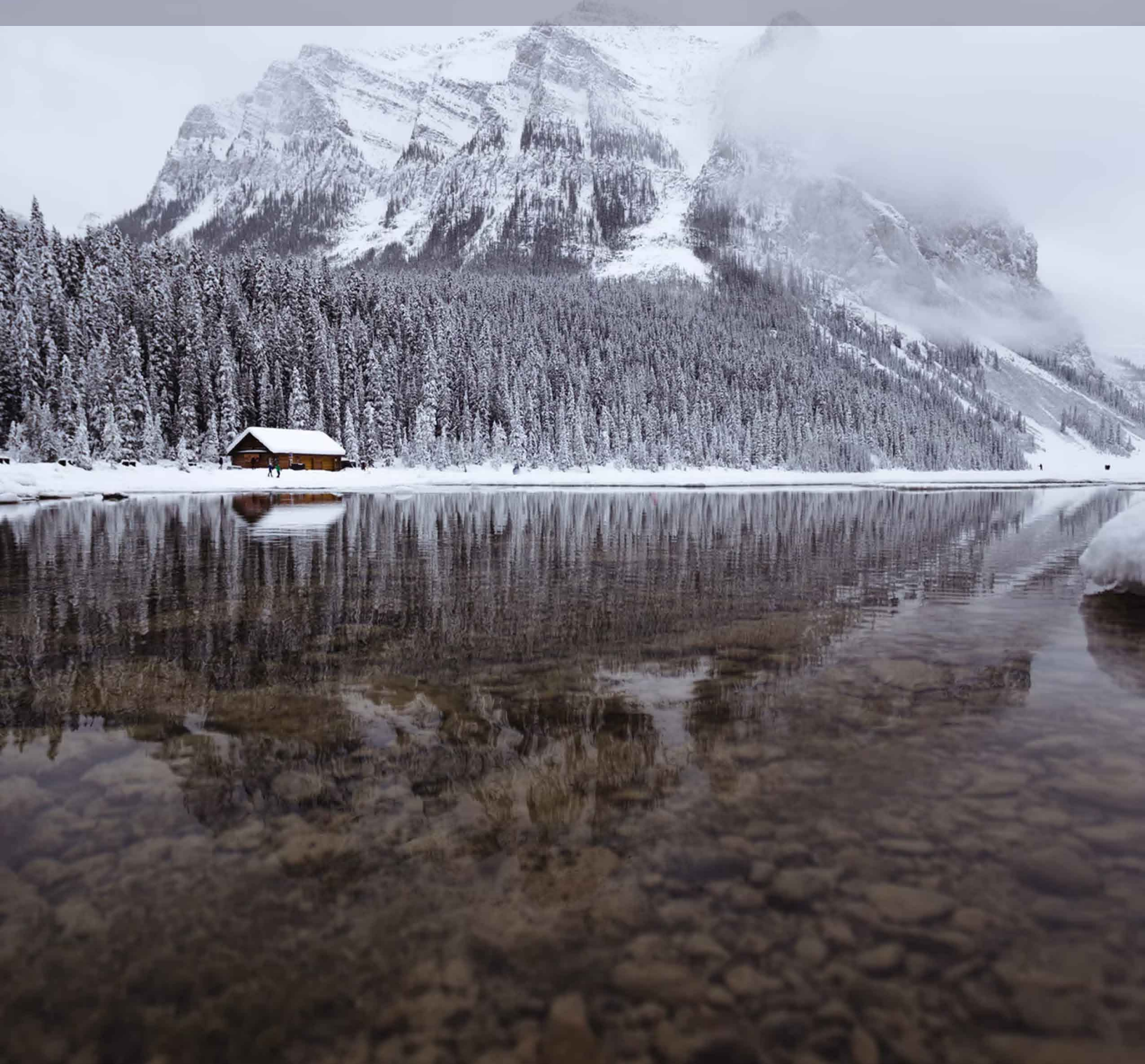


# **THE FAMILY: GOD'S MASTERPIECE**



**SYLLABUS BY DR. WILLIAM J. FINNIGAN**

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## **1. Prelude: “In the beginning God...” (Gen. 1:1)**

