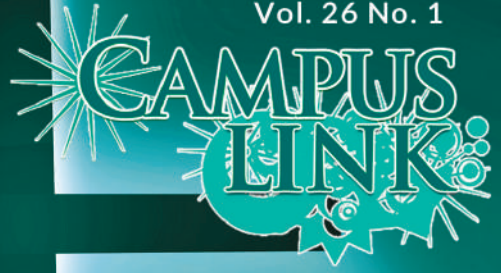


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Christ-Centered Family

Fences to Guard Your Family

God puts hedges around every family like He did for Job's (Job 1:10). At the same time we too need to be careful in safeguarding our families. A soldier, serious about battle, will not be casual in the war zone. The enemy who destroyed the first family in Eden is prowling like a roaring lion looking to devour families (1 Pet 5:8).

Following are the Fences to guard your family:

Intimacy with God and with your spouse needs to be maintained with priority.

The Family Altar and Family time: Private time for the spouse and children should be prioritised and informed to regular visitors.

The Armour of God (Eph 6:10-18): Christian families are engaged in a spiritual battle which is not against flesh and blood but against the powers of darkness, so we need to be alert. The armour of God makes us strong in the Lord to fight against the devil's schemes (2 Cor. 2:11).

The Word of God (Heb 4:12): Bible-centered families will be alert in handling the media through which ungodly philosophies, sex, hatred, vengeance and violence try to enter the home.

Family mentors/Counsellors: Involvement of godly seniors in our lives will help us to get godly counsel at times of conflict in the family.

TRAFFIC (To check our life):

T- Truth in relationship

R- Right with God and spouse

A- Alertness and readiness to witness

F- Fortification

F- Faith, call to be faithful

I- Intimacy with God through prayer

C- Commandments, Word of God which is the power of God against the enemy.

Questions:

1. What are the challenges that the enemy has been trying to bring into your family to hinder God's mission?
2. What are some of the fences that need to be strengthened to protect your family?
3. How can you balance time for your family and others?

Bibliography – Becoming Missional Family by Dr. P C Mathew



Stilla Spencer, UESI Staff based at Bathinda, Punjab, married to Samuel Spencer, and they are blessed with Son Carey, Daughter Emy and Son Jason.

Mature into a Christ-Centered Family

Jesus said, "So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate," (Mt 19:6 ESV).

God is the Master-Architect of individuals and families, guiding them to be centered on Christ (Ps 127:1; Heb 3:2-3). Husbands and wives are co-builders with God in creating Christ-centered families (1 Cor 3:9). God's plan for married couples is to be united and together while still maintaining their individuality. Marriage is a journey from loneliness to oneness of a married couple: a man and a woman. The Lord said, "It is not good for the man to be alone" (Gen 2:18). No suitable helper was found among the living creatures for Adam (Gen 2:20). Then God made woman, a suitable helper, from the rib of the man (Gen 2:22). God created both men and women in His image, as equals, but with differences that complement each other rather than compete. Moreover, they are instructed to leave the authority structure of their parents and cleave to one another to form a new authority structure under the supreme authority of God.

According to Bill Loveless in his book, "The Key to a Christ-Centered Marriage," Adam and Eve began their family as God-centered, relying on God as their source and experiencing intimacy, harmony, and oneness with God and each other. Later, the first couple committed themselves to the breaker and became co-breakers of their own family, leading to a self-centered and separated from God. As a result, their efforts to meet their needs, resolve conflicts, and achieve perfect harmony, intimacy, and oneness became difficult.

A self-centered husband and wife, focuses on himself/herself, lives in insulation and isolation, independent of God and their spouse. They never allow God to transform their selfish behaviours and attitudes, often blaming their spouse for unresolved conflicts. They try to control, rule, dominate and manipulate one another (Gen 3:16; 4:7). Unfortunately, many families today allow external influences to disrupt their unity. The opposite of selfishness is self-denial, humility, and generosity. In order to achieve oneness with their spouse and God, they need to share spiritual truths, demonstrate confidence in each other by sharing their innermost feelings, keep other people out of their marriage and study and serve each other. Biblical families, while not perfect, serve as role models for creating godly, praying, worshipping and witnessing missional families. Since no family is perfect, they can all strive to become Christ-centered. Let us go through all the articles in this issue which will help us to mature into Christ-centered families.



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Biblical Concept of Marriage and Family

In God's Word, marriage is given a very high position because it is the most important relationship among human beings. Heb 13:4 says "Marriage should be honoured by all". The fabric of biblical truth is woven from Genesis to Revelation with the thread of relationship. There is perfect relationship within the Trinity but broken relationships between God and humans. We see an acrimonious relationship between Adam and Eve and Cain and Abel, a loving relationship between Ruth and Naomi, oppositional relationship between Jezebel and Elijah and strained relationships between Abraham and Lot and Paul and Mark. Thus the Bible has numerous instances where relationships are portrayed

vividly. The Ten Commandments are summarized by the Lord Jesus in two very important love relationships, one between humans and God and the second between man/woman and his/her neighbour in Mk 12:30, 31. When God wanted to explain His love for Israel in the Old Testament and the love of Jesus for the Church in the New Testament, God the Holy Spirit used the imagery of the husband and wife relationship.

In the very beginning of human history, God ordained the institution of marriage and family between male Adam and female Eve. He created Eve as a perfectly suitable helper and partner for Adam to enjoy intimate fellowship and togetherness. Soon after the

Lead

first marriage God gave the most important blueprint for marriage in Gen 2:24, "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh". This three-part commandment, though addressed to man, is equally applicable to the woman.

The goal of marriage is oneness which is clearly stated in Gen 2:24, "They will become one flesh". Though this oneness indicates sexual union, it extends to the mind and spirit of the two partners, Mk 10:8. This oneness between husband and wife is a reflection of the Triune God Who created them in His image. After the fall of Adam and Eve, this oneness has become difficult to achieve. But it is not an impossibility with the help of God the Holy Spirit following the redemptive work of the Lord Jesus.

In this process of becoming one by the two partners of the marriage, there are two steps to take: one is to leave and the other is to cleave or join. Let us examine the 'leaving' part. Both partners are commanded to leave their parents. This leaving does not mean abandoning their parents or severing relationship with them. They should accept the covenant they have entered into to form a new family unit. This is a divine principle. This family unit has

its own leadership which is given to the husband by God Himself in His sovereign wisdom (1 Cor 11:3). The husband and wife have a moral responsibility to honor the God-given administrative order in the family institution. Hence both husband and wife should come out of their parental administration for good. The parents should not interfere in the day-to-day administration of this newly formed family unit as it will nullify the husband's leadership. The husband should not abdicate his God-given role of leadership. This leadership is a loving and servant leadership as exemplified by our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. The wife should wholeheartedly accept her husband's leadership as designed by God. She should respect him in every aspect.

