

FAMILY VALUES: LIVING AS CHRIST

INTRODUCTION: What does it mean to live a “Christ – like” life? Is it like being initiated into a tribal group or following a bunch of rules and then receiving an award after many years of service? While it is true when we accept Jesus Christ as our personal savior, we are baptized as the public acknowledgement and initiation as a believer. It is also true that we have been given guidelines to living through the scriptures. The struggle that new believers face and long time followers of Christ wrestle with are issues we face on a day–to-day basis, particularly those issues involving or that impact the family. In other words, how do I live a “Christ-like” life in the cultural setting I find myself?

This study is not intended to create a new “How To” document but rather review existing scripture as it may speak to us regarding lifestyle choices. The foundation for this study comes from three scripture passages:

- God giving Moses the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20: 1-17)
- Jesus response to “What is the greatest commandment? (Matthew 22: 34-40)
- Is it the wise thing to do? (Ephesians 5: 15-17)

- I. It Might be Politically Correct, but it’s Not the Ten Suggestions.
 - A. The first four commandments deal with our relationship to God.
 1. “You shall have no other gods before me.”
 - a. “I Am” the one and only
 - b. Our first priority is serving God
 2. “You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on earth beneath or in the waters below.”
 - a. Even good things can become an idol if we give them a higher priority than God.
 - b. As we make God our priority we are teaching our family and those around us how to avoid idol worship.
 3. “You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God”
 - a. The value of a friend and loved one can be seen in the manner in which you use their name.
 - b. Even in the midst of the painful torture of the cross, Jesus did not curse God or man.
 4. “Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.”
 - a. Every day is special
 - b. By pausing from our labor we have the opportunity to not only be refreshed but also to be renewed.

- B. The last six commandments deal with our relationships with our family and others.**
- 1. “Honor your father and mother”**
 - a. While it may be true that the person you know as your father or mother may not seem to be worthy of your honor, God has ordained the position of “father and mother” as one of honor.**
 - b. Honoring our parents creates an environment for our children and their children to experience the love God has for his family**
 - 2. “You shall not murder.”**
 - a. God was not very happy with Cain when he took his brother, Abel’s life.**
 - b. Jesus taught that we must also be careful with our words and thoughts about others that we are not committing murder.**
 - 3. “You shall not commit adultery.”**
 - a. The message is pretty clear: no sexual relations outside the marriage relationship.**
 - b. Again, we like to create “grey matter,” but Jesus said that even having lustful thoughts about another person is committing adultery.**
 - 4. “You shall not steal.”**
 - a. The obvious is taking something that does not belong to us.**
 - b. Consider when we don’t give our family or our boss their due time.**
 - 5. “You shall not give false testimony.”**
 - a. We are being asked to be truthful in all things.**
 - b. In particular, we are not to give false testimony against others.**
 - 6. “You shall not covet your neighbor’s house. You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.”**
 - a. When we begin to want what our neighbor has, we forget the blessings that God has given to us.**
 - b. Again, when our focus becomes things, we are allowing our priority of serving God to become secondary. He promised he would work with us through our circumstances so we do not need to be wishing for other’s circumstances.**

- II. Jesus Narrowed Our Quest by Defining the Greatest Commandment.**
- A. “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.”**
- 1. When we love the Lord “passionately” our conduct will gravitate to his desires rather than our own.**
 - a. Keeping our focus on God nullifies our passion toward things that can harm our Christian witness**
 - b. Passionately loving God overcomes the will power battles we fight to do the “right thing.”**
 - 2. When we love the Lord “with all our soul” that means our very being.**
 - a. Most of the time when our conduct is not “Christ like” it’s because we made a choice to do as we see fit.**
 - b. The very thread of who we are must crave to be “Christ like.”**
 - 3. When we love the Lord with all our mind indicates that our thought process is focused on God and his desires for our life.**
 - a. You can establish a course of action that includes the reading of scripture, prayer and dialoguing with an accountability partner that will allow your thought process to be permeated with God.**
 - b. Possibly the most important consideration is what are you thinking about when your mind goes into “neutral?”**
- B. “And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself.”**
- 1. When we consider how we should treat others it is clear that we should treat them as we would like to be treated.**
 - a. Before we carry out an action with our family or others, we need to ask ourselves, “Is that how I would like to be treated?”**
 - b. Many times the rationale for how we treat others is based upon the wrong set of assumptions.**
 - 2. When our actions towards others are not of a loving nature it may be indicative of the fact we may not like ourselves.**
 - a. One of the greatest gifts a father can give his children is to show and express his love to their mother.**
 - b. We must come to the understanding that God loves us in spite of ourselves.**

