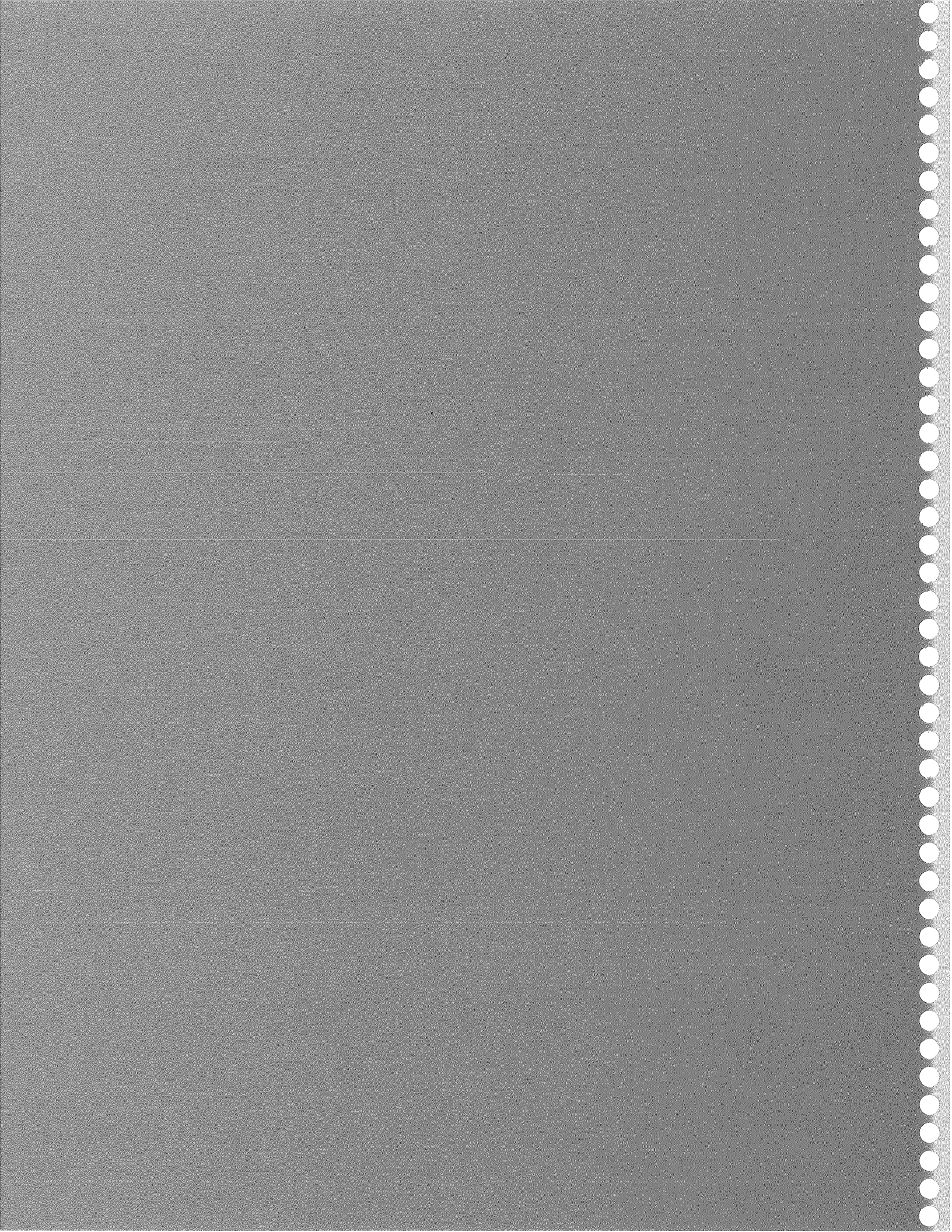


Study Guide

The
Christian
Family

Dr. Lawrence O. Olson

WELS
Congregational
Assistant Program



The Christian Family

Study Guide

by
Dr. Lawrence O. Olson

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Session One: The Creation Account

Introduction

Under what circumstances do people like to be alone?

Focus

God established the family when he instituted marriage at creation.

Scriptural Study

Read Genesis 2:18-25

1. Why did God say that it was “not good for the man to be alone”?
2. What did Adam learn from the task of naming all of the animals?
3. What was different about the way God made Adam and Eve from the way he made the rest of creation (Genesis 1:3-25)?
4. Do you see any significance in the method of creating Eve?
→ 1 Corinthians 11:11-12

5. What is the meaning of what Adam said when Eve was brought to him?

6. Verse 24 provides the Bible's own commentary on this event. What do we learn from it?
 - Malachi 2:13-16
 - Matthew 19:3-9
 - 1 Corinthians 7:10-15

7. What is the point about the unashamed nakedness of Adam and Eve?

Key Points

1. Marriage was established by God, and therefore it is a sacred institution.
2. Marriage joins one man and one woman in a lifelong union.
3. Divorce is a disruption of God's design for marriage.
4. God allows a Christian to seek a divorce in cases of adultery or malicious desertion.

