

A United Family Yes, It's Possible!

Understanding God's design for the family



Miki Hardy

A United Family Yes, It's Possible!

By Miki Hardy

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A United Family — Yes, It's Possible!

This book is based on a series of sermons by Pastor Miki Hardy

Published by Church Team Ministries International

First edition : September 2025

ISBN 978-99993-0-383-5

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Preface

It is with deep gratitude that I accepted the honour of writing the foreword to this book by Pastor Miki Hardy, with whom I have served in the ministry since 1989. His teaching on the family has been a profound source of encouragement and blessing to me.

From our very first meeting, I was deeply moved by the genuine commitment of Miki and his wife Audrey to the Lord. Their example of unity and service has been a constant inspiration in my own walk with God. They have always sought to build heartfelt relationships with those who, like them, are called to serve Christ.

A couple who desires to serve God should be united and seek together to do His will. The couple then becomes the foundation of the family—a place where each child, unique in personality, finds their place and is raised in the ways of God. Believing in the value of the family means first recognizing that God created it with wisdom and love. Each member has a specific role in this divine purpose.

Today, this vision is challenged by modern values that tend to weaken parental authority and mutual respect, thereby destabilizing the family. Yet God's plan remains unchanged: He desires that mankind live in joy, according to His plans for peace and hope, as declared in **Jeremiah 29:11-13**.

It all begins with our personal relationship with Christ. In my own life, I have sought and found peace in Jesus, my Saviour. Acknowledging our sinful

nature and placing our faith in His redemption are the foundations of the new birth—the beginning of a transformed life. From there, we are called to walk in newness of life, constantly seeking God's guidance.

On this journey, my own marriage has faced its challenges. As Georg Christoph Lichtenberg once said, "Love is blind, but marriage restores its sight." I came to see my wife's flaws—but more importantly, I saw my own selfishness and pride. Yet it was by accepting my wife as she is, recognizing that God had placed her by my side to help me, and being willing to examine myself, that our relationship grew stronger. With God, all things are possible!

I wholeheartedly pray that this book will be a help to you, guiding your family toward a life of unity, peace, and love in Christ, just as it has for me.

May God richly bless you as you read and in your walk with Him.

With all my brotherly affection,

Pastor Jean-Louis Gaillard

Introduction

Today, the family unit is becoming increasingly fragile, as reflected in the rising number of separations and divorces. Sadly, Christian families are not spared. Many are breaking apart, leaving deep and lasting wounds in the hearts of both parents and children. Yet divorce has never been part of God's plan. It is heartbreaking to witness how the Church, in many ways, has come to accept it—along with other compromises—by opening the door to the spirit of the world. It is time for us, as the Body of Christ, to wake up and respond.

I firmly believe that if we return to the truth of God's Word, He will lead us to understand His heart and His will for our families. He longs to be involved in our lives, to bring clarity and healing, so that we may walk in unity as husbands and wives, serving Him together in love and mutual respect. Christian families are called to become examples—living testimonies of God's grace and design—to all those around them. May the Lord help us to rediscover His plan and walk in it for His glory.

Marriage & The Couple

Chapter I

Authority Within the Family

The Foundation of Christian Life

Today, there is hope for every Christian couple who recognizes the need to build their life on a solid foundation. For the Word of God to become a living reality in our daily lives, we must be willing to submit to it. If both husband and wife are born again (**John 3:3**), i.e. believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and have accepted Him as their personal Saviour, and are willing to identify with Him in His sufferings and in His death, then their marriage will rest on the right foundation. We must be willing to walk this path, because our Christian life—our decisions, our plans, and our future—depend entirely on the foundation upon which we are built.

“Then He said to them all, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.” **Luke 9:23**

These words of Jesus express a fundamental truth and hold the key to unity in marriage. We see that it's not merely a matter of following a list of commandments from the Bible; what truly guides us in daily life is what lives in our hearts. It's about a daily choice to deny ourselves in every area, in every aspect of our lives. A good relationship between a husband and wife, then, depends on the attitude of their hearts, which will either lead them—or not—to lay down their lives for one another.

If we are ready to fully identify with Christ and to lose our lives for His sake, I am convinced we will find both faith and hope for our marriage. God will open our eyes to the responsibility we carry—not only toward one another but also toward our children. It is essential that both husband and wife anchor their lives in these words of Jesus, for they are the very foundation of a strong and godly family.

A Divine Order of Authority

The first thing that must be clear and without ambiguity is that God has established an order of authority within the family. As the apostle Paul reminds us in **1 Corinthians 11:3**: *“But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.”* God's design is therefore clearly laid out: God is the head, then Christ, followed by the man, and finally the woman.

The apostle Paul goes on to explain the origin of this order. In **verses 7 and 8**, he writes, *“The man... is the image and glory of God; but the woman is the glory [‘the reflection,’ as translated in the Living Word version] of man. For man was not made from woman, but woman from man.”* We also see this clearly in **Genesis 2:7** and **Genesis 2:22**. Created from man, the woman is placed in a position of submission in relation to him.

When Paul says in **1 Corinthians 11:11**: *“Nevertheless, neither is man independent of woman, nor woman independent of man, in the Lord”*, he is not suggesting that man and woman share the same level of authority. Rather, he is affirming that both belong to the body of Christ and hold equal value before God, as he also teaches in **Galatians 3:26-28**.

Because God has placed man as an intermediary in the chain of authority between the Lord and the woman, husbands must first and foremost ensure that they themselves are living under the authority of Christ. Only when each one takes their God-given place and honours the divine order established from the beginning can we experience stability, peace, and strength within the family—and within the Church.

We must be careful not to let the current battle for gender equality distract us from the clear teaching of God’s Word. The spirit of rebellion that is so prevalent in today’s world—a world where moral and spiritual reference points are fading—pushes everyone to do as they please. Sadly, this same spirit has found its way into the Church, and thus into Christian homes, where some women are taking on positions of authority that were not given to them by God. Yet a family where the wife takes the place of her husband in leadership is like a ship with two captains.

Whatever our situation may be, we are called to submit to the Word of God and to trust Him to deliver us from the spirit of this world and to transform us into the likeness of Christ.

Authority That Builds

Every person needs to be under some kind of authority. Nowhere in the Word of God do we find the idea that we are free to do whatever we want, whenever we want, and however we want. From the very beginning, God established the principle of authority—and rejecting it opens the door to rebellion, independence, and ultimately, our own downfall.

As we've already seen, the order established by God, as taught in His Word, places the man in a position of authority with respect to his wife. However, this authority must be exercised according to God's principles: with love, respect, and freedom—not as many men might imagine it. True authority does not crush or dominate; on the contrary, it builds up.

The apostle Paul writes in **2 Corinthians 10:8**: *"For even if I should boast somewhat more about our authority, which the Lord gave us for edification and not for your destruction,..."* Paul almost boasts of the authority given to him by God for the Church, but he understands its purpose: to edify, not to destroy. The authority of Christ never manipulates. It is marked by love and fully aligned with the Gospel—for Christ Himself is submitted to God.