### **a. God’s Masterpiece (Design)**

- i. Creation of the universe (Heavens & earth) Gen. 1:1-3
- ii. Creation of first couple (man & woman) (Gen. 1:26-28)
  - 1. Two genders only—male and female (Purpose)
    - a. To reflect God’s image - vs. 26a, 27
    - b. To rule over the earth (animals, etc.) vs. 26b (including himself)
    - c. To reproduce and multiply vs. 28
  - 2. Man’s direct (unique) creation – Gen. 2:7
    - a. Not an animal, but human being
    - b. Three (3) Functions: Spirit, Soul and Body –cf. 1 Thess. 5:23; Heb. 4:12 (See Diagram in Appendix)
  - 3. God gave him a “job” (Gen. 2:8,9)
  - 4. God gave him a wife (“help-meet”- a helper, one fit to compensate or complete the man’s godly purpose. Gen. 2:18-25 (Institution of Marriage)

## **2. What Couples Need to Know**

### **a. What is a Christian Home?**

- i. Ideally, it is a family which, individually and collectively, desires to live only for the glory of God.

### **b. How Does the Christian Home Differ from the Unsaved Family? Aren’t Christian Homes “Perfect”?**

- i. Christians acknowledge their sins (accept imperfections)
- ii. Christians have the remedy for sins in Christ
- iii. Christians go on to perfection (maturity) and practical righteousness

**c. Five Laws of Communication (Eph. 4:25-32)**

- i. Be open and honest vs. 25
- ii. Talk up (don't blow up or clam up) vs. 26 & 27
- iii. Work – share responsibility vs. 28
- iv. Edify (build up) each other when speaking vs. 29
- v. Be forgiving and kind vs. 30-32

**d. The Christian Husband**

- i. What is a Christian husband?
  - 1. Husband means “House-band” (binding his house and marriage together)
- ii. What is a Christian husband's three main responsibilities to his wife? (Eph. 5:23-33)
  - 1. To lead her – 5:23, 24
    - a. As Christ heads the Church (authority, direction, guidance, encouragement etc.)
    - b. As Christ is Savior of the Church (responsible for physical protection and provision – the bread winner)
  - 2. To love her – 5:25, 28-31
    - a. “Love” is agape (“love measured by sacrifice”; “one-way” commitment) \*Mutual, “two-way” love (phileo) and sexual intimacy (eros) will follow; cf. I Cor. 13
  - 3. To love her as Christ who “gave Himself for the church” (love: peculiar exclusive, intimate and delightful – Hodge)
  - 4. To love her as your own body – 5:28-30
    - a. Indivisible unity between husband and wife (two become one unit)
    - b. This gives basis for husband's ministry
    - c. Just as unnatural for man to hate wife as to hate himself cf. Col 3:19

- iii. To sanctify her – 5:26, 27 (ultimate purpose of love)
  - 1. Responsible for her spiritual instruction – I Cor. 14:34-35
  - 2. Responsible for spiritual atmosphere of home – Deut. 6:4-9
  - 3. Responsible to honor her as “weaker vessel” – I Pet 3:7
    - a. Your spiritual condition will affect your prayers
    - b. Treat her with understanding and compassion

#### **e. The Christian Wife**

- i. What is a Christian wife?
  - 1. Wife means “weaver” – as the husband supplies the wife with rich graces and blessing. She weaves them into a priceless garment for the whole family to wear.
- ii. What is a Christian wife’s position? – Eph. 5:22-24, 33
  - 1. Submissiveness to Husband – vs. 22
    - a. Word “submit” (hupotasso) – “to continually subject oneself; obey; to yield to one’s control”
      - i. As Church to Christ – Eph. 5:24
      - ii. As a citizen to government – Rom. 13:1
      - iii. As a servant to master – Titus 2:9
      - iv. As a Christian to God – James 4:7
      - v. As younger to elder – I Peter 5:5
    - b. Marriage is not a 50-50 deal, but a 100-100 situation
      - i. Success comes when both husband and wife function totally in their God-given roles (both equal, but differ in functions)
      - ii. The wife’s submission is not a hindrance to her freedom, but the release and insurance of it – i.e., the train is free to run smoothly when on track; off track – no freedom.

