

Lesson 34

Teacher's Manual

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FAMILY TOGETHERNESS - PART I

READ & MEDITATE ON: Deuteronomy 6:6, 7 MEMORIZE: Proverbs 22:6

INTRODUCTION

Although the Bible occasionally speaks specifically on the home, it has much more to say on the Church—the larger family of God. In Colossians, Paul makes four concise statements in four short verses (Colossians 3:18-21). Only four verses out of ninety-five in the whole epistle are devoted specifically to the home. In the Ephesian epistle, only sixteen verses out of one hundred fifty-five are devoted directly to the family (Ephesians 5:22-6:4). The question that naturally arises is, "Why is so little said about the home?" The fact is, that much is said about home life because the family is the Church in miniature. We find numerous references to "household churches." (See Romans 16:3-5; I Corinthians 16:19; Philemon 2.) The truth is: as goes the family unit, so goes the church community, so goes the nation. The same corporate faith, hope, and love displayed in a mature church are also the ingredients of a happy home. As Christ is the Head of the Church, so He must be the central figure in the home. Since the family was originally a foreshadow and type of the New Testament church body, any directives to the church are intended for the family as well.

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I. CREATING GOOD MEMORIES

Memories, good or bad, affect our life because we are forever reacting to our past. Our present world is a fulfillment of past experiences. Memories affect our decisions, tastes, choices, expectations, and reactions. Even the way we treat others is based on past expectations—especially negative, painful ones. The way we

were treated by our parents, or our memory of that treatment, becomes our outlook toward our children. That's why we must sort out our memories of the past, and evaluate them so we can use the goodness of them to create wholesome memories for our children.

Fond memories of home are the greatest heritage we can give our children. Memories are really the END PRODUCT of parenthood—memories of each other and parent's love for one another. Everyone can create good memories since they're not based on particular skills, abilities, education, money, or social position, but rather relationships. God's plan includes every family. He designed the family structure so that the greatest gift we can give is OURSELF, through listening and responding to each other. This sounds so simple and insignificant, but actually speaks of the greatest personal sacrifice—that of time and energy. Good memories don't just happen, they are carefully planned for and created. Opportunities for good memories arise almost continually. Whether a good or bad memory results, depends largely on how much we invest of ourselves in these moments of sharing.

A child should be able to look back at his or her past years and say about their parents, "They really tried to understand me. I never thought nor realized they could love me so much." These good and precious memories are created and developed by tender-loving parents.

A. Special Interest In "Little" Things

Be true parents by taking special interest in the "little" things that interest a child. Sometimes it is difficult for an adult to remember what a child finds important in their little world. The things that are vital and important to a child make up his or her world, and it is a wonderful thing for mom and dad to enter that world on special occasions. Whether it is wrestling with the boys or showing interest in your daughter's make-believe friends, you are creating the stuff that warm memories are made of.

B. Plan Special Family Activities

In the hustle-bustle of our world today, the family life is often made up of time left over from the day's activities. Too often there just isn't any time left. That is why it is very important now to plan certain hours of the day for just family activities.

These should include the evening meal: Many happy memories are made at good ole' suppertime. Here the family is together. In

A. God's Means For Salvation

Because of its great potential influence for good upon a child, the family can be one of God's great means for salvation. This is why God so emphatically and forcefully stressed the necessity of teaching the Law to children.

"And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up."

Deuteronomy 6:6, 7

What God was requiring was the means of passing salvation from one generation to another. This would require a family altar, and a time of devotion that imparted to the young the means of finding God for themselves.

It is tremendously important that a time of family devotion be set aside each day. What is accomplished will serve as foundation stones in children's lives. It must be realized that God looks to parents for the laying of this foundation.

B. Jesus—Our Example

Parents need only to look at Jesus to see what the natural relationship should be between a father and his family. God looks to the father as the spiritual leader of his house—it is upon him the responsibility lies for the spiritual welfare of his family.

"But I would have you to know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God."

I Corinthians 11:3

"And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church."

Ephesians 1:22

but His true devotion to His loved ones was revealed in the offering of Himself for their sins. (See Romans 5:6-8.)

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C. Devotion Time

Devotion time is the true test of the sincerity of our love for our family. It reveals whether or not we have accepted the responsibility of their spiritual welfare. It is a good practice to have a round the table type reading of the Bible, with each member of the family taking their turn. This should be followed by a discussion, to assure that the meaning is understood. This practice will encourage the younger children to become more familiar with the Word of God, and more active in the discussion of it.

Bible reading must always be seasoned with prayer. This is the child's first lesson in prayer—the example of mom and dad. Nothing prepares a young heart for the Holy Ghost, and becoming a saint, more than time taken out for sincere family devotions. The best examples in life are the ones that are natural. When we consider that the purpose of our being in this world is to prepare for the next one, then we understand why God gave us families to achieve this divine goal.