Likewise, the husband is called to exercise the authority entrusted to him in the family in a way that builds. He must understand that when authority is misused, it becomes destructive. It can never be exercised "in the flesh," nor can it be used as an excuse to manipulate, control, or belittle his wife. A wife is never to be treated as inferior in any way. Under no circumstance can a husband justify any form of violence—physical, verbal, or emotional—under the pretense of godly authority. The authority God gives bears no resemblance to the kind of authority often seen in the world. It flows from a surrendered life and a heart willing to humble itself. In the same way that Jesus humbled Himself, husbands are called to take up their cross and follow His example.

God has entrusted the husband with the responsibility of leading the family. While final decisions may ultimately rest with him, the role of the wife is to help and support him through wise counsel. It is important that both spouses talk and pray together as they consider the decisions that need to be made—and the husband must learn to listen to his wife. In the end, in most cases, the wife is called to respect and accept her husband's decision, even if it doesn't seem to her the best one.

Laying Aside Our Cultural Heritage

As the apostle Peter writes in his first epistle (**1 Peter 1:18**): *“...knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers,...”*

Each of us comes from a unique background, shaped by different cultures and traditions. From childhood, we've been influenced by the way we were raised—by the lifestyles of our parents and the kind of relationship they modeled. But we must understand that the relationship within a Christian marriage is not to be built on cultural or familial inheritance. It is to be rooted in the truth of the Gospel.

In some countries, according to local custom, a husband exercises heavy domination over his wife—so much so that she becomes like a servant, even a slave, within her own home. She has no voice and is forced to submit to this authority, which she eventually accepts as normal. In doing so, she no longer questions it, without realizing that this kind of authority does not reflect the heart or will of God.

In some cases, the husband becomes a figure of fear—feared not only by his wife but by the entire family. He acts like a tyrant, demanding unquestioning

obedience. When he comes home, everyone tenses up, knowing that his word must not be challenged and everything must be done his way. But this must never be the case in a Christian home. In a Christ-centered family, there should be an atmosphere of love, freedom, peace, and joy. It is vital that every husband understands that God is calling him to obey His Word—not to conform to his culture. A Christian husband must lay aside the customs he has inherited and embrace a new way of relating to his wife and children—one marked by humility, tenderness, and respect. His entire attitude and lifestyle must be transformed to align with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Abusive Interpretation of God's Word

When a Christian husband abuses his authority—imposing his way of life, his desires, and his opinions on his wife without giving her a voice, controlling her—the relationship within the couple no longer reflects God's plan. And such behaviour has far-reaching consequences, often harming the entire family.

Even without going to these extremes, some Christian husbands misuse their position of authority in the home by leaving all the household responsibilities to their wives. They hide behind Bible verses to justify their laziness, selfishness, or pride, pretending to act according to God's commands. They leave every domestic duty to their wife, without any conviction in their heart to take up their share of the daily responsibilities. Yet again, this attitude is far removed from the spirit of the Gospel, which calls husbands to support and help their wives wholeheartedly.

Let us remember these words of the apostle Peter, found in his first letter (1 Peter 3:7): *“Husbands, likewise, dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered.”*

Peter encourages husbands to treat their wives with respect and honour, not to be harsh or dismissive toward them, recognizing that they are more delicate in nature. He calls them to be thoughtful and considerate in how they relate to their wives—never forgetting that men and women are “*equal heirs*” of the gift of eternal life, freely given to us by God (Tree of Life Version).

In closing, I want to emphasize how essential it is for the divine order of authority to be lived out in a spirit of love and respect that pleases the Lord. Without this, imbalance, hurt, and resentment will inevitably find their way into our homes.

Chapter II

The Husband's Responsibility

Being a husband is a responsibility that is comparable to a ministry. As husbands, we not only have a calling towards the Lord but also a calling towards our wives. This calling is not about applying principles or ticking boxes. What we do for our wife, and how we relate to her, must come from the heart. It must be the fruit of a deep work of the Spirit within us—a work we must welcome, if we are to love our wife as God desires.

I hope you understand that in the area of marriage, simply taking the Bible “literally” is not enough to build a joyful and lasting union. The key lies in having a humble heart—one that allows us to take our God-given place within the relationship.

Ephesians 5:25-31 says: *“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church. For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. “For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.”*” [‘one person,’ as translated in the Contemporary English Version].

You've likely read or heard these verses many times, as I had. But as you know, simply being familiar with Scripture does not make it a reality in our lives. In the past, my own marriage was falling apart—not because I didn't try, but because I didn't understand my responsibility as a husband. I sincerely tried to love my wife and do many things for her, but I kept failing. A Christian husband must grasp that he cannot walk in his role apart from the right foundation—the Gospel. If he wants to fulfill his “ministry” as a husband in a way that pleases God, his heart must be shaped by the cross. He will never be able to love his wife as Christ loved the Church unless he is willing to lay down his rights, to give up his life for her.

The Husband Is Called to “Lay Down His Life” for His Wife

Let's return to what Scripture teaches us: *“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her...”* **Ephesians 5:25**. We see here that Jesus demonstrated His love for us—the Church—by laying down His life. While we were still sinners, He chose to suffer and die for us. It was this unconditional love that moved Him to give Himself completely.

In the same way, a husband is called to put the needs and desires of his wife before his own—to deny himself, to sacrifice, and in some situations, even to be willing to “lose,” regardless of his wife's behaviour. That is the measure of love to which we are called.

Too often, a husband refuses to give his wife the freedom to do things she enjoys. Whether it's a matter of differing preferences or a desire to control, he may impose his will in a way that is oppressive. And yet, both husband and wife should be free to express and enjoy their own desires—within the freedom that aligns with the will of God.

Let me share an example from my own life. My wife has always had a deep love for animals. Often, she would ask me to stop the car so she could help an injured animal or feed stray dogs. Sometimes she even brought them home! At one point, she was feeding nearly twenty stray dogs in the sugar cane fields. It was quite a sight! It took time and often delayed us considerably—and to be honest, at first it really irritated me. But as I began to understand my role as a husband, and what it meant to love my wife, my attitude changed. I realized how important it was for her to do what she loves. I came to see that I was not only called to respect her freedom—but to support her in the things that bring her joy.

Allowing my wife the freedom to do what she loves—even when her desires differ from mine—is not only right, it is one of the most tangible ways I can show her love and overcome my own selfishness. Just as Jesus set me free so I could love and serve Him freely, I am called to encourage my wife in the things she enjoys—not to impose what I prefer. Today, it brings me joy to see her happy, doing what she loves. The Lord has taught me to accept what I didn't previously appreciate, and now I delight in helping her in whatever way I can.

Husbands must not use their authority to dictate the life their wife should live or to force her into a mould that reflects their own expectations. In the same way, a wife should be free to do what the Lord places on her heart. A loving husband will respect that freedom and support her in her calling. It is never acceptable to hold her back from serving the Lord. Let us never forget that we are called to be united in all things as a couple!

“Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled

Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.” Philippians 2:5-8

These verses show us that Jesus took on the form of a servant. He humbled Himself and became obedient to death, even the death of the cross, so that He could save and perfect the Church (**1 Peter 5:10**).

It's striking that the apostle Paul, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, asks husbands to love their wives in this way. Love is not merely about words, feelings, or physical intimacy. No family, no marriage can stand on such a fragile foundation. No—the love a husband is called to have for his wife is the fruit of his identification with Christ. It is something that is formed in him over time.