The second step, which is 'cleaving' or 'joining' means a shift in the love priority of the husband as well as the wife. After the marriage, the wife should become the person whom the husband loves the most and similarly the husband should become the person whom she loves the most. All others should be given lesser priority. Thus, biblical marriage causes a shift in administrative leadership from parents to husband and priority in love from parents to spouse. If these two steps are not followed, the goal

of oneness in marriage cannot be achieved.

When the Word of God clearly states that the wife and husband are no longer two but one flesh (Mk 10:8), how does 'becoming one' take place? It is humanly impossible for two different individuals, coming from two different backgrounds, with different personalities, exhibiting differences in many areas psychologically and emotionally to 'become one' without the help of the all-powerful Holy Spirit. Becoming one is a divine work of the Holy Spirit when both husband and wife submit to the sovereign authority of God.

Marriage is a covenant made to live in a life-long loving relationship. Man and woman are created for relationship and if there is no love in the husband-wife relationship, it is as good as a dead relationship. A loving relationship thrives on giving, caring, appreciating, comforting, accepting, supporting, helping, forgiving, forbearing etc. Out of such a relationship emerges an intimate fellowship, in which people concerned show mutual interest to understand each other and understanding leads to knowing the minds of each other. It is not easy to know another person's mind as it is not visible. But the mind becomes

audible when the person speaks out. Knowing the spouse's mind involves communication between husband and wife. Communication is an important part of knowing each other as inner emotions, likes and dislikes, hurt feelings, opinions, outlooks, temperaments, childhood experiences etc. can be shared in an atmosphere of love and acceptance. While communicating, couples have an opportunity to look into each other's mind. Once they speak to each other with transparency, they start to understand each other's needs. When needs are met, the partners experience fulfilment and satisfaction. This draws them close to each other. When their minds are united, they are ready for the union of the spirit also. Such couples can unite their spirits in worship, prayer and ministry. This is what is meant by 'becoming one'.

A Christian family should never underestimate the attacks of the evil one. Satan is a divider. His chief aim is to bring division in the Christian family by deceiving and whispering lies, Jn 8:44. The male ego and the female desire to rule serve as vantage points for him to attack the family. Prayer and obedience to the Word of God are the spiritual weapons against Satan. Both husband and wife should fight as a single unit against him, Eccl 4:12.

Lead

Conflicts will arise in every family as two different individuals live in close proximity as husband and wife. Conflicts expose areas of need and areas that need to be corrected. Conflicts in a family should be treated as opportune times for knowing each other. At such times, agape love, patience and meekness should operate to defuse the situation (Col 3:12-15).

Christian families can raise future leaders for the Church and UESI. Parents have the superior responsibility of nurturing and teaching their children, Prov 22:6. They are only stewards of their

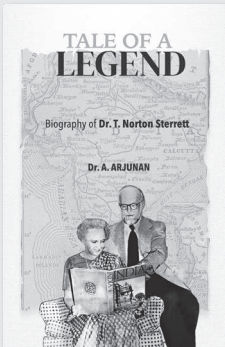
children and they have to present them to God as responsible citizens useful both for the Church and society.

A Christian family has another responsibility of furthering God's Kingdom to the extent possible. Every Christian family must be 'a well of living water' that satisfies those that come to them and the waters should flow out as ministry and bless the community as well. Every Christian family should fulfil this responsibility of being 'a light and salt' and like 'a house built on a mountain', Mt 5:13, 14.



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One + One = One

This is a mystery which no mathematician can solve! It is a profound truth of two becoming one in marriage! Marriage was instituted by God and His formula is unique in that we have two different individuals coming together and living as one, accepting each other with all the baggage and adjusting to each other's ego, preferences, likes and dislikes. Christian marriage and families are the replica of God on earth, representing the Triune God and reflecting the love and bond between them. If families are strong the society will be strong and the Church will be strong! If families fail the purpose of God, everything fails. Families are under attack these days, and Satan has strategically kept an eye on them

to break them so that there will be chaos and confusion everywhere. Let us consider God's intention for marriages and families.

God: The Architect and Builder

The first marriage was initiated by God in the Garden of Eden. It is God who felt that, 'it is not good for man to be alone, I will make a suitable helper for him' Gen 2: 18.

The first costectomy¹ was done by God when He took a rib from the man and made a woman and brought her to him! Adam was surrounded by nature, animals and all creation and everything was provided for him to live a satisfied life. He had the company of God too. But God saw that he needed

1. Surgical removal of all or part of a rib.

a human companion and so he took the initiative and made a right partner for him thus executing the institution of marriage.

The moment Adam saw his partner Eve, he could not contain himself but broke forth into a song, the first ever romantic poem composed and recited by him, to express his emotions owning her as a part of his own body, the missing rib, a person created in the image of God and accepting her as his equal partner ('bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh'). There was no superiority-inferiority complex, no competition, no domination, no control, but was simply captivated with love for her, the perfect choice from God. In their relationship there was no secrecy between them but there was transparency and oneness.

When God created Eve for Adam, she was a suitable companion for him. Selecting a right life partner is the best choice one can make which decides the rest of life. 'God gives His very best to those who leave the choice with Him' is a tested and proven fact. When God gives, it is the right choice and they fit in perfectly like the bricks placed together in a building. It does not mean that they will not face any problems in life, but they can face it together with the strength of God knowing that it is God Who united them. Waiting

for God's initiative and choice is hard in today's fast-paced world. Instead of depending on God and receiving His best choice, folks are on the lookout for their partner by 'falling' in love solely based on their preferences and likings. The period of getting to know each other sometimes crosses all boundaries and they become emotionally so entangled that they are incapable of listening to God's voice. Many are in a hurry to choose for themselves and later regret too. If we choose by ourselves, it is easy to let go when things do not go according to our expectation. We live in a world where changing partners either before or after marriage is like changing clothes. But God has strictly prohibited it in marriage by commanding, 'what God has united let no man separate!' When we make a vow before the Lord, it is a commitment for a lifetime. Therefore, choosing the partner wisely and working on the marriage with God's wisdom and grace will determine the future of our life. Once we mess it up it becomes extremely difficult and even irreversible. If the foundation of marriage is on God, the Solid Rock, we will not be shaken despite the pressures or storms in life. A God-centered marriage stands strong as it says in Eccl 4: 12, 'A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.'

