

How to BUILD YOUR DREAM HOME! Lesson 7 -- Home Maintenance Tools

THE SEVEN C'S OF HOME MAINTENANCE

The most well-constructed houses still require regular maintenance. This is necessary in order for the house to continue to serve its purpose and retain its value. Families are the same way. They need regular maintenance with the proper tools. The tools of home maintenance are attitudes and behaviors continually used within the home either to help avoid break downs within the family or to repair breaks quickly when they occur. *Every* family member should be trained in the use of these tools.

(1) Communication. The wise man said that "Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruit" (Proverbs 18:21). The death and life of a family are in the power of the tongue too. Many marriages suffer either from a lack of communication or an abundance of bad communication. According to Dr. David Mace, past president of the American Association of Marriage Counselors, "Poor communication is the main problem in 86 percent of all troubled marriages." The same problem afflicts many parent-child and sibling relationships as well. In their book *What Every Family Needs*, noted family counselors Brecheen and Faulkner list the following eight barriers to great communication: materialism, a critical attitude, fear, manipulation, preoccupation, dullness, alcohol and dishonesty. Notice that several of these things are out and out sin, and the others frequently involve it. Repentance is needed! Once the sinful barriers to communication have been removed, *you* can take the steps necessary to make communication within the home what it ought to be.

- *Listen.* James instructs us to be "swift to hear" (James 1:19). We need to be eagerly attentive to the messages other family members try to communicate. Often, the rush to react, judge, or express ourselves causes us to answer a matter before we fully hear it; this is "folly and shame" (Proverbs 18:13). Listening not only involves hearing *all* the words of the other person, but also mentally processing those words to recreate their message in your mind. One good way to make sure you have got the correct message is to restate what the other person has said back to them ("Are you saying..." "I think what you're saying is...." "What I heard you say is..." etc.).
- *Think before you speak.* "Do you see a man hasty in his words? There is more hope for a fool than for him" (Proverbs 29:20). How many problems could be avoided in the home if each of us took the time to ensure that our words were true, kind and necessary? Truly, "whoever guards his mouth and tongue keeps his soul from troubles" (Proverbs 21:23).
- *Check to see if you're getting through.* It is unwise to assume that others have received our message just because we sent it -- no matter how clear we think we made it! In Matthew 13:51, after relating several parables to His disciples regarding the kingdom, Jesus asked, "Have you understood all these things?" It is interesting to note that Jesus, the Greatest communicator and One who could read the human heart like an open book, still found it helpful to ask whether the message He spoke was the message others received. We should follow Jesus' example.

(2) Consideration. Philippians 2:4 teaches each of us to "look out not only for his own interests but also for the interests of others." Similarly, Hebrews 10:24 exhorts Christians to "consider one another in order to stir up love and good works." The Greek word translated "consider" here

(*Gr. katanoeo*) means "to observe fully." Thus, these verses teach that Christians are to observe, look out for, and think about each other. But this principle surely has application beyond relationships between Christians. The golden rule is a rule for *every* relationship *all* the time (cf. Matthew 7:12). And, it is not merely a matter of walking *one* mile in the other man's moccasins; the other man must be considered with *every step* that is taken.

Unfortunately, the last place many of us think of applying "the golden rule" is in the home. But this rule of life desperately needs to be applied in the home on a regular basis. The needs, wants, experiences, hopes, and dreams of every member of the family should be considered by every other member of the family. Spend time purposely thinking about your spouse and children. The thoughtful and considerate mind will produce thoughtful and considerate behaviors.

(3) Confrontation. The instruction of Jesus for members of His spiritual family is plain: "If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him" (Luke 17:3). In too many physical families, confrontation is only initiated through selfish desires while sin is routinely ignored. This is harmful to the soul of the sinner and to the stability of the home. While hyper-criticism, nagging, and needless arguing should be avoided, lovingly confronting family members with their sin(s) in hopes of correcting them is necessary. "Those who rebuke the wicked will have delight, and a good blessing will come upon them" (Proverbs 24:25). "Open rebuke is better than love carefully concealed" and "faithful are the wounds of a friend" (Proverbs 27:5-6). When a problem persists even after confrontation with a family member who is a Christian, the aid of brothers and sisters in Christ should be obtained (Matthew 18:15-17).

(4) Correction. Most people are willing to admit that they are "not perfect" and that they "have made mistakes." Many could give a long laundry list of their bad points. But how many could give a long list of the behaviors and attitudes they have corrected? When you become aware of a personal fault, either through self examination or rebuke, how do you respond? For many, the response is often some rationalization which "helps me accept myself for what I am." This is roughly the equivalent of a home owner who discovers a leak in his plumbing and neglects to fix it; his failure to take corrective measures virtually guarantees the future deterioration of the home. In our home lives, we must fix things that need fixing. Behaviors which have been identified as sinful or harmful to the family structure *must* be changed. "Poverty and shame will come to him who disdains correction, but he who regards a rebuke will be honored" (Proverbs 13:18).