This is the model God gives to every husband. The Bible doesn't just say, "Husbands, love your wives." Full stop. It goes further: *"Love your wives, as Christ loved the Church,"* with the same heart, the same attitude, and the same humility. Jesus didn't defend or justify Himself, even when He was treated unfairly. He submitted to the will of God and gave His life for the Church. The path to the cross was painful and humiliating—but He embraced it, out of love for her.

A High Calling

Let us recall what the apostle Paul writes in **1 Corinthians 11:3**: *"But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God."*

The husband must understand his role and calling within the marriage. This understanding helps his wife take her place alongside him and willingly

submit to his leadership. As a husband, I believe my calling is more demanding than that of my wife—because the responsibility of loving her as *Christ loved the Church* is far greater than the one she carries toward me. I could give her all the gifts in the world, but nothing can replace the deep sense of love she feels when I “lay down my life” for her.

Sadly, it is rare for a husband to willingly lose or humble himself before his wife when the situation calls for it. Yet, this is one of the greatest expressions of love he can offer her. This kind of attitude doesn’t come from a theory, a technique, or a sense of duty—it flows from a heart that longs to please God by being the kind of husband He has modeled and called us to be.

What’s essential is that the husband first grasps how the Lord loved the Church and gave Himself up for her. Without this revelation, it’s unlikely that a marriage will function the way God intends. A husband must desire to grow and mature in his calling—just as he would in any other ministry. When the Lord asks something of us, He also looks for willingness and perseverance as we run the race toward the goal. And along this path, the husband can count on God’s grace to help him carry this responsibility—a responsibility that carries great weight in God’s eyes and in the life of his family.

Jesus never lost His authority, even as He sacrificed Himself for the Church. In the same way, a husband does not lose his authority by “laying down his life” for the good of his wife. In **Matthew 26:53**, Jesus says: *“Or do you think that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He will provide Me with more than twelve legions of angels?”* This verse shows clearly that Jesus had all authority, even as He surrendered Himself to God’s plan.

I can testify that my ministry as a pastor, as well as my relationship with my wife and children, began to change for the better the day I accepted to “lose” when it came to my wife. My attitude toward her has been deeply transformed. I now see how important it is to do everything I can to help her

become the woman God has called her to be. I've come to understand that the quality of my family relationships depends largely on how I embrace my role as a husband.

A husband is called to glorify the Lord not only through his personal life, but also through his relationship with his wife. He must walk by faith and seek the right heart attitude, because when God places someone in a position of authority, He entrusts them with great responsibility.

Taking the First Step

When harsh or hurtful words have been exchanged during an argument, it is up to us, as husbands, to do all we can to restore peace. It's not about insisting on being right or holding our ground while waiting for our wife to apologize first, using our role as head of the household as justification. Our position of authority does not exempt us from humbling ourselves or from being willing to "lose," regardless of whether our wife was in the wrong or not. On the contrary, that position comes with an even greater sense of responsibility. If, afterward, our wife doesn't acknowledge her part, that should no longer be our concern. What matters is that we've done our part to prevent the conflict from dragging on and harming the relationship. As my wife often says, "You have to do everything you can to keep the relationship at the right temperature." Being a husband is not an easy calling! But let's remember—we can rely on the grace of God. Again, we're not talking about applying a rule in a mechanical way, but having the right attitude of heart.

There have been many times when I found myself in conflict with my wife, fully convinced that I had done nothing wrong. Yet I still chose to humble myself in order to calm things down, protect our relationship, and maintain peace in our home—trusting that the Lord is at work in both our hearts.

I am deeply convinced that I carry a great responsibility for the success of our marriage. Just as Jesus led the Church by example, we as husbands are called to lead by following His model—so that we might help our wives grow spiritually and allow the Lord to unite us more deeply (**Ephesians 5:26**).

A Promise of Restoration

I know many pastors, leaders, and believers who have chosen this path and can now testify to the restoration God has brought into their marriages. Today, they serve the Lord together in unity of heart and mind. One pastor in particular comes to mind. He had already begun divorce proceedings when, during one of our conferences, he heard a message about the husband's role toward his wife. That message opened his eyes. He realized he had not truly understood his responsibilities toward her. Right then and there, he had a change of heart, and believed God could restore his marriage and family. That same day, he repented, humbled himself before his wife, and together they started anew—building their life again on a fresh foundation. What a testimony of God's grace!

It's clear that the husband has a vital role to play in the success of his marriage. When he recognizes and values the gifts and strengths God has placed in his wife, it brings strength and stability to the entire family. Personally, I can honestly say that without the support and encouragement of my wife, I would not be the man I am today.

Above all, let us never forget that God is greater than we are, and in His boundless grace, He can intervene in our marriages. He has promised to bless our lives when we walk in the order He has established.

Chapter III

The Wife's Role

Submission According to God

As we've already seen, submission according to God is first and foremost a matter of the heart. It's not about following a rule or a principle, nor is it about obeying under pressure or constraint. True submission is the fruit of God's work in a person's life. Under the New Covenant, we are no longer governed by law, but by grace. That means submission cannot be demanded or imposed—it must come from a willing heart. We are called to be genuine, and to walk in freedom.

A Wife's Submission to Her Husband

"Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything." **Ephesians 5:22-24**

This idea of submission, so foreign to the mindset of our time, is often misunderstood. Today, many women seek independence, take on positions of authority, and sometimes try to assert themselves over their husbands.

But this is not the order that God has designed, and it often leads to tension and conflict in the home.

Biblical submission does not diminish a woman's worth or her equal value before God and her husband. Rather, it speaks to the role she is called to embrace within the marriage, as defined by God Himself. To accept that place requires humility and can be challenging in a society that champions equality of roles and responsibilities in marriage. And yet, it remains the path for every wife who desires to honour the Lord. Let us remember that, according to **1 Corinthians 11:3 and 8**, God has established a divine order in which the husband holds a position of authority in relation to his wife. However, this applies only within the context of marriage and the church—it does not mean that all men have authority over all women.

A Different Model from the World

The direction the world is heading today stands in complete opposition to God's design—and things seem only to be getting worse. It is essential that the Church not fall under the same influence. The world may do things by its own standards, but we, as believers, are called to live according to the Word of God, which speaks clearly on this matter: a wife is called to submit to her husband. To disregard this order of authority established by God is, in a sense, to reject His authority altogether. A wife must allow the Lord to reveal anything in her heart that could be hindering her ability to walk in this submission. It is not something she is meant to accomplish by her own strength—seen that way, it would become a heavy burden—but rather something that flows as the result of God's work in her life.

As we have already seen, the apostle Paul compares the relationship between a wife and her husband to that between the Church and Christ.

He writes: “...as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands ...” (Ephesians 5:24). In the New Testament, the relationship between husband and wife is the only one compared to that between Jesus and the Church. This tells us how important it is, and helps us understand the spirit in which it should be lived. Importantly, the submission of the Church to Christ is a response to His love for her. In the same way, it is far easier for a wife to submit to a husband who is loving and kind than to one who is harsh or authoritarian. But even when a husband is difficult, that should not lead a woman to resist or oppose him. Thanks be to God—she can always rely on His grace to keep the right attitude and to walk faithfully in the calling He has given her, even in the face of trials.