Sin: The Destroyer

The relationship between spouses is meant to be unique and revolutionary in nature compared to the standards of the world. But sin marred the beauty of this relationship and subsequently began to rule over and dominate. There was shame, guilt, covering up oneself, blame, etc. The effect of sin was so serious that it affected the whole system of marriage and its purpose leading even to break-ups. We often misquote Eph 5:22 without seeing verse 21 where it begins with 'submit to one another.' We focus entirely on the wife's submission and obedience and don't pay any attention to the role of the husband. The husband is called to love his wife as Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for her. There is no other degree of love, or demands, or conditions. The model of Christ's love is the paradigm that is set. Which wife will not submit or respect her husband if he shows such a sacrificial love? Which husband will not love if the wife respects and submits to him as unto the Lord? It is a natural outflow of love and respect which is reciprocal in nature totally eliminating the need to enforce anything on either spouse. Submission and love should not be demanded, but it is to be voluntary

and spontaneous. Often we expect submission like a slave with the idea of the husband bossing over or expecting love even when the wife is not willing to submit. There is a spirit of competition and rebellion resulting in 'yours and mine!' But the formula says $One+One=One$, 'ours'! Many families struggle with 'my money-your money, my family-your family, my work- your work, my duties- your duties and so on.

This calls us to retrospect our behavior with each other. How do we treat our spouse? Is it like a machine with no emotions? The way we talk, react or respond shows how much we respect them as the image-bearers of God. Do we accept each other with all the shortcomings or weaknesses or do we treat each other as doormats seeking to fulfil our own selfish agendas? Do we let down our spouses in front of others? Do we speak with respect to each other in front of children? Children will respect their parents by observing the way their parents treat each other. If we follow the model of agape love where God accepted us with all our vulnerabilities, we too will be able to show each other love and respect. A word of appreciation and encouragement can lift up the spouse and do wonders. Mistakes and errors can be corrected with love and care.

Believing families are not spared from the tactics of the devil either. We need to understand the schemes of the evil one and fight against it with the grace and strength of God because the One Who is in us is greater than the one who is in the world. No family is perfect, but both the spouses should be willing to come together, forgive one another, pray together, and move together thus glorifying God and setting a model for the children who will be building families in the future. May we be the trendsetters for them as they observe us closely each day, watching how we handle issues with the help of the Lord. If we don't do it, they draw values from the world outside.

God: The Rebuilder

Jesus has freed us from the curse of domination and He wants us to get back to the original intent of marriage. He restored the marred and broken relationship by His sacrifice and reinstated it by quoting the same verse from Genesis, the two becoming one and the covenant relationship which no one can break (Matthew 19). This formula has to be reemphasized in our families through our words and actions. We are no more independent individuals but two individuals from different backgrounds, accepting and

adjusting with one another thus fulfilling God's original design. Humility to uplift one another and bring out the best in each other is what God expects us to do. How beautiful the families look if the spouses sing to each other even after years of marriage, 'This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh!' So many conflicts can be avoided if we consider each other as our own and care for each other as we care for our own body. That is the model Christ expects from each family. Instead of biting and devouring, blaming each other, displaying the sacrificial love of God can make the families stronger, fulfilling the God-given purposes. Having the attitude of Christ and considering the other better than oneself can do miracles in families.

The purpose of marriage is to be together, to enjoy each other's presence, to do things together, to complement each other, and to support one another. Our call as families is to be in one accord, serving one another and serving God together, having the same mind, purpose and vision to be involved in God's mission. This has to be thought through carefully right from the time that one begins to think and pray about choosing the partner and marriage and renew it even in married life. Often couples struggle after the



marriage and it affects their family and involvement. Being one even in vision enhances the harmony in the family and ministry. Right from the beginning God chose families to glorify God and to be a light to the nations. If we deliberately disobey this call, we have nothing much to offer to the world. If families are affected, God's mission is affected.

Conclusion

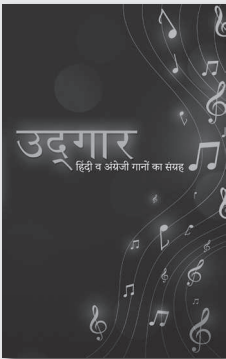
God is the initiator and the perfecter of marriage, and He desires families to fulfill His dreams and purposes. Families are His agents on the earth to display the beauty of harmonious

relationships. The invisible God is reflected in the world through our visible lifestyle. God being the centre of our family will help and guide us even in our vulnerabilities, making us victorious, holding out the biblical values amidst the changing values of the world. The ultimate purpose of marriage is to glorify God and so let us recommit ourselves as families by renewing our vows and covenant made in the presence of God and others. Let love be the major ingredient in our families thus creating a taste of heaven on earth!



Jessy Jacob, UESI staff based at Chennai, married to Mr. Jacob Varghese and they are blessed with two daughters, Prashansa teaching in a school & Purna doing her M.A at Pondicherry University. As a family their passion is to build up young leaders with high spiritual caliber to impact their campuses, society and nation at large.

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Born to Fly



Psalm 127:3 "Sons are a heritage from the Lord, children a reward from him."

You would have come across the term developmental disorders, or if you are parents who are new to the term developmental disorders, here is a parent's guide on how to deal with them:

First, it is crucial to accept that your child is special and needs special care and attention. Prioritize your child's needs over yours. It is essential to understand what your child's requirements are, which may not always be materialistic but could also include emotional or physical support.

Developmental disorders encompass various conditions such as Intellectual Disability (ID), Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Down Syndrome,

Cerebral Palsy (CP), and others.

The first step you must take is early diagnosis; the earlier the intervention, the better. Early diagnosis helps determine the exact cause, severity, and areas where the child needs special attention or help. Here are a few signs to look out for:

- ▶ No eye contact
- ▶ Poor response to name calls
- ▶ Staring blankly in space
- ▶ Zoning out
- ▶ Poor compliance
- ▶ Poor speech and communication
- ▶ Delayed milestones
- ▶ Stereotyped behaviour (hand flapping, toe walking, banging...)
- ▶ Hyperactivity
- ▶ Echolalia
- ▶ Use of jargon words

In today's fast-paced world, where Google and AI are our friends, they provide information that could be both genuine and false. Total reliance on it is not advised. Once you identify the problem your child is facing, a quick visit to a paediatrician or child psychologist can make your hardship easier.

The second step is therapy. Therapy is essential nowadays, such as Occupational Therapy (OT), Speech and Language Therapy (SLT), and Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) and Child psychologist. These therapies target specific problems and help formulate short, systematic goals to achieve them with a proper, target-oriented treatment plan. However, therapy alone is not sufficient. You still have to work with your child on

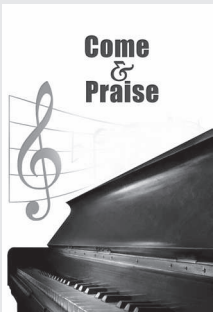
the goals formed every day so they can be achieved faster. As Christian parents, you could use the motto "pray and play."

Play is the most effective therapy a child with developmental disorders can have. It's fun, it's a new learning experience, it improves task skills, and it enhances social interaction. Prayer is a powerful weapon; if you feel down and find it hard, just pray about it and then engage in play.

