3, weren't you? What about the Bible's promise of good quality and quantity of life for those who honor their parents?

This verse says that those children who honor their parents will be blessed with a greater quantity of life. That is, they will avoid the curse of rebellion and disobedience that, as we have seen, can bring premature death.

These children will also experience God's blessing. Do you want God to hear and answer your prayers? Do you want His blessing on your education, career, choice of a mate, or other issue of life? Then honor your mother and father. Because if you don't, it won't go well with you.

Many people are messed up because they have never fixed things up with Mom and Dad. Some of us need to put this Bible study down and go make a phone call or pay a visit or write a letter. This principle of honoring parents was given in the Old Testament, and it carries right through to the New Testament and today. It still applies and is still a central feature for anyone who is serious about functioning in accordance with God's kingdom agenda.

Let me close by answering the obvious question. Is Ephesians 6:3 promising that every child who honors his or her parents will live to be ninety and experience only good things?

No, the idea of long life is that you will get all the life God ordained you to have. He won't have to cut you off before your time because you refuse to stop dishonoring your parents. You won't die at forty if you're supposed to live to be seventy. You'll make all your ordained days.

This is an issue with the power of blessing and of life and death in it. We need to make sure honoring our parents is high on our life's values.



CONNECT

Ephesians 6:2-3

"Honor your father and mother (which is the first commandment with a promise), that it may be well with you, and that you may live long on the earth."

1 Timothy 5:1

"Do not sharply rebuke an older man, but rather appeal to him as a father, to the younger men as brothers."



FOCUS

Do you want God to hear and answer your prayers? Do you want His blessing on your education, career, choice of a mate, or other issue of life? Then honor your mother and father. Because if you don't, it won't go well with you.

Dr. Tony Evans



REFLECT

Why is it important to continue to honor your parents, even into adulthood?

What blessings come with doing so?

How can you honor your parents?

How can you choose to avoid dishonoring them?

How can I better honor my parents?



REVIEW

The institution of the family has been established by God as the tool through which He is both advancing and expanding His glory on earth. Everyone has a different role to play. In this study, we have examined the various roles such as husband and wife, parent, single, and child. It is my prayer that you will take these principles and apply them in your home and in your life so that you will fully manifest and experience the family God has designed you to have.

May He bless you greatly as you seek Him in your home, and may your days ahead be greater than your days gone by.

my notes _____



WEEKLY MEMORY VERSE

Proverbs 3:1

"My son, do not forget my teaching, but let your heart keep my commandments."

TALK-IT-THROUGH

With a partner or small group, consider the application questions below. Your leader may direct you to focus on particular questions. Be ready to report a summary of your discussions—along with any key insights—to the whole group when you regather.

DAY ONE

Why should children be important to the family and to the church?

DAY TWO

The reasons for obedience are given in Day 2. What are some of them? What excuses do children sometimes make instead of obeying? Dr. Evans asks these questions concerning obedience: "How far does a child's obedience go?" and "What happens if my child decides not to obey my instructions?" Discuss these.

DAY THREE

In Day 3 honoring parents is discussed. Can a child ever stop showing honor to his or her parent(s)? Why or why not? What makes a child go from honoring to dishonoring a parent?

How willing would you be to bring your child to the church in the case of serious dishonor?

DAY FOUR

Day 4's reading reveals specific ways children can honor parents—even into adulthood. Based on the three areas in which we can show honor (emotionally, verbally, and financially), how do you show honor to your parents? How has your example affected your own children?

What other concepts, insights, or applications would you like to raise from your week of study? (Feel free to talk about meaningful Scriptures you've read in "Reviewing the Word.")

WATCHING TOGETHER

DVD SESSION FIVE



SHARING TOGETHER

Group discussion and insights

PRAYING TOGETHER

Prayer requests for myself and my family

Prayer requests for others

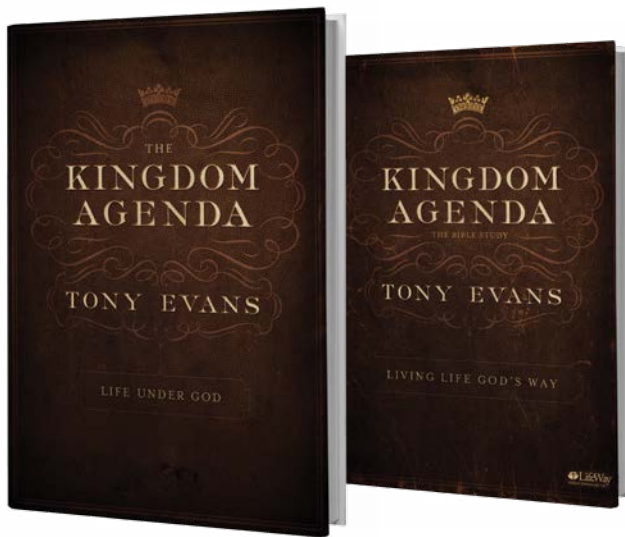
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group notes _____

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Dig Deeper

Kingdom Agenda: Life Under God
by Dr. Tony Evans
and the
Kingdom Agenda Bible Study



Find these and many more resources at:
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