The Challenge of Submitting to a Husband Who Does Not Obey the Word of God

“Wives, likewise, be submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives, when they observe your chaste conduct accompanied by fear. Do not let your adornment be merely outward—arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on fine apparel— rather let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God.” 1 Peter 3:1-4

This passage offers invaluable encouragement to women regarding their attitude toward a husband—whether a believer or not—who does not walk according to the Word of God. The apostle Peter shows that it is possible to remain faithful to the Lord while submitting to such a man. A woman’s godly attitude can, in fact, touch her husband’s heart and draw him closer to God.

Submitting to a husband who does not obey God's Word is not just a choice—it is also a deep challenge, especially in circumstances that may be painful or difficult to endure. It calls for discernment, sensitivity, and a heart led by the Holy Spirit. A woman in this situation must remain attentive to her relationship with her husband, making sure she does not become so caught up in church activities that she neglects her home life. The Lord will take care of her and give her the grace she needs to maintain a respectful and godly attitude, even in the midst of adversity. This, too, is part of the cross she is called to carry.

Once again, submission is not a commandment to be enforced or a duty imposed from the outside—it is an attitude of the heart, freely given, without any expectation in return. I want to encourage you, sisters in Christ, to let the Lord form this heart in you. It is only as you take your place according to God's established order that you will be able to find true joy in your home and thrive.

The Limits of Submission

One may wonder how far submission should go when, for example, a husband asks his wife to act contrary to the Word of God. In such cases, the wife must take a stand for the Word, as she is called to submit to God before submitting to her husband. Similarly, in exceptional circumstances, the wife may seek God's will to know which direction to take. However, one thing is certain: under no circumstances should she assume the authority of the household.

There are also extreme cases where some families experience violence. Although the New Testament does not explicitly address domestic violence or cases of verbal or emotional abuse, it encourages believers to live in love

and peace. It is important to remember that when the situation requires it, one can call upon authorities or courts to resolve serious conflicts. The laws of many countries provide penalties for abuse and offer protective measures to ensure the safety of women and children.

Nevertheless, women facing such trials should be encouraged not to allow bitterness or hatred to take root in their hearts, but rather to forgive their spouse, while taking the necessary steps to protect their children and themselves.

Beware of Emotions and Manipulation

I don't think it will surprise anyone to say that, generally speaking, women tend to be more emotional and sensitive than men, which can be a great blessing. However, some women suffer from mood swings or get easily hurt. While their husbands should take this into account, it is equally important for these women to be aware of their own emotions so they don't let themselves be dominated by them. They should seek to grow in this area and, with the Lord's help, learn to manage their emotions. Some of them may even use their emotions to manipulate their husbands. In response, a husband might choose to remain silent rather than stand firm or express a desire, simply to avoid conflict. In the end, the wife gets what she wants and ends up taking authority over him. Such behavior cannot be pleasing to the Lord and does not reflect the harmony He desires within the couple.

Chapter IV

Becoming One - The Mystery of Marriage

I often remind Christians of Jesus' command: to deny ourselves, take up our cross, and follow Him. This must be the very foundation of our lives—and it will deeply influence every area, especially our marriage.

Today, many Christian couples, hoping to improve their relationship, attend seminars where they are taught to communicate better, show their love, spend time together, pray, and so on. These are good things in themselves, yet too often, the opposite of what is hoped for occurs. Instead of each spouse taking personal responsibility and allowing God to change them, they end up waiting for the other person to change first. Rather than humbling themselves, they focus on what their partner is not doing. Yet, it is the heart that needs to change—ours, not just theirs. As I've already said, when this revelation becomes real to us, we'll know how to respond to every situation, trial, or disagreement in our marriage. Each person must do what God is asking of them, without expecting anything in return. It's true that it's more difficult when the other isn't walking in obedience to God or carrying their own cross. But the health of a marriage ultimately depends on each person choosing to accept the other as they are and allowing Christ to do His work in their own life.

Letting Go of the Desire to Change the Other

Christian couples must not fall into the patterns of the world around them. Differences in personality, preferences, or opinions can easily lead to ongoing conflict—especially when both spouses are trying to mould the other into their own image. But the Bible makes it clear: a legalistic attitude will never bring true change. It's only when we give up the desire to control or change our spouse that God can step in—if the other is willing, of course. Only the Lord can truly transform a heart, and bring us to accept and appreciate each other just as we are.

For years, I tried to change my wife so she would fit into my expectations—with no success. And she was doing the same with me. The more we tried to change each other, the more tension built up between us. Neither of us was willing to yield. But everything started to shift when I realized that we first had to accept each other, just as we were, and trust God to bring the change in His time and His way. I humbled myself and slowly began to take my rightful place. From there, things began to improve. God started a work in my wife, helping her to adapt and to submit. On both sides, we asked the Lord to deal with what needed to change in our hearts. The process was painful and humbling—but it became one of the richest and most fruitful seasons of our lives.

Receiving Constructive Feedback

There was a time when my wife would point out things about me—truthful things—but I simply wouldn't hear them. Let's be honest: for us men, accepting criticism is often difficult—especially when it comes from our own wife. Unless our life is grounded in the foundation of the Gospel, our pride

resists correction. But when Christ is truly our cornerstone, we become willing to walk the path He shows us, to lay down our pride, our desires, and the impulses of our flesh. Rather than seeing our wife's comments—when offered with good intent—as a challenge to our authority, we should receive them as help and support, revealing areas of weakness in us that God longs to heal and transform.

Looking back, I can now see that many of my wife's remarks—though hard to hear in the moment—were instrumental in helping me grow. She often notices things I overlook. Being open to what she shares, and taking time to talk it through with her, is not only good for me personally—it brings blessing to our home, and even ripples out to bless the church. As husbands, we must learn to listen to our wives' counsel, remembering that God Himself has placed her at our side. Giving her the freedom to speak openly, to share what she sees and feels, will be a source of life for our family. And of course, this goes both ways: a wife who is open to the Lord will also benefit from the insight and encouragement of her husband.

The Unity of the Couple

Several years ago, my wife and I received a prophetic word at church from a servant of God who didn't know us at all. He compared us to a hare and a tortoise—one always wanting to speed up, the other to slow things down—and he added that God had brought us together so we could complement one another. The entire congregation burst into laughter, because it was an exact description of our personalities. I share this little story to illustrate how God is able to unite a man and a woman who are completely different, and transform them so that they become truly one. This is a miracle that only God can accomplish.

“For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church.” **Ephesians 5:31-32**

This passage reminds us that the union of a man and a woman—often so different in background, temperament, or desires—into one shared life is a profound mystery. It can only be brought about through the deep and gracious work of the Lord in both hearts. The apostle Paul likens this relationship to the bond between Christ and the Church. Just as Jesus, the head, cannot be separated from His body, the Church, so too a husband and wife are called to leave their parents and become one, living together in unity of spirit. The mystery of marriage is nothing short of a miracle.