Children are all gifts of God, and if they are special, they make life special by teaching you new skills and perspectives. Don't think of it as a downfall; rather, think of it as an upgrade to new opportunities you can achieve with your child. Create a safe place for your child to reach the maximum of their dreams.



Dr. Saloni Rajesh Kshirsagar, Occupational therapist, Jaipur, Rajasthan



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Song of Songs

A love story

Bible Book Review

The name 'Song of Songs' is a literal translation of the Hebrew title which means 'the best or the greatest song.' Interestingly, we find seven references to King Solomon in the Song of Songs (1:1,1:4,1:5,3:7,3:9,3:11,8:12). It could mean that it was 'for' or about Solomon. His two names, which symbolize peace (Solomon) and love (Jedidiah) apply to the Song (2 Sam 12:24-25). His kingdom rule from 970-930 BC was a restoration of the Garden of Eden with temple and palace in the Promised Land (1 Kings 4:20-34 & 6:7). Solomon stands as a personified blessing of covenant love (1:2-4, 5:10-16).

Song of Songs is love poetry depicting the love story of the shepherd-stranger and a "Shulamite-Cindrella" celebrating

the joyous potential of marriage in the light of sworn covenant principles. The basis for all human love should be covenant love, which is also the basis of the relationship between God and man. Therefore, this song applies to both marriage (Gen 2:24) and God's covenant of love and its blessings (Deut. 33:13-17). The Shulamite personifies 'the wife' in an ideal marriage and 'covenant people' in the Promised Land. The whole Song of Songs can be divided into three parts.

The first part of the story, talks about Solomon owning a vineyard in the hill country of Ephraim, in the little town of Shunem (8:11) which is rented to a farmer family having 2 sons and 2 daughters. The Shulamite girl is one among the daughters.

She is endowed with natural beauty and since her brothers have made her work very hard in the field it has resulted in her dark skin. She has little opportunity to take care of her appearance (1:6, 1:8).

The second part of the story includes a shepherd-stranger who is very handsome and wins the heart of the Shulamite girl. He leaves her and promises to return someday to her.

The Shulamite girl dreams of her lover, the shepherd-stranger, on two occasions. The first dream is about a time when they are married and one night she awakens to find him missing. She then goes out in search of him. (3:2-4). The second dream is of her beloved returning to her and trying to open the door. But she refuses to get dressed and admit him in. When she finally decides to let him in, to her great disappointment he is gone (5:3-6). After a frantic search and mistreatment by the guards, with the help of the women of Jerusalem she is finally able to trace him (5:8-16; 6:2-3).

The third part of the story is about

King Solomon himself approaching their city, and this news reaches the maiden. Initially she is disinterested until she is brought into the presence of the King and finds that her beloved shepherd-lover is none other than the King himself. She is his choice bride (3:7-11; 6:8) and is carried off to the royal palace in Jerusalem (3:7-8).

The Song of Songs is basically love poetry celebrating an exciting love relationship. It has powerful and expressive language. Though there is no mention of God in the Song, it is widely accepted as the book which is meant to portray God's love for man. God's love for us is real and deep. He considers us of great value and also longs for our love in return.

The inclusion of physical expressions of love suggests that there is no clash between physical intimacy and holiness when expressed within the legitimate bond of marriage. It is beautiful, pure and precious.

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Mr. Rajesh Kshirsagar, UESI Training Secretary, UESI, has M.A in family life education from Martin Luther University. He is married to Shirley and they live in Jaipur, Rajasthan. They are blessed with two daughters.





The Gospel Shaped Relationship

Mogan and Maria completed their MBBS degree and moved to a reputed institution to work and teach students. Both were involved in church ministry as well as counselling. As both of them wanted to pursue their higher studies, they applied for PG courses. Maria got admissions in the PG course but not Mogan. Maria came home in excitement to join the PG course and informed her husband about the admission in the university. Mogan could not accept this and felt uneasy. He was not able to congratulate Maria for her achievement, instead he mumbled and said "I need to do the course first. Please wait for my admission". And he didn't allow Maria to join the PG course. Maria was shocked and upset about her husband's attitude.

Many questions arise in our mind like a) Why did Mogan behave like this towards his own wife? b) Why did he want to compete with her? c) Why is he not able to accept his wife's victory? Let all these questions linger in our mind while we look into Philippians 2. Here, we see three important aspects which Paul insists on:

- A. Principle
- B. Jesus's mindset
- C. God's grace to follow Him

A. Principle (v.3-4):

Paul starts verses 3 and 4 in a negative tone and then emphasizes on doing for others. Let us start with verse 3, where he mentions "Do nothing from selfish ambition or vain conceit (excessive pride)". The reason is that selfish ambition,

revolves only around self. This selfish motive makes us think about how to achieve and hold on to it. It won't allow us to think about others. Consequently, we use our power and pride to control others and make use of them to fulfil our selfish ambitions.

When we start controlling and overpowering others, then we value and consider others as lower than us. This attitude of pride makes us believe that we are always superior to others and our mind does not like to see the prosperity of others. Saint Paul many a time reiterates the word 'humility' (probably in all his letters), in vs. 3 which is directly contradictory to pride and selfish ambition. Humility is the mother of all virtues; being humble is not to see how important we can become, but to see how much difference we can make in the lives of others.

In verse 4, we see the word 'interest' two times; one is not to look out for our own interests but to the interests of others. Mogan looks only on his own interest, but failed to consider the interest of Maria, which makes him to value Maria less than himself. We can ponder about how a believer can behave in this way. The question has two sides: it indicates how far our selfish ambition can take us, and instead how we ought to consider and look

into the interest of others. Let us see Jesus' mindset to find out the answers.

B. Jesus' Mindset (v.5-8):

Paul has concluded the principles for relationships in verse 3 and 4 which could be quotable quotes, pop ups in our computer screen or in the social media. But Paul continues to present the mindset of Jesus Christ in verses 5 to 8 where it highlights for us to have the same mindset like Jesus in our relationship with one another.

Servant: We see a phrase 'very nature' in verse 5 and 6: the very nature of God and the very nature of a servant. Jesus Christ is God, but He does not use this nature of God for His own advantage (v.3, 6), but made Himself as nothing. In another version of the Bible, we see, He emptied Himself and made Himself of no reputation (v. 4, 7). Paul asked us not to do anything but here Jesus made Himself nothing; it means that he gave up His being. What does that mean? It means He has given up His glory and power; and didn't use them for His own advantage during His earthly life. He mentioned that He has the power to ask God to protect Him during the betrayal (Mt 26:53), yet He didn't do it. Again, Jesus prayed to God to glorify Him with the glory that He had with the Father before

the world was created (Jn 17:5)

Submission (v.8): Jesus Christ, the Eternal son, submitted to the Father unconditionally because Jesus' love towards His father is incomparable. His obedience and submission were proved through His crucifixion.