- c. Submission insures God's blessing and protection
      - i. Physical – vs. 23, 25 (husband protects from bodily harm)
      - ii. Mental and emotional (conflict with neighbors or children)
      - iii. Spiritual – vs. 25-27 (stands for wife in midst of deceit and warfare)
  - 2. Shows reverence (honor) toward husband – 5:33
    - a. This exemplifies true marriage to children
    - b. This attitude reflects to children the true relationship of a Christian to His God
- iii. What is a Christian wife's purpose?
  - 1. To be her husband's "help-meet" (lit. "a surrounder" – Gen. 2:18ff; I Cor. 11:8,9)
  - 2. To bear children – Gen. 2:27,28; Psalm 127; 128:1-3
- iv. What is a Christian wife's privilege? – "Queen of the Home"
  - 1. Godly character – Proverbs 31:10-15, 25:31
    - a. Priceless treasure – 31:10
    - b. Trustworthy – 11
    - c. Good (godly) – 12
    - d. Diligent – 13,14
    - e. Not Lazy – 15
    - f. Honorable – 25
    - g. Kind – 26
    - h. Industrious - 27
    - i. Praiseworthy – 28,29
    - j. Fearing the Lord – 30
    - k. Efficient testimony - 31
- v. Greatest career – Titus 2:1-5
  - 1. Martin Luther said of his wife: "The greatest gift of God is a pious, amiable (pleasing disposition) spouse who fears God, loves His house and with whom one can live in perfect confidence."

## **f. What Does a Wife Need?**

- i. Strong Spiritual Leadership
  - 1. Four characteristics of Spiritual Leadership by husband
    - a. Desire to seek God
    - b. Delight in scriptural convictions
    - c. Determination to follow convictions
    - d. Demonstration of love in attitude and actions
  - 2. Fruit of the Spirit essential – Gal 5:22-23
- ii. Knowledge that she's especially needed by you
  - 1. List the needs she now meets that no other woman does
  - 2. Suggestions: (she)
    - a. Provides power potential in prayer – I Pet 3:7
    - b. Protects you against other women with wrong motives
    - c. Provides pleasure of physical intimacy without guilt – Prov. 5:19,20; Heb. 13:4
    - d. Safeguards your hasty decisions
    - e. Imparts attitudes in the children and discerns their real needs
- iii. Provision of quality time for intimate conversation
  - 1. List regular time(s) you and your wife have for intimate conversation (if none, plan one now).
  - 2. Such communication may be her basic need
    - a. Possible only through oneness of spirit (goal of marriage)
    - b. Her enjoyment results if she knows you enjoy listening
    - c. Take time to talk (planned or spontaneous)
    - d. Ultimate level of communication is sharing deepest secrets
  - 3. Most wives don't share their deepest emotions. Why?
    - a. Guilt feelings for having them
    - b. Hoping they will pass
    - c. Fear of rejection from you
    - d. Desire to reduce your burdens
    - e. Knowing you don't have answers