Intimate Life

The intimate relationship between husband and wife, instituted by God Himself, holds great significance within marriage. The apostle Paul urges each spouse to respond to the needs of the other, and not to withhold themselves, so that temptation might be avoided—unless they mutually agree to set aside a time for prayer (**1 Corinthians 7:3-5**). Though every couple experiences intimacy in their own unique way, it should always be guided by mutual love and respect. Open communication—both speaking honestly and listening attentively—is essential. Sadly, this aspect of marriage can sometimes become a place of selfish gratification, where personal pleasure overshadows the needs of the other. But this is not God’s design. Paul reminds us in **1 Corinthians 7:4**: *“The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. And likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does.”* This mutual belonging speaks of a deep interdependence, one that must always remain within

the boundaries of shared consent and respect. As **Genesis 2:24** says, man and woman become “one flesh”—called to give themselves to each other in love, with patience and understanding, mindful of life’s seasons and its challenges.

Man and Woman: Two Distinct Roles

Over the past few decades, the dynamics of marriage and family life have changed considerably. The understanding of duties, responsibilities, and relationships within the family has evolved. Today, people often speak of complete equality between men and women. And while it is true that, before God, men and women are of equal worth—with neither being superior to the other—God has entrusted each with distinct roles and responsibilities.

Let us remember that, according to the divine design, a woman is not called to hold a position of authority within the family. Even if she holds a leadership role in her professional life, she should be careful not to carry that same authority into her home, for that would mean not submitting to her husband. When a woman embraces the place God has given her, she becomes a source of great blessing—for her family and for the church. We are called to fight the good fight of faith, to stand for God’s Word, and for each one—husband and wife—to fulfill the role that is theirs in the Spirit. It is in this way that we can bear witness to what it truly means to live as a family according to God’s heart.

Sadly, the new generation is heavily influenced by the mindset and values of the world. Husbands and wives are not meant to compete with one another, but rather to accept the place God has lovingly assigned to each. Too often, relationships are filled with “yes, but...”—each person trying to justify themselves instead of taking a moment to question their own behaviour. Yet

Jesus shows us the way: He had a thousand reasons to defend Himself, but He chose not to—for He had to go to the cross with a pure heart. And that is exactly what He asks of husbands and wives. In order to find our place within marriage, we must be willing to love, to forgive, to repent, and to acknowledge our own faults—all while keeping a heart that remains pure.

Accepting One's Place Within the Couple

The duty and place of each within the couple are truths we must learn to accept. When both husband and wife embrace their roles faithfully, they complement one another in the best possible way. Let's not waste time—let us step into the place God has prepared for us. What the world thinks or says should not concern us. We do not belong to this world. The Church must completely break away from the corrupted mindset that prevails in it.

Impossible Without the Cross

To serve the Lord and build a family that can be a true example, there is no other way but to “put to death” our old nature—our character flaws and wrong attitudes. That is what it means to take up our cross. Because we are imperfect, we will always need to adjust certain areas of our lives and repent. There is no other path. The cross cannot be carried by two; each one must take it up individually. No one can carry it on behalf of the other. And without the cross, there is no spiritual growth—nor any lasting solution for our marriage. Take up your cross. Lay down your selfish desires. Let the Lord break you if He must—and you will see how everything begins to fall into place. It's not enough to simply declare that this is what you want; you

must live it, with the right attitude. Each of us must be willing to submit to the Lord.

The cross we are all called to bear presents a real challenge: dying to ourselves. It is not easy—but there is no other way. This is the path we must walk, both husband and wife. It shakes us, humbles us—but this is the price of true communion with the Lord, so that our lives may bear fruit and be filled with joy and peace.

It is no longer a time for debate—it is a time for obedience to the Word of God. So I ask you, husbands and wives: Are you ready to take up your cross and welcome the change that the Lord desires to bring about in you?

Love, humility, repentance, and forgiveness must be at the very heart of married life. We must stop being content with merely listening—whether to sermons or good advice. It is time to live this out, day by day. And on this journey, no Christian couple should feel alone, for the Lord has placed shepherds—leaders in the church—whose role is to feed, support, counsel, and protect His people, according to His Word and the leading of His Spirit, without manipulation or control.

Desiring the Best According to God for Your Family

Anyone who commits to marriage must aspire to the very best for their family. When my wife and I got married, we were not yet born again, and our plans looked much like those of many couples without Christ: simply living together, having children, someday buying a house, and so on... We had no spiritual vision for our union, no solid foundation on which to build our marriage, and we didn't know where this journey would lead us. Today,

starting a family without sharing the same spiritual goal is to expose oneself to great risks amid the many challenges and difficulties a couple will face.

Being a Christian does not guarantee a life without struggles in marriage. Sadly, the blessing given by a pastor at the wedding ceremony is not enough to face the realities of everyday life. Too many Christian families go through storms because the spouses never fully understood what their commitment truly meant.

In **Luke 14:28**, Jesus teaches us to count the cost before starting to build: *“For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has enough to finish it [...]”*. Similarly, as we have seen, before committing to marriage, a Christian must understand the value God places on that union and the price to pay for its success. They must also grasp the importance of their responsibility toward their future children: raising them in the ways of the Lord, a growing challenge in the face of the world’s harmful influences.

After understanding what God expected from us, my wife and I went through difficult times, but we can testify to His faithfulness and grace in changing us and shaping us more and more into His image. Our desire is to grow ever closer in unity to serve the Lord and His Church. I recognize my part in making that happen, and I am ready to do whatever it takes. As for our children, we have seen the Lord at work in their lives, and today, we have the grace to serve Him together, as a family.

Marriage and Finances

Finally, I want to draw your attention to the importance of managing finances within a marriage. It is essential not to adopt the worldly mindset that

sometimes insists each spouse should keep their own income separate, without consulting the other. The husband must understand that his salary also belongs to his wife, whether or not she has her own income. On her part, a wife who earns a salary must be careful not to adopt an independent attitude toward her husband or take a position of authority in the home. Husband and wife should manage their finances together, discussing their priorities, the various needs of the family, and what they give to the Lord and to others.

In Conclusion

Although husband and wife have different responsibilities according to God's will, they are both called to walk the same narrow path—to take up their cross and follow Jesus. This is the only sure way to build a truly united family. Such a relationship, established by Christ, requires the deep work of the Holy Spirit in our lives. I repeat: feelings, emotions, and mutual attraction do have their place in marriage, but a lasting union cannot rest on these alone. To be a couple united in service to the Lord, we must experience His intervention in our lives and become a man and a woman of the Spirit. This journey is a long process, marked by trials and difficulties, but victory is assured if we stay on the path of the cross. Sadly, for a long time now, fewer and fewer Christians truly grasp what this means and live it out. How then can we be surprised that Christians are experiencing a growing number of divorces, just like non-believers?

As a pastor, whenever I am given the opportunity, I always speak to engaged couples about the mystery of marriage. They must understand its implications and responsibilities. Marriage is a divine institution where God's glory and power can be revealed. If so many marriages are troubled today, it is not because God

has failed, but because men and women—created free—often refuse to turn to Him, to walk in His ways, and to seek His help.

Yet God has provided everything needed for our marriages to be a success !

Children & Family Life

Chapter V

Investing in the Lives of Our Children

The Importance of Our Example

The example that parents set for their children has a profound and lasting impact on their development and well-being. When God's order is not established in the home, it is always the children who suffer the most. Sadly, some Christian parents resist the work that the Lord wants to do in them, finding it too difficult to accept.