Application

1. God looked at his creation, including the institution of marriage, and said that it was "very good" (Genesis 1:31). Do you agree? Why or why not?

2. What are some of the common views of marriage within your culture? Evaluate them.

3. Discuss whether or not marriage would be viewed differently if people recognized that God established it.

Session Two: The Purposes of the Family

Introduction

Why do people live in families?

Focus

God established marriage with specific purposes designed to bless people.

Scriptural Study

Read Genesis 2:18

1. What specific blessing of marriage is referred to here?
2. How did the gift of a “suitable helper” solve the problem of Adam's “aloneness”?
→ 1 Corinthians 7:1,7-9
→ 1 Corinthians 7:10-15

Read Genesis 1:27; 2:24-25

3. What specific blessing of marriage is referred to here?
→ Hebrews 13:4
→ 1 Corinthians 7:2-5

Read Genesis 1:28

4. What specific blessing of marriage is referred to here?

→ Psalm 127:3-5

→ 1 Peter 3:7

→ Psalm 51:5

Key Points

1. God provides companionship in a unique way in marriage.
2. Sexuality is a wonderful gift from God to husbands and wives.
3. Engaging in sexual relations outside of the bonds of marriage is contrary to the will of God.
4. Children are to be welcomed with gratitude as blessings from God.

Application

1. If you are married, describe the times when you appreciate most the companionship God has given to you in your marriage. If not, reflect on how your parents or another couple in the previous generation would likely describe those times.
2. How do people in your community view the connection between sex and marriage? Sex and children?

3. Evaluate the "Safe Sex" movement.

4. Abortion is legal in many countries. How is it regarded in your culture? What is the biblical perspective on abortion?

5. Agree or Disagree: In an over-populated world, Christian parents will want to severely limit the number of children they have.

Session Three: Husbands and Wives

Introduction

What does it mean to be a “man”? What does it mean to be a “woman”?

How do people learn how to be a husband or a wife?

Focus

God’s Word gives us the position descriptions for men and women in their roles as husbands and wives.

Scriptural Study

Read Ephesians 5:21-33

1. The marriage relationship involves a kind of "mutual submission." What does Paul mean?
→ Galatians 5:13
→ 1 Corinthians 11:11-12
2. What are the roles that God has given to husbands and wives? How are they different? How are they complementary?
→ Colossians 3:18-19

3. What comparison does Paul make in describing a wife's role in marriage? What do we learn from this comparison?

4. What is the example that Paul uses to picture a husband's relationship with his wife? What does this example teach us?

Key Points

1. Husbands and wives have reciprocal, complementary roles in marriage.
2. God gives husbands the role of leadership in marriage.
3. God gives wives the role of submission in marriage.
4. Husbands and wives alike are to use their roles in loving service.

Application

1. Discuss how husbands and wives, in general, relate to each other in your community. Do families tend to be patriarchal ("father-ruled"), matriarchal ("mother-ruled"), or neither?

2. How might husbands be tempted to sin in their headship role?

3. How might women be tempted to sin in their role of submission?

4. Agree or Disagree: Times have changed, and it would be demeaning to ask a contemporary woman to “submit” to her husband.

Session Four: Parents and Children

Introduction

As a child, what did you appreciate most about your parents? What did you appreciate least about having parents who were responsible for you?

Focus

Children and parents alike have responsibilities and receive blessings through their relationships within the family.

Scriptural Study

Read Ephesians 6:1-3

1. What are the two commands that are given to children? How are they related?
→ Exodus 20:12 (1-21)
→ Deuteronomy 5:16 (1-33) (1-21)
2. Does it make a difference that Paul adds the qualifying phrase, "in the Lord"?
→ Colossians 3:20
→ Acts 5:29
3. Paul, as he quotes the Fourth Commandment, notes that it is "the first commandment with a promise." Why?

Read Ephesians 6:4

4. What negative command does Paul give fathers? What temptation prompts that command?

→ Colossians 3:21

5. What positive command does Paul give fathers?

6. Why does Paul not mention mothers? How do they fit in?

→ Proverbs 1:8-9

Read 1 Timothy 5:3-8

7. What additional insight about family responsibilities do we find here?

Key Points

1. Children will give their parents honor and obedience.
2. Parents will provide for the spiritual and physical needs of their children.

Application

1. Has the degree of honor and obedience shown by children to their parents changed since you were a child? If so, how?
2. How do parents and children tend to relate in your culture?
3. What are the factors that can get in the way of parents and children fulfilling their family responsibilities?
4. Discuss how the roles and responsibilities of children change as they grow older.

Session Five: Relationships Powered by Grace

Introduction

Think of your closest, longest-lasting friendships. What keeps them going?

Focus

The grace of God is the foundation for the relationships within the family.