Sacrifice and Salvation v.8: Jesus Christ gave His life on the cross for the redemption of our sins. His sacrificial love demonstrated that He lived only for others. He considered us better, the pinnacle of creation, and that made Him to become as a servant. He gave His life on the cross for our life, His righteousness for our unrighteousness, His freedom for our condemnation and through His sacrifice, Jesus elevated us as God's own children.

Shepherd (v.9-11, Rev. 7:17): God exalted Jesus Christ to a higher place to rule over the heavens and earth; every tongue acknowledging Him as the Lord, to the glory of God the Father; He is the ultimate King (v.9-11). John the author of Revelation, sees Jesus Christ as the Lamb and the Shepherd. He came as a Lamb and sits on the throne as a Shepherd; He is the Lord who takes us to springs of living water (Rev. 7:17).

C. God's grace to follow Him:

In verse 5-8, Paul reveals the mindset of Jesus Christ and asks

us to have the same mindset in relationship with others. Let us look deep into the mindset of Paul, and see how it was transformed to that of Jesus Christ's and also how it impacted his relationship with others. He considers his identity and becomes aware of his identity in Christ, and acknowledges that his identity is garbage; he becomes the scum of the world to bring others to Christ (1 Cor 4:8-13 and Phil 4:5-9). Our self revolves around our identity. The identity makes us to cling on to something and value that attachment as very near and dear to us. Paul considers his identity as nothing when compared to the surpassing worth of knowing Jesus Christ (1 Cor 4:13).

Paul wants to become lower than others so that others could be lifted to know Christ more. He wants to be a fool for Christ so that others could become wise in Christ. He wants to be weak so others will become strong, he wants to be crushed so others will be blessed, and he wants to be slandered and persecuted (1 Cor. 4:10-13). He wants to be displayed at the end of the procession and desires others to be at the front of the procession. In one of the towns, a guest speaker invited for a Christian convention, got annoyed when his title 'professor' was removed from his name. An organiser removed

the prefix knowing that he was not working in that job and had retired 20 years ago. People aspire for worldly titles before their names like 'Prophet,' 'Pastor,' 'Evangelist,' 'Missionary,' 'Dr,' 'Er' and 'Apostle.' Some people always want to boast about their birth, place of birth, upbringing, caste, community, university etc. Irrelevant of caste and creed, community, what is our priority???? When will we come out of this unwanted worldly fame and popularity???

Let us ponder how Paul led a humble victorious life with the mindset of Jesus. Paul felt sufficient in his life because of God's abundant grace and did not get distracted or attached to any type of power or glory. As the Psalmist exclaims, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not be in want" (Ps 23:1), let us also not lack anything, as the Triune God is our Shepherd.

Conclusion:

Mogan received the gospel of grace, and he became aware that His grace is more than sufficient in his life. However, in the beginning,

Mogan went through the tension of whether to give up his interest to look after the interest of Maria or others which meant he was not able to understand the servanthood of the Shepherd Jesus. He failed to portray the Christ like image in him. We come to Him by His abundant grace and His grace changes our lives completely. Now let us examine our hearts.

- Am I still holding to my own self or clinging close to Jesus Christ?
- What do we become in order to bring others to Christ?
- Are we ready to be the scum of the world, fools in Christ, condemned to die and be at the end of the procession?

Leaving all His power and glory, Jesus Christ came down to earth as a servant, submitted to the Father's will, sacrificed His life for the redemption of sins, and as a loving Shepherd led us to the living water. When we are in Christ, we should look to the interest of others and give our life for others (Phil 2:21, 1 John 3:16).

Let us be a true disciple!!! And be a true disciple maker!!!

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Leaving a Legacy as God-Centered Parents

- ◆ Children are the greatest treasures we can have on earth. They are God's priceless gifts to us. Paul counsels us to bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord. (Eph 6:4)
- ◆ Sons are a heritage from the Lord, children a reward from him . . . Blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them. (Ps 127: 3&5)
- ◆ Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it. (Prov 22:6)

Each of us will leave a legacy behind us that is far greater than what we can imagine. *We need to show our children and grandchildren how to live and lead a godly life, show them how to love, show them how to forgive, show them how to give and most of all show them how to live forever with you and the God Who created us.*

God has blessed Renuka and me with 3 children as gifts. All 3 children have accepted Christ and married believing spouses by finding God's will. They all involve in student ministry through UESI as we do. They all keep their home open for mentoring and discipling students and graduates.

If you are married, you have one of the greatest of all opportunities—that of **leaving a lasting legacy to your children**. To do this you must impart to your sweet children a strong spiritual foundation that equips them to handle whatever

the future holds. **That means you must be a strong spiritual leader yourself.** Don't leave behind only personal memories. As wonderful as they are, memories fade with time. And don't leave behind only financial security. Seek to leave behind a tower of spiritual strength that is being built now, today, through your godly example.

Perhaps the greatest legacy you can leave behind is another godly generation. Humanly speaking, Christianity is only one generation away from extinction. You are to pass on to your children the truth about Christ and Christian living. Your faith ought to become their faith. Nowadays graduates become so busy with their work and UESI ministry. But, taking care of children lies squarely on the shoulder of the parents.

As parents, we know that we cannot grant salvation to our children. We cannot give them eternal life.

No, that's God's job. **But you and I can provide the right kind of godly influence in the home that will point our children to the Saviour.** The reality of Jesus must first be evident in your life before you can point your children to that same reality. Children rather look at your life than listening to what you say. All our children accepted Christ when they were in their school-going age. Our last daughter accepted Christ when she was 8 years old. Now her daughter too accepted Christ when she was also 8 years old.

Your children may sometimes resist your Christian focus and involvement in UESI. They may complain about your direction for their lives. But don't give in. There is a war going on for their souls and for their purity, just as there is a war going on for your soul and your purity. **Do your part to provide a godly influence, and trust God to do the rest.**

The Apostle Paul took God's priorities for life and made them his own. He had a significant impact on everyone around him. From Paul's example, you will learn how to:

- Let God's power work in and through you.
- Acquire discernment for making right decisions and choices.