As parents, we must ensure our home is a place where our children can look to us as role models—where they experience the fear of the Lord (in the biblical sense) and genuine respect for us. This will help them learn obedience. There is no foolproof method or universal principle for parenting success. It is not hours of preaching that will transform our children, but the work of Christ in our lives and the atmosphere of love and joy that flows from it.

God has entrusted us with the responsibility of caring for our children—physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. As figures of authority, it is essential that we reflect the love of Jesus in both our actions and our words. Our children are always watching and learning from us. The first role models they have before their eyes are us, their parents. Our behavior and our words leave a deep impression on them. If they see that we love one another, are united, and serve the Lord together with one heart, they will have every opportunity to flourish and grow up choosing to follow God.

Parents are the key to a happy and united Christian family—one that becomes a testimony both within the church and to the world around it. We must not only be committed to doing God's will and pleasing Him as a couple, but also be intentional about securing the spiritual future of our children. This is an extremely important and urgent matter, especially as many young people who had to attend church in their early years eventually drift away and become lost in the world.

Embracing Our Responsibilities as Parents

It is sad to see that some parents avoid their responsibilities in an area as vital as the spiritual upbringing of their children. We must do everything we can to prepare them to respond, when the time comes, to God's call on their lives. It is not enough to take them to church from a young age and assume they will come to know the Lord. One day, they must personally repent, be born again (**John 3:3**), and surrender their lives to Him according to His plan for them.

Children growing up in a Christian home are blessed with a special grace: they have the opportunity to hear the Word of God and to receive spiritual investment from one or both believing parents. The apostle Paul explains in

1 Corinthians 7:14 that even in a home where only one parent is a believer, the children are holy—that is, “*set apart for God, prepared for Him*” (Living Word translation).

As parents, it is high time we make sure we are truly fulfilling our God-given responsibilities! Many children from Christian families are far from God today because their parents failed to raise them according to the Lord’s ways or to be godly examples in their lives.

Unconditional Love for Our Children

Nothing lasting can be built in a child’s life unless they feel that we, their parents, love them unconditionally and that we will always be there for them—no matter what they do. It is this love that gives them a sense of security, which is essential for them to accept and respect our authority. When they feel secure in our love, their hearts remain open to us—so we can encourage them, reward them, or correct them when needed. They must sense that our parental authority is exercised for their good and that they are not left to fend for themselves.

The Spiritual Condition of Parents is Crucial

The spiritual condition of parents has a decisive influence on the most important aspect of their children’s lives: their spiritual future. We can teach them the Bible, but the example we set in daily life—especially at home—has an even greater impact. If our lives do not reflect the values we preach, our children will naturally question our authority. This weakens our relationship with them and diminishes our ability to guide them according to God’s plans.

Children need to see their parents love and respect each other. They should experience peace and joy in the home, rather than witnessing or being victims of frequent arguments, outbursts of anger, and hurtful words. Parents can hold excellent principles yet still be in constant conflict behind closed doors.

A troubled atmosphere at home can easily breed insecurity and sadness in a child. If parents present themselves as devout Christians, attending every church meeting, but do not live an authentic Christian life at home, their children will be confused. Under these conditions, children will not enjoy going to church with their parents and will attend only out of obligation. They may come to see Christian life as hypocrisy, developing rebellious attitudes toward the church—and sometimes even toward God. It will then become very difficult to raise them in the ways of the Lord. To act like a Pharisee—expecting your children to behave differently than you do—is essentially saying, “Do as I say, not as I do!” This can only drive them away from God.

Key Question: Television and Screens

A crucial aspect of bringing up our children today concerns their use of television and screens. Do our children have the freedom to choose the programs they watch? Or do we, as parents, watch over what they see and hear? Today, very few television programs are truly suitable for children without risking harm. If we don't pay attention, television can become a destructive tool. Yet, in many Christian families, children are left to themselves, free to watch and listen to anything without any parental control. What an irresponsible attitude from parents, whose role is to protect them!

It is sad to observe that often, out of fatigue or simply to keep the peace, some parents leave their children alone in front of the television or screens, without caring about what they watch — often violent, unhealthy, or even dangerous content. Under these conditions, how can we train them in the ways of the Lord? It is impossible. Often, you may wonder why your children show signs of rebellion, disobedience, or anger. It is very likely that what they watch or listen to feeds such behaviours. We must also be careful about what we watch ourselves in their presence. Some images or words can have very harmful effects on them.

I remember when our two daughters were small, they could watch Christian children's programs but were not allowed to turn on the television without an adult responsible being present. Back then, there were far fewer programs likely to harm children than there are today. The rare times they watched TV, they only saw cartoons or Christian movies, in front of which they would sing, dance, and enjoy themselves in a wholesome way. This is how they grew up without being under the influence of the spirit that rules in the world. This example dates back about forty years—practically an eternity, given how fast things change—but I want to emphasize that we made the choice to invest in Christian books, films and other things to protect and spiritually prepare our daughters, even if it meant going without certain material things. Today, many parents do not see things this way and do not take their responsibilities seriously. That is why I continually encourage Christian parents to obtain Christian books, children's Bibles, good Christian music, and films to protect their children and prepare them spiritually for the future. Seeing where my daughters are today in their walk with the Lord, I am convinced that, alongside our efforts to be examples for them, our decision to invest in their spiritual lives from a very young age greatly helped them serve the Lord. I know many other parents can share similar testimonies about their children.

The delicate matter of mobile phones, internet, and social media

There is no denying that smartphones and the internet, which we all use, expose our children to the corrupt spirit that so often pervades the world. Everything is accessible. What can be a tool for education can also become a source of destruction—both for children and for adults. I understand that today it is unthinkable for children to be without a computer or internet, especially for their schoolwork. Yet, it remains the parents' responsibility to explain the dangers associated with these tools and to carefully monitor how they are used at home. This is not always easy, especially when children have grown accustomed to doing whatever they want. It's true that following rules different from those of their classmates can be frustrating for them, even isolating at times, but we must remember what is truly at stake. Once again, a relationship of trust between parents and children is essential—it makes all the difference. Moreover, if we ourselves spend too much time in front of screens, we will lack credibility. Once again, it all depends on the example we set!

Limiting screen time is crucial for the health and development of our children. Excessive use can lead to problems with sleep, language, concentration, and behaviour. Children under three years old should not be exposed to screens, and it remains inadvisable for those under six. Furthermore, time spent in front of screens can reduce family interactions and physical activities—both vital for healthy development. For parents, cutting back on their own screen use not only allows more quality time with their children but also demonstrates a living example to follow. In short, limiting screen time contributes to better physical and mental health for the whole family.

Having Discernment

All of this shows us how important it is for us, as parents, to be firmly rooted in the Lord so that we can discern what might harm our children and choose what will help them grow in God's ways. Undoubtedly, there will be some "cleaning up" to do at home if we acknowledge that at times we may have acted irresponsibly!

We must love our children while also showing discipline and firmness—without falling into a harsh or legalistic attitude. Our children need to understand why we warn them and why it is necessary to be cautious. This understanding will help them see that our intentions are good and that they can trust us.