(5) Compromise. Christians should never compromise principles of truth or conscience (Hebrews 13:18; Acts 24:16; Proverbs 23:23). However, in the home many situations arise in which neither truth or conscience are at stake. Matters involving mere personal preference are legitimate areas for compromise. The husband/father may feel that, as head of the house, his preferences should always be imposed on the rest of the family. But as we noted in an earlier lesson, this is a selfish and sinful concept of headship. One of the definitions of compromise is "something blending the characteristics of two others" (Webster's Dictionary). This is exactly what God intended marriage be -- two become one! (Matthew 19:5). The characteristics and preferences of husbands, wives and children are blended to form the fabric of home life. This occurs through many compromises made through loving communication and consideration as discussed earlier in this lesson.

(6) Contentment. Paul said, "I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content" (Philippians 4:11). A sturdy home is maintained when each family member learns and practices contentment. Coveting the possessions, wives, husbands or children of others is sinful and extremely destructive to the home (cf. Deuteronomy 5:21).

We must all learn to behave "without covetousness" and to "be content" with such things as we have (Hebrews 13:5). Those who refuse to be content with their material blessings and give themselves over to the pursuit of *more money* will "pierce themselves through" with the sorrows of estranged spouses, alienated children, loneliness and perpetual dissatisfaction (cf. 1 Timothy 6:6-10).

Husbands and wives especially need to learn to be content with their marriage partner. According to John Clark, one of the first realizations of marriage is that "She can't bake bread like his mother, and he can't make dough like her father." To be content, we must learn to fully accept both the limitations and talents of our spouses and to emphasize the latter. Contentment comes from counting our blessings. Some family counselors instruct their clients to sit down and make a list of their spouses' good points. Look at it from time to time and add to it. Do the same for each child. This kind of exercise helps one develop appreciation for what he has, rather than frustration over what he lacks.

(7) Center everything around God.

My sister Patti met and eventually married Steve Sikes in college. One year, the theme of her college yearbook was "My God and I," taken from the title of a spiritual song. Years ago I was sneaking a peek in the yearbook and noticed that on one of the first pages there was a scenic picture with the words "My God and I" printed across it; beneath these words, in Patti's distinctive handwriting, she had added "and Steve." As an outside observer, it has seemed to me through the years that the relationship between Patti and Steve, and later the relationships with their children, had God in the middle.

To say that everything in the home should be centered around God may seem like fanaticism to some Christians, and that is tragic. But the Bible plainly teaches that becoming a Christian radically changes the way we view every relationship, and this includes relationships within the family (cf. 2 Corinthians 5:16-17). The Lord should be a guest at every meal, the prime factor in every decision, a listener to every conversation, an observer of every activity, a companion in every tragedy and triumph, and a friend in every adversity. Think about the place God had in the *families* of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David, Timothy and Jesus.

In God-centered families, Bible study, prayer, praise and thanksgiving to God are daily activities. The presence of God is recognized in His blessings, His creation and His word. When guidance is needed, the questions which are repeated day in and day out are, "what did God say in His word?" "what would Jesus do?" and "have you prayed about it?" Every relationship and activity is driven by the realization that every family member must be about the Father's business (cf. Luke 2:49).

Questions for Home Builders -- Lesson 7

1. Give a specific example of how each of the following things could be a barrier to great communication.
Materialism --
A critical attitude --
Fear --
Manipulation --
Preoccupation --
Dullness (boredom with habit and routine) --
Alcohol --
Dishonesty --
2. Is it sinful to be a poor listener? (cf. James 1:19; Proverbs 18:13; Luke 8:18). What practical thing(s) can a person do to improve his listening skills?
3. What simple lesson do we learn from the example of Jesus in Matthew 13:51 regarding how to check to see if we have successfully communicated?
4. Do you agree that "the thoughtful and considerate mind will produce thoughtful and considerate behaviors"? If so, what suggestions would you have for someone who is trying to develop a more thoughtful and considerate mind?
5. Name some specific sins, frequently committed in homes, which ought to be confronted.
6. Proverbs 24:25 teaches that a good blessing will come upon those who rebuke the wicked. What are some of the blessings that could come our way if we are willing to rebuke sin in the home?
7. What are some issues within the home over which it would be appropriate to compromise?
8. What are some problems caused in the home through lack of contentment?
9. Would you agree that contentment and covetousness are opposites? If so, what verse(s) would you use to show this?
10. What is the secret to being content?
11. Research and be prepared to discuss in class the importance God played in the family life of one of the following Bible characters: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David, Timothy or Jesus.