4. She will “open up” if she knows you really understand and really care
- iv. Knowledge that you are aware of her presence even when mind is elsewhere
1. This is her assurance of your love and protection
  2. This quality and attentiveness to her needs won her to you initially
  3. This attentiveness to her presence is the true basis for good manners
  4. Which of the following do you consistently practice?
    - a. Helping her on and off with coat
    - b. Seating her at the table
    - c. Opening doors – car, house, etc
    - d. Lifting heavy objects
    - e. Ordering for her at restaurant
    - f. Knowing and using table manners
    - g. Picking up after yourself at home
    - h. Punctuality
    - i. Properly introducing your wife
    - j. Telling her your schedule (failure here breeds disloyalty)
    - k. Refraining from crude language, criticism and improper subjects
    - l. Personal hygiene and physical fitness
      - i. Cleanliness, grooming, and neatness, etc. are never “out of style”
      - ii. Concern for personal health and fitness; proper diet and exercise to discipline body and mind
- v. Be alert to your wife’s “daily readings” of your awareness of her
1. When she asks a question:
    - a. Stop what you’re doing
    - b. Look at her
    - c. Smile when you talk
    - d. Answer her question (even little ones)
    - e. Relate your love through your eyes

- vi. Knowledge that you're making investment to develop and expand her world
  - 1. Recognizing and challenging her spiritual gifts and talents
  - 2. Defining responsibilities that each of you has in home
  - 3. Visualizing how you can add new dimensions to her life and sense of value
    - a. Adult courses to reinforce her skills (music, crafts, sewing, cooking, etc)
    - b. Contact with other families who demonstrate various qualities
    - c. Expose her to biographies of great Christian women, etc.
    - d. Encourage and make her a success!
- vii. "The greatest investment in our life and ministry is that placed in our wife." - "The most important thing a father can do for his children is to love their mother."

**g. What Does a Husband Need?**

- i. A wife that respects him as a man
  - 1. Every man desires to prove his manliness
  - 2. A wife can destroy her husband's manliness by:
    - a. Expecting him to know what protection she needs
      - i. Physical, mental, spiritual, emotional etc.
      - ii. Remedy: wife tells the husband how he can protect her
    - b. Being financially independent
      - i. Self-sufficiency kills love
      - ii. Whoever controls the money controls the leadership
      - iii. Mutual agreement essential
    - c. Remedy: husband centers his work and ministry in the home

3. Greater loyalty to outside leadership
    - a. Pastor, church leaders, women Bible teachers etc.
    - b. Remedy: Wife ask your husband your spiritual questions – I Cor 14:35
  4. Resisting his decisions in her spirit
    - a. Wife's spirit controls his ambitions
    - b. Reviewing past failure destroys his self-worth
    - c. Remedy: Wife learn to wisely appeal to your husband
  5. Resisting his physical affection
    - a. This is the unspoken crushing of a man's spirit
    - b. Wife's godliness will safe-guard his abuses – I Pet 3:1
    - c. Remedy: Prayerfully communicate concerning barriers (sex and spirit)
  6. Taking matters in her own hands
    - a. When she usurps his responsibility, he may surrender others
    - b. Remedy: Don't become his conscience – Wisely appeal wrong decisions. Give him room to fail.
- ii. He needs a wife who accepts him as a God-given leader
1. Reassurance that his authority comes from God
    - a. Headship illustrated by Christ and the church (Eph. 5:22-24; I Cor. 11:3)
    - b. Husbands commanded to govern (not boss) their wives – Gen 3:16
    - c. Wife reassures husband that he's God's leader for you
  2. Confidence that God's working through him
    - a. God does work through a man's decisions – good or bad
    - b. Bad decisions reveal his needs and allow wife to demonstrate godliness
    - c. Wife can learn spiritual lessons even through his mistakes

3. Loyalty from wife when pressures increase
    - a. Only adversity reveals loyalty. Be patient.
    - b. Husband's trust in wife often misinterpreted as taking her for granted
    - c. Don't ask others for counsel without husband's approval
  4. Praise for godly qualities – I Tim 3:2-8
    - a. Spiritual alertness, wisdom, hard work, patience etc.
    - b. Let husband hear wife praise him to others
  5. Encouragement not to give up his God-given goals
    - a. Manliness enhanced when he fulfills his responsibilities
    - b. Expect birth, death, and fulfillment of vision
    - c. Encourage him to verbalize his deepest desires
    - d. Accept difficult situations from God, without giving Him deadline to remove them
  6. Share his enthusiasm in achievements
    - a. To reject his achievement is to reject him
    - b. Pay attention when he's talking
    - c. Look at him admirably when he talks to others; that inspires their respect.
- iii. He needs a wife who continues to develop her beauty (inward & outward)
1. Hair – symbol of submission – I Cor. 11:10
    - a. Hair given as covering of glory (I Cor. 11:15) and protection – (11:10)
    - b. Hairstyle should reflect husband's wishes – Eph. 5:24
      - i. Extra time and effort expresses reverence
      - ii. Explain hairstyle to others on basis of submission to authority

