

Building Strong Families

The VISION Newsletter / November 2018
Pastor E. Keith Hassell

Ephesians 5:22–6:4 (NKJV) “Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. ²³ For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. ²⁴ Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. ²⁵ Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, +that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, ²⁷ that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. ²⁸ So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. ²⁹ For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church. ³⁰ For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. ³¹ ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.’ ³² This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church. ³³ Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband. 6 ¹ Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ² ‘Honor your father and mother,’ which is the first commandment with promise: ³ ‘that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth.’ ⁴ And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.”

The family is under attack. Satan understands that if he can destroy the family, he can create the dysfunction and chaos necessary to bring people under his destructive control. As the family goes, so goes society.

Human families are God’s idea. He made the man, formed the woman from the man, and together they formed a marriage and bore children. Families are the building blocks of the church and of society.

Healthy families are the building blocks of a healthy society. Dysfunctional families reproduce dysfunction. Healthy families are the building blocks of a healthy church. Dysfunctional Christians reproduce dysfunctional Christian families. Together, dysfunctional families create dysfunctional churches. We need to build strong healthy families.

Healthy families don’t happen by accident. Healthy families are usually a reflection of healthy family heritage. The healthiest families are those who follow God’s plan for the family. Thank God if you grew up in a Christian home and were raised in a healthy church. Don’t ever take that for granted.

With the breakdown of the family in our secular society, social engineers have attempted to redefine marriage and the family and to rewrite the rules. Since family was God’s idea, it is important to go to Him to obtain His definition and plan for the family. He has given us His instructions in the Bible. So, what constitutes a healthy family?

Healthy families are built with healthy marriages. Healthy marriages are biblical marriages. Biblical marriages are covenant marriages between one biological man and one biological woman for life. Cohabitation and common law relationships are not marriages in the sight of God. Healthy marriages are built on the foundation of faith. They are built around a mutual submission to Jesus Christ.

Healthy marriages are built with a mutual commitment to God's order for marriage. God's order for the marriage is as follows. God made the husband to be the head of the marriage and family. Headship does not mean superiority. Rather, it is an assignment of responsibility and leadership for which they will give account to God. God created the wife to be a companion and helpmate to her husband.

Healthy marriages have godly husbands. Godly husbands reflect the love that Christ has for the church. This refers to a supreme love. Husbands are to love their wives as themselves. This refers to a selfless love. Husbands are to lay down their lives for the sake of their wife. This refers to a sacrificial love. They are to help their wives become holy, pure, and whole. This refers to a sanctifying love. A godly husband understands that his wife thrives in an environment of love.

Healthy marriages have godly wives. Godly wives are submitted to God's order for the home. This means that they honor their husbands as the head of their marriage in the same way that they honor Christ as the head of the church. Godly wives are submitted to their husbands as they are to Christ. Submission must not be misunderstood. Submission does not mean unquestioned slavish subjection. Submission does not mean that a wife is to obey her husband when it means disobeying God's Word. Submission is, first and foremost, an attitude. It is an attitude of peaceful rest under God's order.

Godly wives show respect to her husband as they would to Christ. Not all husbands have earned respect even as not all wives have earned their husband's love. Husbands are commanded to love their wife and wives are commanded to respect their husband. Wives are to honor Christ by showing respect for their husband's role regardless of their faults and flaws.

Healthy marriages keep the door closed on destructive influences. This means keeping the door closed on selfishness and self-centeredness. It means keeping the door closed on affairs and adultery, whether they be emotional or physical. They avoid unnecessary temptation in this area by establishing strong boundaries, making no provision for the flesh, and by communicating and being accountable. Healthy marriages keep the door closed on alcohol and drugs. They keep the door closed on lust, pornography, and sexual sins. They keep the door closed on anger, abuse, and violence. They keep the door closed on worldliness and carnal distractions that steal the purity and vitality of the marriage.

Not only do healthy marriages keep the door closed on destructive influences, they are also maintained like a weeded and well-watered garden. Healthy marriages have Christ at the center of their relationship. They cultivate this focus and dependence by praying together and centering their home around the word of God. Healthy marriages work at spending quality time together and keeping the lines of healthy communication open. Healthy marriages are quick to resolve conflicts and to forgive.

Healthy marriages produce healthy children. Healthy children know that they are loved and cared for by their parents. Healthy children have parents who are healthy role models to follow. Healthy children are taught with reinforcement to honor and respect their father and mother. Healthy children are taught to obey their parents. Healthy children are brought up in the training and admonition of the Lord. "Training" refers to disciplined training according to proper rules and behavior. "Admonition" refers to instruction that corrects improper behavior and belief. It means to forewarn, reprove, correct, and discipline them when they stray. Susannah Wesley had seventeen children, including John and Charles. She once wrote this, "The parent who studies to subdue self-will in his child works together with God in the saving of a soul. The parent who indulges self-will does the devil's work, makes religion impractical, salvation unattainable and does all that is in him to drown his child, soul and body forever."

Healthy families also maintain a weekly involvement in a healthy church family. Healthy churches help foster healthy homes. Healthy churches teach and uphold the biblical standard for marriage and family. They provide healthy role models for young or struggling families to follow. They provide prayer and support for struggling families. Families that are not committed to weekly involvement in a local church usually end up being distracted, divided, dysfunctional, divorced, and destroyed.

Now is the time for us to embrace God's plan for our marriage and family. Now is the time to close the door on destructive influences. Now is the time to change what is wrong and do what is right. Now is the time to build strong families.