Our Children and the Word of God

"My son, hear the instruction of your father, and do not forsake the law of your mother; for they will be a graceful ornament on your head, and chains about your neck." **Proverbs 1:8-9**

"Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." **Proverbs 22:6**

As soon as our children are old enough to understand, it is our responsibility to tell them about Jesus and introduce them to the Bible. We cannot simply rely on what they hear at church; it is up to us as parents to take responsibility and teach them God's Word. Sadly, many parents leave this task entirely to the church, instead of praying with their children and spending time together in the Bible at home.

Giving Our Time to Our Children

Above all, spending time with our children is essential. They understand that we have commitments and work to do, but they should never feel pushed to the background. We must be careful not to prioritize church meetings and activities at their expense. Playing with them, accompanying them in their activities—whether it's sports, music, or other hobbies—encourages them and strengthens our relationship, because they see how much we care about them. Praying together as a family, reading God's Word with them, and listening to their concerns will plant good seeds in their hearts, and the time spent with them while they are young will bear fruit as they grow.

As Christians, we cannot take lightly the spiritual future of our children. Today more than ever, having children is a serious responsibility, and it's becoming increasingly difficult to fulfill. Fully embracing our role as parents will sometimes require sacrifices: investing in Christian leisure activities, sometimes foregoing certain comforts for their well-being, dedicating time to them, and watching over their activities even when we are tired... Without this spirit of sacrifice, we risk seeing our children one day reject God's will for their lives. Yet, what immense joy it is to see our children grow in the ways of the Lord, one day give their lives to Him, and choose to follow Him!

Chapter VI

Raising Our Children in the Ways of the Lord

The greatest responsibility parents have is to raise their children. Yet many Christian parents increasingly feel overwhelmed by this task and find it difficult to bring up their children according to the ways of the Lord. To understand this, we must keep in mind that the world is under the influence of spiritual forces. The Apostle Paul clearly speaks to us about the powers of darkness at work in the heavenly realms (**Ephesians 6:12**). Satan, called the prince of this world in the Bible, is the source of all that is evil on earth and of the rebellion against God and His plan. Our children, living in this atmosphere, suffer its effects.

Today, I see many parents struggling to teach their children even the most basic rules of life, such as respect and obedience. The dangers facing young people are not limited to television, the internet, or drugs. It is the spiritual rebellion against God's Word and the authority of their parents that leads them down a path of destruction. Christian parents must therefore be aware of this reality in order to raise their children according to the Lord's ways and prepare them spiritually to not bow to the spirit that rules this world.

As parents, our responsibility is to nurture and protect the children God has entrusted to us. They must understand the family hierarchy—what their place is, and what ours is. This is why the Bible urges children to obey

their parents: *“Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.”*
Ephesians 6:1

Setting Rules and Boundaries

Raising our children means giving them rules and boundaries from a very young age. These guidelines are essential for their safety and help them distinguish what is acceptable from what is not. They teach children to develop responsible behaviour as they grow.

I believe that, above all, we teach this to our children through dialogue—though it is not always necessary to explain or justify everything. We should not fear frustrating them by setting limits; these boundaries are vital for their stability and provide them with a sense of security.

How to Respond to a Disobedient Child?

A child has so much to learn, including the limits they must not cross. This learning happens over time and requires from us, as parents, the same consistency and patience that the Lord shows toward us.

Sometimes a child deliberately disobeys a rule they clearly understand and opposes it. They may be testing our authority or the boundaries we have set. It is then essential to calmly remind them of the rule they are refusing to follow. But if they persist in their disobedience, how should we respond?

Often, words are not enough, and it becomes necessary to guide them back in the right direction—to correct them in the sense of “reforming their behaviour,” as the Apostle Paul expresses in **2 Timothy 3:16** (Living Word translation). Again, there is no single principle or method; each parent must

know their child. When we discipline a child appropriately, we do so for their good. *“He who spares his rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him promptly.”* **Proverbs 13:24**

Although a child does not like being corrected in the moment, they must understand that this consequence comes when they willfully defy our authority.

Some Essential Points About Correction

• Our child must be assured of our love

Reprimands or correction are sometimes necessary, but they must always be filled with love. A child needs to understand why parents set limits and why they must correct them when needed. They should know that all this is done out of love for them, because of their behaviour, not because we like to punish them. They must be assured that our love for them is unconditional—just as God’s love is (**2 Timothy 2:13**)—and that we want the best for them. This will give them a sense of security and help them accept correction, understanding that our love for them doesn’t lessen when they disobey.

• The importance of self-control

When correcting a child, it’s vital to act calmly, without being ruled by anger, frustration, or irritation. Acting under these emotions would be an abuse of our authority. Likewise, correcting just because we’ve lost patience, are tired, or “at the end of our tether” would be unfair. If we feel we won’t act appropriately, it’s better to wait, as acting out of emotion won’t be constructive. But, if we do correct our child out of anger or exhaustion, it’s important to admit our mistake and sincerely

ask them for forgiveness. Failing to do so can cause the child to feel unjustly treated or even rebellious.

- **No acts of violence**

Correction never means humiliating or hurting a child. However difficult it can be for us parents, what matters is doing it the right way, with the right attitude. We must show sensitivity and reflect the heart of the Lord. If we struggle with this, we should seek guidance and help.

- **Don't fear losing your child's love**

Whatever conflicts or difficulties arise, our priority must always be to protect our relationship with our child. This does not mean we should be afraid to discipline them, just as the Lord disciplines us out of love: *"For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and he chastens everyone he accepts as his son."* **Hebrews 12:6**

When words are no longer enough, we must not let our emotions control us or fear losing our child's love; otherwise, we won't be able to correct them.

- **No automatic responses**

Correcting a child is not a reflex and should never become one. Before reprimanding, it's important to warn the child and ensure the correction is necessary and deserved.

- **Flexibility and wisdom**

For basic rules or dangerous situations—like holding hands to cross the street or not touching the oven—there can be no compromise. But in other cases, flexibility is possible. If we are open and willing to

learn, the Holy Spirit will give us wisdom in all circumstances. It's also important to realize we cannot address every issue at once. We must prioritize, or we risk constantly correcting our child and discouraging them.

As parents, we need discernment to adapt our expectations to the child's developmental stages. Specialists explain that around two years old, children often enter a phase of opposition, frequently saying "no." This crucial stage allows them to discover autonomy, test limits, build themselves, and gradually detach from us—which is a healthy thing. Although it can be unsettling for parents, patience is essential, and it's important to understand this is not necessarily rebellion but a natural growth process. Of course, we must not tolerate everything, especially where safety is concerned, but misunderstanding this stage risks harshness and discouragement.

We should also remember that very young children often get up to mischief without bad intent. We must let them learn through experience and sometimes accept that things will get broken... A little humour can help in those moments!

• Adapting the reprimand

Keep in mind that correction should be adapted to the situation. It depends on circumstances—Is it a first disobedience or repeated?—and on the child's age and sensitivity. Every child is unique; it's important to understand what works best for them. One child might be more sensitive than another, and what helps one could be inappropriate or harmful for another. This is why knowing our children well is so important! However, while each child's sensitivity varies, rules must be the same for all. Most importantly, we must avoid favoritism.