For smaller children, who have not yet learned to read, one may read Children's Bible Stories, or Bedtime Stories with a moral value illustrated. Play special Children's Christian Records by Ethyl Barrett, or "Your Story Hour" cassette tapes by Aunt Sue and Uncle Charlie, to mention a few.

It is important to plan what is going to be shared in a family devotion time. The time for devotion should be convenient for the whole family.

A variety of light and serious approaches will keep the devotional time exciting. Some additional activities might be memorizing and reviewing Scripture, acting out Bible stories, or simply sharing life experiences of joys or disappointments.

Everyone should be included in family devotions. Occasionally, your children should plan and lead a family devotion by relating some lesson learned in Christian Education classes at church. When communicating with children, keep it simple, short, and relaxed. Remember, it must become something that the entire family looks forward to every day.

2. Outdoor Responsibility

Cutting the lawn, working the flower bed, washing the car, etc., are some of many outdoor responsibilities.

C. Spiritual Activities

The most important things done in this life are spiritual. The major problem in accomplishing them is a lack of people to get them done. God intends for the family to be the model for spiritual division of labor.

1. Prayer And Fasting

The family should share burdens and pray together for them. This teaches the young the value of prayer and fasting; and that some things can only be accomplished through prayer and fasting.

2. Church Attendance

This must become more than a family project, but the center of family life. Emphasizing that each member is an essential part of the body of Christ will encourage them to be present in each service.

3. Visiting The Sick

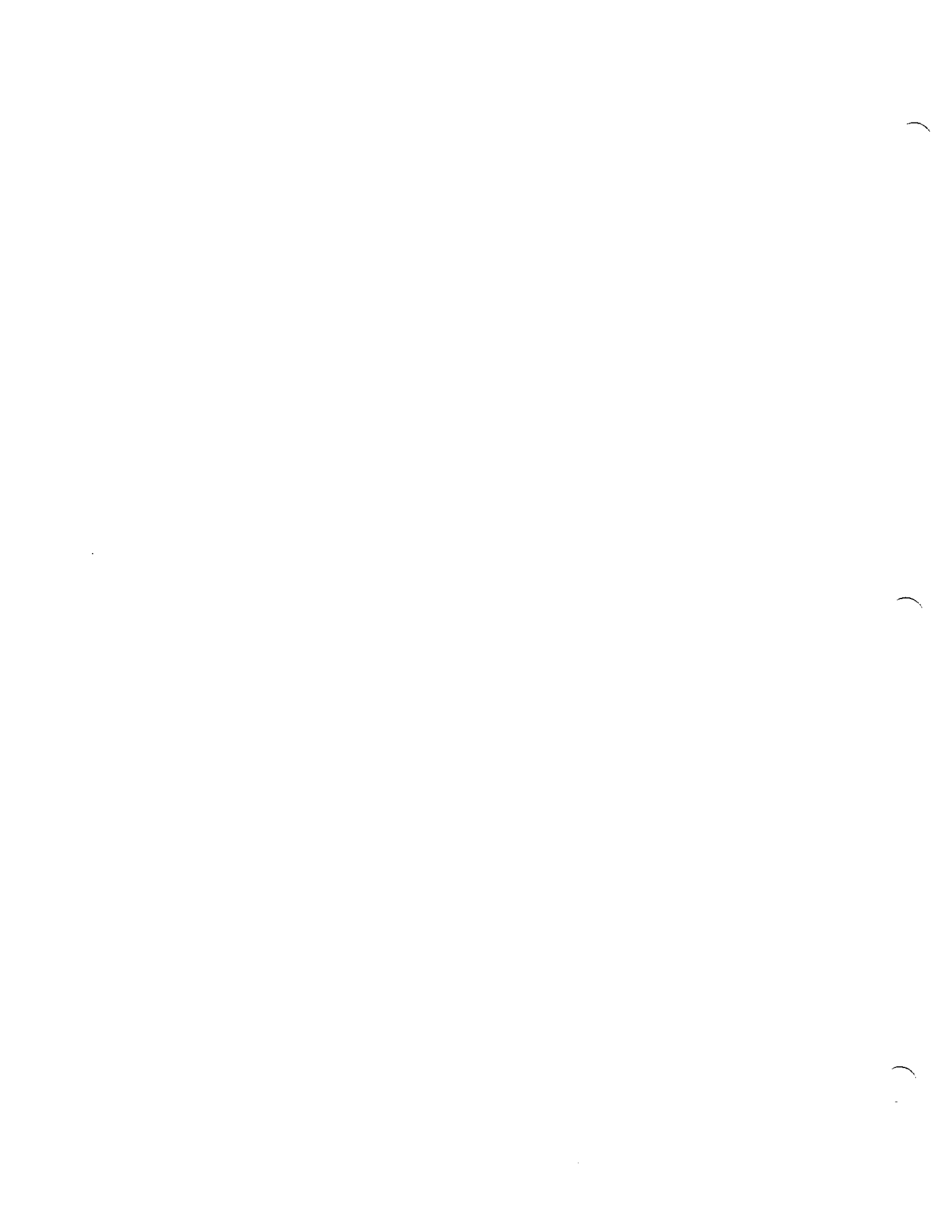
Our children should learn the value of visiting the sick—how a thoughtful visit can be of great encouragement to someone ill.