Scriptural Study

Read Ephesians 2:1-10

1. What are the major points Paul makes as he tells us how we are made alive in Christ?

Sin: vv. 1-3

Grace: vv. 4-7

Faith: vv. 8-9

Works: v. 10

Read Matthew 7:24-27

2. How would you apply these words to the family?

→ Psalm 127:1-2

Read Deuteronomy 6:4-9

3. In what ways could these directions be put into practice in the Christian home?
→ Colossians 3:15-17

Read Hebrews 10:24-25

4. In what ways will Christian families participate in the “meeting together” mentioned here?
→ Deuteronomy 5:15
→ Exodus 20:11

Read 1 Corinthians 13:4-7

5. How would these characteristics of love be seen in the family?

Read Luke 15:11-32

6. What do we learn from the father in this parable? From the younger son? From the older son?

Key Points

1. Our life in Christ is a free, unmerited, unearned gift from God.
2. A shared commitment to Christ is the best foundation for family relationships.

3. The Christian family will be nurtured through its spiritual life in the home and in the congregation.
4. Family relationships will be characterized by love and forgiveness.

Application

1. What makes forgiveness difficult?
2. Discuss times when someone has shown grace to you.
3. What practical things can a family do to reflect the grace of God to each other?

Session Six: Communication

Introduction

When does communication take place?

Focus

The Christian family strives to have healthy communication patterns in order to build and maintain strong relationships.

Scriptural Study

Read Ephesians 4:25-5:4

1. What kind of impact can speech have?
2. What healthy communication patterns will the Christian family seek to develop?
3. What unhealthy communication patterns will the Christian family seek to avoid?

→ Genesis 3:1-19

Read James 1:19-20, 26; 3:3-12

4. James gives a good deal of attention here to communication. Why? What advice does he give?

→ Ephesians 4:15

Read Proverbs 26:18-27:2

5. In what ways do Solomon's observations hold true within the family?

Key Points

1. The way we communicate is a powerful force – for good or for bad.
2. Truth and love will characterize the communication of the Christian.
3. The speech of family members will provide encouragement, affirmation, and support; it will build up instead of tear down.

Application

1. Agree or Disagree: "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me."
2. What are the factors that get in the way of healthy family communication?

Session Seven: Lifestyle

Introduction

Politicians like to talk about “family values.” Why? What are family values?

Focus

The Christian values and commitments of the family will be carried out in a Christian lifestyle.

Scriptural Study

Read 1 Corinthians 10:31

1. What is the scope of the Christian lifestyle?

:
:
:

2. What is the purpose of the Christian lifestyle?

→ Matthew 5:16

:

Read Colossians 3:1-17

3. What are the family values that Paul encourages in this section?

4. What makes these values possible?

→ Galatians 5:22-26

Read Matthew 6:25-34

5. How does Jesus teach us to view having the necessities of life? Why?

Read 1 Timothy 6:6-10

6. What is the real problem Paul addresses here?

→ Philippians 4:11-13

Read Luke 12:48b and 1 Corinthians 4:2

7. What does God expect of his followers?

→ Proverbs 3:9

→ 1 Timothy 5:8

→ Ephesians 4:28

→ Romans 13:6-7

Key Points

1. Christians seek to give glory to God in all areas of their lives.
2. A spiritual lifestyle is enabled by the Holy Spirit.
3. God expects us to be faithful managers of the material blessings he has given us.

Application

1. What are the major challenges our families face in living a truly Christian lifestyle?
2. Discuss how a godly set of values will affect choices in entertainment, recreation, and leisure activities.
3. Agree or Disagree: A Christian should give all that he or she has to the Lord.

Session Eight: Service

Introduction

When do you feel good about serving other people? When do you resent it?

Focus

The Christian family glorifies God through service to other people.

Scriptural Study

Read Ephesians 2:8-10

1. What role does good works play in the life of a Christian?

→ James 2:14-26

Read 2 Corinthians 5:14-15

2. What motivates Christians to serve?

→ 1 John 4:19

Read John 13:1-9

3. What was the significance of washing feet at the time of Christ?

4. What was the lesson that Jesus was teaching his disciples?
→ Mark 10:45

Read 1 Corinthians 12:4-11

5. What does the Holy Spirit give to support Christian service?
→ Romans 12:1-8
→ Ephesians 4:11-16

Read Galatians 6:9-10

6. What does doing good result in?
→ Ecclesiastes 11:1-2
7. What sort of priority does Paul suggest in carrying out works of service?
→ Luke 10:25-37

Key Points

1. Christians seek to do good works as a way of responding to God's grace.

2. A life of Christian discipleship is one that follows the example of humble service set by Christ.
3. Because all Christians have received spiritual gifts, each family member is equipped in a special way for service.
4. God blesses Christian service.

Application

1. What are practical ways that family members can serve one another?
2. Identify ways that the family, as a family, can serve in the church.
3. What community needs might be met through the Christian service of the families in your congregation?