- Pursue holiness that allows God to work through you unhindered.
 - Children should follow the parents as much as they follow Christ.
- ✓ How can you connect intentionally with children? By modelling God-like relationship with children.
1. Your children are the greatest gift and their souls are the heaviest responsibility in your hands. Take time with them, and teach them to have faith in Christ. When you are old, nothing else you've done will have mattered as much.
 2. Walk the talk. Children have never been perfect at listening to their parents, but they have never failed to imitate them in some way. Children should see the model of love and relationship between us and would like to have similar love and relationship in their families.
 3. Your children need you to love them for who they are, not spend all your time trying to fix them.
 4. Children must be taught how to think, not what to think.
 5. Parents can only guide by example and put their offspring on the right path, but the final



- forming of a person's character and life-story lies in their own hands.
6. All details aside, if you have never been "hated" by your kid for a short time, you have never truly been a parent. A harsh truth, I know.
 7. It's absolutely impossible to protect your children from disappointment in life. Some things you just have to live through to learn.
 8. One of the best things you can do for your children as they grow is to let go and allow them to do things for themselves, allow them to be strong and responsible, allow them the freedom to experience things on their own terms, allow them to take the bus or the train and learn from life firsthand – allow them to be better people, allow them to believe more in themselves and do more by themselves.
 9. We should instruct the children and discipline them; but should not provoke them to anger (Eph 6:4). Teach them about God and spiritual things.
 10. Be consistent in your talk and behaviour.
 11. Play with them.
 12. Tell them that you love them.
 13. Look for good things in children and not just the bad.
 14. Don't pressure them too much to excel.
 15. Believe them and believe in them.
 16. Share your life, the good and the bad, that they might learn from you.
 17. Let them see how Christ has worked in your life and how He continues to work, even though you may have failed miserably as a younger person.
 18. Point them towards heaven as your time on earth is most likely shorter than theirs; let them know how family can all live together forever.
 19. Talk to them straight about sensitive subjects.
 20. Guide them towards good marriages by modelling a good one.
- ✓ How can you connect intentionally with grand children?
1. Do not dishonour their parents - if you disrespect their parents, they will disrespect their parents and that is simply not scriptural. (Because a house divided cannot stand).
 2. Do not change the rules - you must enforce and honor the rules of the parents - if bedtime is 9:00 p.m in their house, then bedtime is 9:00 p.m at your house too.

3. If your grandson/granddaughter cannot have chocolate in his/her house, then he/she cannot eat at grandma's house either.
4. Do not extend your authority over the grandchildren. God has placed the parents of the children in authority over them, not on the grandparents. Understand God's accountability lies on the heads of the parents. Grandparents must not divide God's chain of command.
5. Never correct the parent in front of the child.
6. Do not take sides if there is a dispute - a conflict or separation or divorce in the family. But teach the child to honour and respect both of his/her parents.
7. Do not speak badly about either of his/her parents. It amounts to speaking badly about the child.

Releasing children on their own (Your role as support and advisor). When they have accepted the Lord and connected to a good fellowship to grow spiritually, giving freedom to decide what to study, where, whom to marry, etc. Not interfering

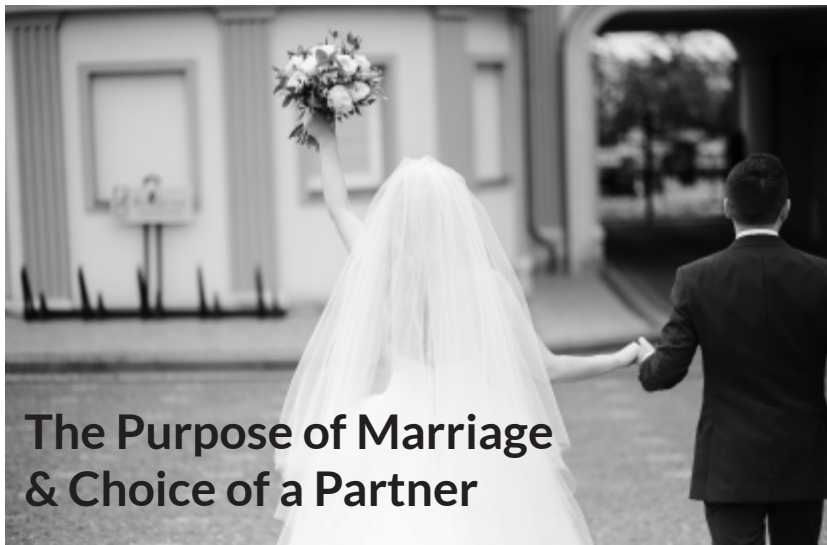
in their married life. Consider them as a separate unit able to decide on their own with the help of the Lord. If they want, they may consult you or anybody in the Fellowship. You don't question them.

- ✓ Our first daughter's family was staying with us in the duplex portion of the house; but there was no interference from us on where they went, how they spent their money and time. We may have common food sometimes; but not always. Sometimes our daughter feeds us. Sometimes our grandchildren are fed by us depending on our schedules.
- ✓ Our son took a house separately in Bangalore after marriage and we were meeting once in a while either in his house or in our house. Our daughter-in-law is treated as a daughter. She had declared in her college that we were her second parents which I heard from her guide when I met him once. She addresses us as Daddy and Mummy.
- ✓ Passing on the inheritance without being biased. We have worked out how the inheritance is to be shared without any bias between girl or boy child.



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The Purpose of Marriage & Choice of a Partner

Even in this 21st century when ethical and moral values are decreasing rapidly, the importance of family as an institution cannot be denied. “Does a nation require a leader or a loyal person who has values?” questioned a professional editor. In another article published in *The Week* magazine the former election commissioner Shri TN Seshan who questioned ‘What constitutes a leader?’ ended up stating that it is moral values which make a person noble. Family is the first school, parents are the first teachers, and their life styles are text books. That’s why marriage is honorable in all, marriage is the first institution of God even before the church and society.

In spite of sufficient doctrinal teachings we see and hear some of

our believing graduates, who are knowingly making wrong choices and facing problems. As a result those who are active in ministry before their marriage have been inactive and ineffective later by this subtle trick of the devil. Many times believers who were not obedient to the specific will of God in selecting the partner are getting into confusion about involvement in ministry.

The purpose of Marriage

Marriage is God’s plan for man - not to be alone, (Gen. 2:18) but to replenish the earth and keep the human race going (Gen. 1:26) and to prevent fornication (1 Cor. 7:2,9). In this postmodern world, sadly, marriage is considered to be a contract between two individuals, whereas it has to be a life-long

companionship – “till death do us part”. Marriage is the first institution created by God, even before the Church. Marriage is holy (Heb. 13:4) The Bible starts and ends with Marriage. The first miracle of Jesus was at a wedding. Marriage is an important and an irreversible decision.

The purpose of marriage is **1. Companionship:** The affection, Love, and true companionship which grow out of a oneness of spirit as each partner models Christ’s unconditional love (Amos 3:3) **2. Enjoyment:** The physical relationship is a reflection of the loyalty and affection shared among marriage partners who have become “one flesh” (Heb 13:4) **3. Fruitfulness:** The blessing of children in a marriage allows that relationship to reproduce itself physically. It is the fruit of the oneness that results in a marriage (Gen1:28, I Pet 3:7) **4. Protection:** The husband protects his wife by laying down his life for her (Eph 5:25). The wife is to protect the home (Titus 2:4-5) and the parents together protect their children to raise up a godly seed (Malachi 2:15; Psalm 112:1-2) **5. Reflecting God’s image** – Trinitarian God, His Character are reflected in marriage.