2. Dress – symbol of husband’s taste, standards and provisions
  - a. Modesty is always in style
  - b. Dress to please husband
  - c. Dress should always emphasize your countenance (not body)
3. Home – symbol of husband’s wisdom, provision and protection
  - a. What happens at home determines a man’s message – I Tim. 3:4
  - b. Wife’s spirit sets atmosphere of home
    - i. Keep home clutter-free
    - ii. Train children to be neat and clean
4. Physical condition
  - a. God is concerned about eating habits, weight, and stamina
  - b. Consider proper diet (life-style) together, along with exercise routines
  - c. Pray together for wisdom and grace; avoid “guilt trips” (James 1:5; Prov. 3:5&6)
    - i. Confession of over-eating etc., then work on achievable goals together
    - ii. Remove hindrances to good health (e.g. bitterness, anger, wrong snacks, medical issues, etc. etc.)
5. Meek and quiet spirit – basis of inner beauty – I Pet. 3:1-7
  - a. Meekness is yielding rights and expectations to God; it is power under control (Includes husband too!)
  - b. A quiet spirit rests in God’s omnipotence – free from worry
  - c. Visualize how Godly character can result from disappointments
    - i. Our disappointments are God’s appointments
    - ii. “Godliness with contentment is great gain”- 1 Tim. 6:6

- iv. He needs quality time to be alone with himself and God (As does his wife!)
  - 1. A man's success is based on seeking after God – II Chron. 26:5
    - a. Admire men who walk with God
    - b. Share questions and decisions that require your husband to seek God
  - 2. A man's fellowship with God affects his fellowship with his wife
    - a. To be out of fellowship with God is to be estranged from wife and children
    - b. His regard for Scripture reflects his love for God
    - c. Express your pleasure when you see him spending time with God
    - d. Pray for him especially when he's meeting God
- v. He needs a wife who is grateful for all he's doing for her
  - 1. What are the basic ingredients of gratefulness?
    - a. Giving all your expectations to God – Ps. 62:5
      - i. Thank God it's as good as it is
      - ii. Be genuinely thankful for the little evidences of your husband's love
    - b. Learning contentment with Godliness – I Tim 6:6
      - i. Set your affections (mind, attitude) on heavenly things – Col 3:1
      - ii. Use every situation to learn more of Christ – Phil 3:7-8
      - iii. Realize that "things" compete with Christ
      - iv. Rejoice when God takes anything away, knowing He has something better to give
    - c. Experiencing together how all things work together for good – Rom 8:28-29
  - 2. What is the source of gratefulness?
    - a. The Holy Spirit's fruit – Gal 5:22-23
    - b. Memorize (together) and meditate upon these qualities of Christ
    - c. Visualize how the joys and struggles of your marriage help develop these qualities

#### **h. Summary**

- i. Christian couples have trouble too!
- ii. Open and honest communication is a basic key
- iii. Husband is the initiator; wife the receiver
- iv. Honeymoon need never end . . . a growing relationship
- v. Wholesome Christ-centered marriage is a powerful witness to saved and lost
- vi. Problems when approached scripturally can only serve to make us godlier
- vii. Our triumphs over failure qualify us to counsel others

### **3. Money Management (Finances) - Adapted from FamilyLife Canada; c. 2003**

#### **a. Testimony of John D. Rockefeller**

- i. One of the world's richest men in his day
- ii. When asked, "How much money is enough?" Ans. "Just a little bit more"
- iii. Christian, beware of greed