- **To be credible, be consistent**

There must be continuity in the rules we give our child. We cannot change limits depending on circumstances. Once a rule is established and the child understands the consequences of breaking it, we must follow through. Otherwise, we lose credibility, and the child's behaviour won't change.

- **Unity between parents is paramount**

It's essential that parents present a united front in raising their children—both in setting rules and in applying them, including discipline. Children quickly notice disagreements between parents and try to get from one what they cannot from the other. They know exactly who to turn to for what they want! But when parents are united in how they raise their child, it creates stability and a sense of security that benefits the child.

A Heart Filled with Grace

Raising a child means constantly seeking a balance that can sometimes be hard to find! I repeat: we must set rules and be firm and consistent, but without having excessive expectations. Let's respect the child's personality and not try to make them perfect—after all, we aren't perfect ourselves. Our goal is certainly not to create a robot, but to bring them up by helping them to grow in the best way possible. Let's remember that they are children, and it's normal for them to behave as such. We cannot expect adult behaviour from them. Let's not watch over them like a policeman, but instead show love and a spirit of grace. In this way, our home will be a place where order reigns, but also freedom, love, and peace.

I remember the day my eldest daughter, then six years old, took advantage of a moment of inattention from her nanny to set off on an adventure down the road with a friend her age. Needless to say, we were terrified when we realized what had happened, considering the risks of her getting lost or having an accident! But we understood that at her age, she was simply carefree, unaware of the danger. Of course, we explained clearly to her that she must never do that again—without being harsh toward her. I'm sure every parent has similar stories to share!

Always Encourage Your Child

One of the most important things we can do for a child is to build their self-confidence. Praising their efforts and achievements—and sometimes even rewarding them with something they enjoy—is essential. This also means giving them plenty of our time, which is the most precious gift in their eyes.

A verse from the Bible beautifully sums up the responsibility the Lord entrusts to parents: *“And now a word to you parents. Don’t keep on scolding and nagging your children, making them angry and resentful. Rather, bring them up with the loving discipline the Lord himself approves, with suggestions and godly advice.”* **Ephesians 6:4**, paraphrase from Living Bible Version

Chapter VII

Youth in Danger

A relationship of trust and love between parents and their children from an early age fosters good communication within the family and can inspire young people to serve the Lord. Nothing is more important than this relationship in the home!

Obedience or Rebellion

“Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. “Honor your father and mother,” which is the first commandment with promise: “that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth.”” **Ephesians 6:1-3**

The Word of God does not say, “Children, obey your parents if they are good to you” or “if they are not too old,” or “only up to a certain age,” but simply *“obey them for this is right.”* The apostle Paul, quoting Deuteronomy, adds that to live happily and long, children must honour their parents.

Today, the legal age of majority often interferes with parental authority, exacerbating rebellion in the hearts of young people. Some teenagers eagerly await their age of majority thinking, “When I’m an adult, I will be free and no one will be able to impose anything on me!” This attitude reflects the rebellious spirit of the world and is exactly the enemy’s plan.

What Satan accomplishes in the world, he seeks to introduce into the Church and into our families. His lies deceive young Christians, making them believe

that submitting to God is enough and they don't need to submit to their parents. Some claim to serve the Lord while being in full rebellion against their parents. They deceive themselves and fall into the trap set by the enemy. It is urgent that young people become aware of the danger of rebellion, which often leads to poor decisions. For their own safety, they must obey God and their parents. If they obey only out of obligation, they will stop as soon as they become adults and free. Obedience and submission must come from the heart; they are attitudes that translate into actions when genuine. Parents should be able to feel this sincerity in their children. This applies to children but also to youths and adults, without, of course, questioning the chain of authority within the couple and the family. Whether we are 7, 15, 18, 25, or even 40 years old, it is always wise to seek advice from our parents, to benefit from their experience and their walk with the Lord.

Taking a Stand Against the World

You, young Christians, I encourage you to stand out from the world. You must be able to submit to your parents without fear of being despised or rejected by your friends, but on the contrary, be proud to obey God and His Word. I know it is particularly difficult for you because, as teenagers, you go through a period of great changes, seeking your identity, aspiring to more autonomy, and often wanting to fit into your group of friends by doing whatever everyone else does at all costs. This is why I tell parents that it is important to understand your children's struggles at this stage of life, to be patient with them, while encouraging them to follow the Lord's ways.

We cannot live according to the world's thinking because it is diametrically opposed to God's. That is why we, Christians, are and will be persecuted. In John 15, Jesus reminds us that if the world hated Him, it will hate us also, and if it persecuted Him, it will persecute us too. This is the experience young people must be ready to live, the path on which they must walk!

Protecting Oneself from the Spirit of the World

Young people must understand the urgency of protecting themselves from the spirit of the world. Often, children are advised to avoid certain activities or to distance themselves from friends who do not share their faith. Why? Because they will inevitably influence them one way or another. Young people of the world are often proud of their lifestyle and choices. But are young Christians proud to obey Jesus?

I encourage young Christians to separate themselves from those who walk in darkness, to reject their reasoning, and to align themselves with the Word of God. They must grasp that this is what it means to belong to the body of Christ, to Jesus! They need to understand that Christians do not meet only to listen to the Word of God. What matters is to live it, as the apostle James says: *“For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was.”* **James 1:23-24**

Jesus is looking for young people who are pure, separated from the world, with a powerful testimony like Daniel's, and who are able to share with others what they live. These young people, obedient to the Lord and respectful of their parents, will spread around them a sweet fragrance, the fragrance of Christ.

Conclusion

Today, many parents have lost all authority over their children, who from adolescence become independent and rebellious. These parents have let their children do what they wanted, see whoever they wanted, and organize their lives as they pleased. When they try to oppose their choices during adolescence, they face resistance. This shows how important it is for parents to take responsibility for their children from a young age by dedicating time to them. It is true that young people can make decisions with sometimes irreversible consequences, but by the grace of the Lord, broken relationships can always be restored.

Husbands, wives, children, know that there is a special grace from God to walk in obedience. This cannot be done by relying on our own strength but by humbling ourselves before the Lord. Living the Gospel means opening our hearts to the work the Lord wants to accomplish in us. Each person must examine themselves, take up their cross, obey, and submit to the Word of God. Only then can we live in the peace and joy of the Lord.

The decision to start a family is a great responsibility. In a world where so many forces are set against children, raising them in God's ways is a true challenge. But what a powerful testimony it is to see a happy and united family serving the Lord! And yes, it's possible!

A United Family — Yes, It's Possible!

Conflict, broken homes, wounded hearts, children searching for direction... Even Christian families are not spared. In today's world, more than ever, they face deep and troubling upheavals.

It is high time for Christians to return to the Word of God, to rediscover their God-given roles, and to fully embrace their responsibilities within the home, so that love, peace, and unity may reign.

In this book, Pastor Miki Hardy shares the biblical vision of the family with insights from his most recent teachings. With clarity and grace, he leads us back to God's original plan for the home, anchored on the one unshakable foundation: the Gospel.



Church Team Ministries International (CTMI) is a Christian network, formed in 2001 by a team of leaders from various African countries who are united by the message of the cross and the work of God in their lives.

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ENGLISH

ISBN 978-99993-0-383-5