Knowing the will of God regarding marriage partner

As a believer, share your convictions about Marriage with your parents. Inform your parents about the importance of God’s will in your decision making and convince them. If any proposal comes, inform your Mentor for prayer and advice. In general, Prayer, Word of God, Elders’ counselling, Circumstances are the four ways to know God’s will. Pray with burden, open mind and without any reservations about the proposal to get peace of mind. Prayer changes things, wait upon God for His time. In His time He makes all things beautiful.

Many youngsters and their parents set worldly criteria while looking for suitable partners - ABCDE; A for Age, B for Beauty, C for Caste, D for Dowry, E for Earning or Education, F for Family background (well settled). But as believers, we must let God be our Guide, not worldly. Otherwise, we will miss the blessings of God and also become a bad role model to next generation.

The Process of Marriage

When both sides are clear about God’s will, the families can come together for an engagement where the marriage is decided. The partners to be may communicate and correspond with each other but not behave in a manner that would bring reproach to the Lord’s name or set a bad example for others. Behave



with dignity and decency. The process of deciding about marriage can be in 3 stages: 1st Stage - Before praying for the proposal, get to know about their testimony 2nd Stage – Get to know God's will and the approval of mentors and parents. 3rd Stage – For marriage arrangements, both side elders can meet together to finalise Venue, Date, Expenditure, etc.

Conclusion

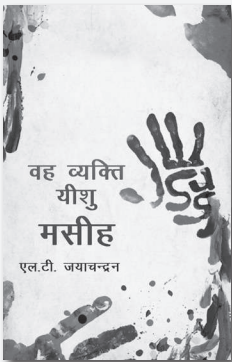
Believers are to marry only believers. Your marriage is your right. Remember, marriage is a yoke, you

shall not tie up an ox with a donkey (2 Cor. 6:14). Both Old and New Testaments condemned marriages with unbelievers. Marriage should be contemplated only after completion of your studies or after achieving some degree of financial independence in order to take care of the family. Last but not the least, consider the compatibility in age, mental and spiritual maturity and also vision about ministry. May the Lord help you to choose your mate not only with the sole purpose of meeting your needs but ultimately to bring glory to Him.



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Altogether in Perfect Family

1) Marriage is God ordained

God ordained marriage and the family with the first couple Adam and Eve in a sinless world. Marriage was instituted and blessed by God. Heb.13.4; so, it is holy. God created mankind in His own image, in the image of God He created them; male and female He created them." Gen 1.27-28. The Lord God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him." Gen 2.18.

The relationship of a husband and wife within a marriage shows the beauty of God's rule and harmony. Eph.5.31-33. In a family there is love, submission, authority, respect, acceptance, appreciation, mutual help, headship, fellowship, obedience, trust, service and a sense of belonging to one another that brings a wonderful harmony.

2) Equally created but different

Husband and wife are equal in status before God, but different physically, emotionally and mentally from each other. They complement each other. The Bible does not talk about male superiority. We have, in our cultural background, a strange feeling that women are second grade human beings. It is a wrong notion. God



created both of them as equals. However, when their roles come into play, the husband is given the leadership by God in marriage.

Coming from two different backgrounds, husbands and wives differ in many things. This should not surprise them but they need to understand that these differences show needs and a harmony in their unity. They meet each other's needs through these differences and hence grow together. The diverse characteristics are meant to be complementary. When differences become complements, there is a dynamic unity in the context of a loving relationship.

How to capitalise on the divine design

- a) Be aware of the differences.
- b) Recognise the validity of each other's natural tendencies.
- c) Make them work together to enrich marriage.

Some Suggestions:

- **Husband to wife** - The wife needs security through ample appreciation and reassurance. Give importance to certain 'small' things. Give sufficient time for togetherness. Recognize the variation in the moods. Be considerate and patient. Do not reject the wife's suggestions. Discover her individual needs and try to meet them.
- **Wife to husband** - The wife is to accept her husband as he is. Another important key to a happy marriage is understanding. Her support can give him strength in every situation. A wife should be sensitive to her husband. Another key is approval. It does not mean that the wife approves everything but it shows that the wife is conscious of the husband's merit. She will not blame him but will share the blame. The next thing is appreciation. When understood properly and accepted mutually, the differences between the husband and wife no longer irritate one another but generate sympathy. God created a woman as man's companion, not another man. God designed the differences in the genders for a purpose.

3) Monogamy is God's plan

God created one man and one woman. Monogamy means married with one person at a time. Whenever any man or woman married more than one person there has been problems in the family. In marriage a man and woman come together as life partners. There has been a lot of deviation from the pattern God has made.

God Himself ordered that it was not good for man to be alone. It not only removes loneliness, but it also provides for fellowship, friendship and partnership. It provides for a lasting, very meaningful and intimate relationship between husband and wife. A leader has to be the husband of one wife (Titus 1:6).

4) Irrevocable commitment Mal. 2.14

A Christian marriage is a commitment not a convenience, a complement not a competition between a husband and wife and also a covenant not a contract. The marriage covenant is an irrevocable and final commitment. God made covenant promises to Noah, Adam, Abraham, Moses etc. Every covenant is initiated by God and it could not be nullified. As God is one of the parties to the covenants that He had made at various times,

the covenants were holy and they were bound to be kept.

In the same way, marriage is also called a covenant. It is not a convenient, comfort, arrangement, promise or any such thing, but it is to be kept till the end and cannot be broken under any circumstances. This gives Christian marriage the permanency. Divorce does not even come into the picture at all. The husband and wife are bound to one another until death parts.

5) Becoming one flesh

The fundamental rule for the husband and wife is to leave, cleave and to become one flesh. Gen.2.24. In Christian marriage, both husband and wife find the fulfilment of their needs and desires – in a holistic way. I Cor.7.3; I Cor. 6:15-20. Cleaving to one another in sickness and health, poverty and wealth, pleasure and pain, days fair as well as foul, agreements and disagreements. Needs are identified and met in marriage. The deepest needs are met in the most intimate relationships. This includes the fulfilment of the sexual needs of the husband and wife. Their inadequacies are met in their relationship as one person's strength will help in the other person's weakness and vice versa. In other words, husbands and wives

becomes complementary to one another for their mutual growth.

6) Believers as partners - I Pet. 3:7.

In a Christian marriage, two believers can support each other, move with one purpose. They can bear the burden together because they are moving with a single purpose - to glorify God and live for His purpose. They believe in God and the Bible; they have the same values and can support one another's burdens. Getting married is like becoming a Christian. One leaves his former style of life and commits oneself to each other in Christ. Rom. 10:9-10; Acts 16:31; Phil. 3:7, 8.