#### **b. Financial Health and Home Atmosphere**

- i. Managing money is a spiritual issue
  - 1. Jesus spoke of money more than "Heaven and Hell combined"
  - 2. Attitude towards money reflects attitude toward God
    - a. Couples' checkbook reveals spiritual life – Matt. 6:
    - b. Financial success – not accumulation of wealth per/se, but following God's plan (Matt.6:33)
- ii. Simple three-step management plan
  - 1. Honor the Lord First (Pay God)
    - a. Priority given to God and His work
    - b. Give as "God has prospered us"
      - i. Compare O.T. tithe (10%) vs. free-will giving under Grace
      - ii. Pray together for wisdom and agreement
      - iii. Remember, "God loves a cheerful [hilarious] giver" (cf. 2 Cor. 9:6,7)

2. Set aside money for regular savings. (Pay Yourself)
  - a. Establish a “rainy day” fund for unforeseen expenses and future goals
  - b. Start early, saving some before spending
  - c. Disciplined savings accumulate, not just for our needs but ministry to others
3. Spend rest on needs (Pay Bills)
  - a. Live below your means and be content (1 Tim. 6:8)
  - b. Establish budget- e.g. track expenses for 3 months and evaluate
  - c. Couples must always discuss finances together (team effort)
  - d. One spouse writes checks, etc. but both are directly involved
  - e. Unsolved money issues can easily lead to strife and marital separation, i.e. divorce

## **4. Child Discipline**

### **a. Introduction:**

- i. “Almost everything in the modern home is controlled by a switch – except the children.”
- ii. The problem of undisciplined children stems basically from undisciplined parents.
- iii. A parent to parent relationship has direct bearing on a child to parent relationship.

### **b. Director of Child Discipline – Eph. 6:4a**

- i. “Ye Fathers”
  1. Not grandparents, school teacher, baby-sitter, policemen etc.
  2. Consistent with father’s place of leadership in home
- ii. Fathers assisted and supported by mothers – Prov 1:8



**c. Directions for Child Discipline – 6:4b**

- i. Negative Command – “Provoke not” means
  - 1. Don’t excite one unduly to anger
  - 2. Don’t give them unnecessary grounds to get their emotions stirred up against you
  - 3. Immediate causes of undue anger in children:
    - a. Unreasonable demands of style of clothes, makeup, etc.
    - b. Partiality (fairness)
    - c. Ignoring his personal dignity
    - d. Overbearing and harsh tone
    - e. Inconsistency of example (hypocrisy)
    - f. Inflexibility – i.e. never admitting wrongdoing
  - 4. Delayed anger – eventual resentment of young people because parents failed to deal and discipline
- ii. Positive command
  - 1. The task – “Bring them up . . .”
    - a. Greek means: “to nourish up or nurture to maturity;” thus to provide all things necessary for their total development
    - b. “It doesn’t take grace to father children, but it takes great grace to be a father to them.”
  - 2. The task implemented
    - a. “In the nurture . . . of the Lord” (training)
      - i. Definition:
        - 1. “training of a child, including instruction, discipline and correction (chastening)
        - 2. Character regulated by Christian discipline – cf. Heb. 12:5-11
      - ii. Training is enforced teaching – Prov. 22:6; Gal. 6:7

- iii. God's instrument of training: rod
    - 1. Expression of love – Prov. 13:24
    - 2. Impresses conscience (more important than feelings) – Prov. 19:18
    - 3. Drives out foolishness – Prov. 22:15
    - 4. God's way of keeping them from Hell – Prov. 23:13, 14
    - 5. Imparts wisdom – Prov. 29:15, 17; Eccl. 8:11
- b. "Admonition of the Lord" (teaching)
  - i. Definition: "to put to mind or lay to one's heart"; thus to teach or instruct
  - ii. This is verbal instruction "given in form of warning and reproof both for present error and future pitfalls". Cf. Prov. 1:10; 2:1, 3:1
  - iii. Set guidelines for children, with God's wisdom – Prov. 1:7
    - 1. Table manners
    - 2. Neatness of dress and room
    - 3. Development of responsibility – i.e. dishes, garbage etc.
  - iv. Be loving and consistent, not worrying what they think of you
- c. Prerequisites:
  - i. Grace
  - ii. Vision
  - iii. Persistence
  - iv. Self-denial