4. Paying Tithes And Offerings

It is never too early to learn that God owns all resources and our paying tithes and giving offerings acknowledges the blessings He has given us.

5. Witnessing

This, too, should be a family project. Our children should learn our doctrine and the power of the Holy Ghost and have a desire to witness; this desire should come from seeing results.



III. FAMILY WORK PROJECTS

The family is a training ground for the development of our young into productive saints.

What is called "Division of Labor" by Sociologists is universally accepted. Therefore, children should be taught responsibility as early as possible. If we are to "train up a child in the way he should go..." then responsibility must be the center piece of their training program—and that by example.

A. Responsibility

Responsibility means that one can be relied upon to do his duty. It is essential that people accept responsibility for providing certain things, or chaos results.

1. Dad's Responsibilities

What would happen if dad did not go to work? There would be no money to pay for the home, the car, the groceries; therefore, there would be no shelter, transportation, food, etc.

2. Mom's Responsibilities

Suppose mom decided not to wash any dishes, clean the house, wash clothes, etc.? The home would become intolerable as a place to live.

B. Family Projects

Family projects should involve each member of the family. Each person should be made to feel that if he does not fulfill his obligation, then the project will not be completed.

1. Household Responsibility

Cleaning one's own room, hanging up of clothes, cleaning house, making beds, folding towels, emptying waste baskets, and personal hygiene, etc. are some of many individual responsibilities.

1. Jesus Chose To Have A Church

He called His disciples to leave all and to follow Him. He took on a serious responsibility. Had He not been successful, He would have caused many families to reap adversity and confusion. However, He was able to complete the task that He undertook. He opened the way for them to inherit a kingdom of righteousness, peace, and joy.

When parents choose to have a family, they take on an awesome responsibility. Not just a life that entered this world, but a soul entering eternity forever. The child's life is clay to be molded; its mind is a scroll to be written upon; and its soul is a vessel to be filled. The final responsibility of what the child becomes is ultimately the parents', and primarily the father's.

Notice that the Scripture reveals that when God determined to create mankind, He made a commitment to secure His salvation. He did this before he created the worlds. "...the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (Revelation 13:8).

So must every parent make a commitment to every child, before it is born, to do everything in their power to secure its salvation. For a promise is made to us that if we do our part, God will do His. "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Proverbs 22:6).

2. Jesus' Responsibility For His Disciples

Not only did He choose His disciples, but He took His responsibility for them seriously—He taught them and He prayed for them. In a child's formative years before worldly influences affect him, parents should influence the child's habits, thoughts, and spiritual goals.

Jesus showed us the secret when He said, "...for all things I have heard of my father I have made known unto you." He taught them what He received from God—that means He also prayed for them daily, for He taught them daily. (See John 17.)

3. Jesus Gave Himself

Jesus' ultimate act of love and responsibility was the giving of Himself. He gave Himself daily in His ministry,

order to enjoy togetherness discuss only pleasant topics. Ask each child whether they had a good day or not. This is a beautiful time for special attention to be given for any achievement or things of interest to the youngster. The asking of grace can be rotated to develop good habits among the children.

Recreation time needs to be planned with the whole family in mind. At least one evening each week should be reserved for family activities. Vacations should always be used as a time for enjoying each other's company, while sharing the new experience through togetherness. Each night, or as often as possible, the family should share a beautiful time of devotion in Bible reading and prayer.

It is very unfortunate that many family members become so involved in their own worlds that they fail to appreciate the few years they have together as a family in the same home.

C. Center The Family Around Jesus Christ

Our children should be taught, as early as possible, who Jesus really is and be shown an example of worship, respect, and faithfulness to the house of God. They should see and realize our active faith that we put in Christ for everything. God should be given the glory for each and every success, healing, and manifold blessing. This type of spiritual development will enrich the memories of the past, and prepare our child to meet life's realities with strong assurance that God is able to do what He promised.

II. FAMILY DEVOTION

God's plan from the beginning was to take those of the human family, who loved Him, to live eternally with Him in a place that He prepared especially for them. Therefore, it is important that in the tender years throughout childhood, our children should be separated unto the Lord and taught His ways. This is the will of God.

"For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him."

Genesis 18:19

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