Marriage involves a man and a woman entering into a responsible, mutual, exclusive, permanent, chaste, and total commitment in spite of possible adversities. People should know that they must face problems and seek God's help and not run away.

7) Oneness through unity

The husband and wife enjoy intimate relationship as compared with Jesus and the church. We all have a God-shaped vacuum in our hearts. Until this vacuum is filled by God, we wander through life in meaningless existence. It is only when we enter into a relationship with the Creator that the void is filled. This vertical relationship,

which begins with conversion, is intended to become deeper and more intimate as we journey with the Lord. This leads to the horizontal relationship with one another. This becomes evident that we have a vertical relationship (I John 1:7, 2:9, John 3:16 & I John 3:16)

a) Emotional oneness - When we are emotionally intimate, we feel close to each other. We feel emotionally supported and cared for by our mate. There is a sharing of hurts, joys and a sense that each one is genuinely interested in the well-being of the other.

b) Social Intimacy - When we are socially intimate, we have many friends in common as opposed to socializing separately. Do you have many of the same friends in common?

c) Sexual Intimacy - The sexual intimacy involves more than the new performance of the sex act. If our relationship is sexually intimate, we are satisfied with our sex life.

d) Intellectual Intimacy - Intellectual intimacy involves the sharing of ideas. It is more than a superficial conversation, value

your mate's opinions and share your own. Conversations become stimulating and enriching.

e) Recreational Intimacy - When we are recreationally intimate, we enjoy and share in many of the same just-for-fun activities outdoor or indoor activities like travelling, eating outside, etc.

f) Spiritual Intimacy - It is being able to share your spiritual self, find this reciprocated and have a sense of union with your mate. It is an act of self-disclosure, of opening yourself up to someone else and privileging them with a genuine glimpse of who you really are.

A feeling that you are spiritually in time as a couple. It is to find it reciprocated. We realize that you cannot stand alone and experience intimacy.

We can have all the other dimensions of closeness, like emotional, intellectual, sexual, social and recreational; but if we are lacking the spiritual, we are really missing out the best God intended for His children. It is always worth the effort to have all that God intends.



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Building Blocks in Christian Family



“The family is the ground floor; it’s the foundation. Underneath all of society and all of civilization, Western civilization itself seems to hang on this issue. And if you undermine it, if you weaken it, if you tamper with it, you necessarily threaten the whole superstructure.” These are the words of Dr. James Dobson, founder of Focus on the Family, a psychologist and Christian author of several books on marriage and parenting.

Fundamentally, a family begins with a strong and nurturing marriage—a union between a man and a woman, as designed by God in the Garden of Eden. The initial family was charged by God with a mandate: *“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 creature that moves on the ground”* (Gen 1:28). This mandate, extending beyond the husband and wife, encompasses the children and generations to come.

Paul, in his letter to the Colossians, talks about the essential virtues needed in a church, Col 3:12-14. Since a family is like the smallest version of a church, these virtues are crucial in a home. These virtues build the home and can create an impact outside the home. How do we embrace these virtues? Paul gives us a clue: “Clothe yourself.” Let’s take that cue, and together, let’s embody these virtues within our own families.

Each family member should put on their **‘compassion lenses’** to understand and feel others’ pain, offering comfort when needed. When someone makes a mistake, they don’t need a lecture; they need empathy. Empathy grows from living a compassionate life.

Close on the heels are the **‘gloves of kindness’** that each one wears. We all need help at some point; no one can do everything alone. Ray Stedman writes that “kindness is action that reveals compassion, action that arises out of a sense of sympathy. It can take many different forms—a smile, a kind word, a pat on the shoulder, an invitation to lunch, an offer of help.

There is no place for pride in a home. Pride cracks the unity in a home, and it cannot grow. Every family needs

an **'apron of humility'**. Humility is not thinking less of ourselves but is really not thinking of ourselves at all. Jonathan Edwards, the great man of God, said, "Nothing sets a person so much out of the devil's reach as humility."

In families, some have more power, maybe through strength or authority. But when dealing with each other, we need members who wear the **'shawl of gentleness'**. Aristotle defined gentleness as the correct average between being too angry and being never angry at all.

In a family, there's a mix of different traits—some are intelligent, some are beautiful, smart, wise, or talented, but not everyone has all these qualities at once. Everyone goes through moments of weakness. This is where wearing **'socks of patience and forbearance'** comes in. Just like you can't run while wearing socks at home without slipping, these socks help us move slowly and patiently with each other.

In close relationships, it's normal to feel hurt. Often, those closest to us

can cause the most pain. If these hurts aren't addressed, they can fester and become worse, like an infection. So, what's the solution? Use your **'handkerchief of forgiveness'**. Just as we use tissues to clean dirt from our hands or faces, forgiveness helps wipe away the hurt. Remember, during COVID, how frequently we wiped our hands to stay safe? Similarly, having a big 'handkerchief' of forgiveness helps erase every hurt within the family.

Finally, each family member wears the **'fragrance of love'**. This fragrance spreads a sweet aroma wherever they go. When a family is filled with selfless, agape love, it becomes unshakable and grows into a strong foundation. This love acts as a powerful glue, holding everything together—it's the most important virtue of all.

Such a family is equipped to reach out to others outside of the family; the extended family, the church, the neighbourhood, the workplace and the society at large. Can your family become such a family clothed with all these virtues?



Mr. Franky Fernandez, has spent nearly 3 decades in the financial services sector. He is a certified executive coach, trains and coaches on personal finances, teaches on family relationships, and is also an author. He is married to Shabeena and they are the parents of two teenage daughters.

SUFFERING'S PURPOSE

*In suffering's grip, our essence is revealed,
Suffering unveils the core of our being,
In agony, we find a refuge sure
In seeking God, we find our guiding star.*

*Each ache and sorrow, a lesson learned,
Teaching trust and reliance on the divine,
In hardship's grasp, our faith is earned,
As to God's embrace, we incline.*

*For suffering moulds us, shapes our soul,
Purifying, refining, making us whole,
In likeness to His Son, we're made to grow,
In the crucible of pain, our soul is refined.*

*Yet through it all, we stand firm and strong,
Anchored in the faith that carries us along,
For suffering's purpose, though it may seem bleak,
Is to draw us closer, the divine to seek.*

*In our pain, we find a peace profound,
And comfort through God's love abound,
And as we journey through the darkest night,
Our faith shines bright, a beacon of light.*

*Our faith's foundation strengthened through the test,
In suffering, we find God's power manifest.
Divine peace and comfort, in the midst of pain,
His presence felt, our souls find rest again.*

*So let suffering not be in vain,
But lead us to lives flourishing and sane,
For in our trials, we find our calling true,
To comfort others, as God comforts us too.*



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