## 5. Family Life

### a. Devotion – Priesthood of Parents – I Pet. 2:5, 9

- i. Presenting Christ to children by example – Deut. 6:4-5
  - 1. Life full of love
  - 2. Jesus loved children – Luke 18:16 “suffer the little children...”
- ii. Presenting Christ to children by the Word – Deut. 6:7-9 (i.e. – teach it, talk it, tie it on, tack it up)
  - 1. Individually – (object lessons, fishing, walking, food, cleaning)
  - 2. Family altar (Daily)
    - a. Singing
    - b. Bible stories
    - c. Missionary biography
    - d. Sword drill
    - e. Discussion of verse
    - f. Testimony time
  - 3. Scriptures and sayings on walls
- iii. Presenting Christ to children by prayer
  - 1. Offering them up to God (our priesthood)
  - 2. Pray with them individually
  - 3. Family prayer – (variety of requests) Brief! – discerning God’s will and direction John 15:7; I John 5:14

### b. Development (of balance)

- i. Mentally and spiritually
  - 1. Provide spiritual books and magazines, encourage reading and hobbies (instead of TV, etc.)
  - 2. Provide Christian education, if possible; consider Home-schooling
- ii. Socially and physically
  - 1. Eat meals together; no cell phones!
  - 2. Weekly “family night” (games, puzzles, popcorn etc.)
  - 3. Encourage children to invite friends to home
  - 4. Encourage school activity and athletics

**c. Emotionally**

- i. Have “rough-house” time frequently
- ii. Take time with each child’s problems
- iii. Encourage and supply wholesome music (classical, semi-classical and sacred)
- iv. Wise and firm control over harmful use of technology; e.g. TV, Internet, video games, etc.
- v. Encourage musical talents to be developed and harnessed by God
- vi. You’re the “potter”; they’re the clay – PRAY for WISDOM and GRACE!!

**6. Conclusion:**

- a. **“Choose ye today, whom ye will serve . . . as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.” (Joshua 24:15)**

## About the Author

Pastor, teacher, author, mentor, and presently a Bible instructor at the Rescue Mission of Mahoning Valley in Youngstown, Ohio. Bill Finnigan has been engaged in active ministry for almost sixty years.

A native of Newark, New Jersey, Bill received a call to ministry while in college. The ensuing years were spent in intensive study to learn and sharpen ministry skills. Attending several universities, he holds a number of degrees, including the Master of Divinity and Doctor of Ministry. For over twenty seven years, Bill has held pulpits in Pennsylvania and New Jersey, reaching people with God's life-changing Word.

His outreach has also included radio, prison, and Bible conference ministries. He has served as a college professor, and director of a Biblical counseling center. He has authored other publications, including his latest book, *A Fresh Look at Pentecost in Light of Present Day Confusion*. This book serves to help the church better understand what really happened on the Day of Pentecost, and how the Church began in an applicable way that will clear up the confusion that is so pervasive in the church today.

Other publications include: *Healing for the Mind*, which offers comfort and remedy for mental turmoil; *Forgiven to Forgive*, which serves as an antidote to resentment and bitterness; *Living Skillfully*, a commentary on the book of Proverbs; and *Facing Depression*, examining its cause and cure.

More recently, Bill's time has been devoted to writing, preaching, and the on-going Biblical instruction at the rescue mission in Youngstown, OH. As the Lord provides opportunities, he continues to be busily engaged in the Lord's Vineyard, considering himself "refired," rather than retired.

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