- III. “Be very careful, then, how you live – not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord’s will is.”**
- A. Many are the folk that assume if there is nothing wrong with what they are doing, it must be okay.**
- 1. “If it is not illegal, unethical or immoral, then it qualifies as a live option, right?” (Stanley p.19)**
 - a. How close can I get to sinning without committing the sin?**
 - b. “How did I get myself into this mess?” (Stanley p. 20)**
 - 2. The question we should be asking, “What is the wise thing for me to do?”**
 - a. We do not live in a morally neutral environment.**
 - b. “Therefore, do not be foolish.”**
 - c. “but understand what the Lord’s will is” becomes the call for us to “face up to what we know in our hearts God would have us do.” (Stanley p. 28)**
- B. To better understand the question we must establish a stationary reference point to give us insight into where we are and where we are headed. (Stanley p. 32-330)**
- 1. “Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.” George Santayana**
 - a. Rearview mirror perspective, “In light of your past experience, what is the wise thing to do?”**
 - b. “Your past experience must be a grid through which you evaluate every new decision.” (Stanley p.35)**
 - 2. Life is seasonal and with that being understood you owe it to yourself and to the people you love to take your current emotions and state of mind into account when making decisions.**
 - a. Consider that, “In light of my current circumstance, what is the wise thing to do?”**
 - b. It should also be a consideration that what may be wise in this season of life may be unwise in the next or possibly vice versa.**
 - 3. Your tomorrows will be shaped by today.**
 - a. “In light of my future hopes and dreams, what is the wise thing to do?” (Stanley p. 43)**
 - b. Asking the question with our future in mind clarifies our options and causes us to eject are “often-rehearsed excuses that have buttressed our misguided decisions for years.”**

C. What may become of me if I begin to ask the question?

1. An abundant life

- a. "Like a good father, God wants what's best for each of us. So he has given us a standard that goes beyond the cultural norms. Not a get-by life. Not a life of regret. An abundant life." (Stanley p. 22)
- b. "To foolproof your life, you must ask it of every invitation, every opportunity, every relationship." (Stanley p.22)

2. Surrender to the "Author of Life."

- a. Stanley asks, "How do you expect to make wise decisions regarding your family, marriage/love life, and career if you are not willing to submit to the promptings of the One who knows more about those things than you or I ever will?" (Stanley p. 166-167)
- b. Solomon said, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." (Proverbs 9:10)
- c. "Wisdom begins with a proper understanding of who God is and who we are not." (Stanley p. 167)
- d. Stanley paraphrases Proverbs 9:10 thusly, "Wisdom begins when we recognize that God is God and that we respond accordingly. The proper response, of course is surrender. Once we have surrendered, God is more than happy to reveal more and more of himself. And as we discover more and more of the character and nature of the Father, we gain greater understanding of the world he has created. Our expanded understanding results in an improved ability to choose wisely. Thus, true wisdom begins with a proper recognition of who God is coupled with a proper response – surrender." (Stanley p. 166-167)

IV. Dealing With Your Neighbors' Speck (Matthew 7:1-6)

A. Recovery model

- 1. Admitting your own fault first in humility (dealing with your own plank first)
 - a. Unconditional support and understanding of the person
- 2. Use your own recovery experience to help your brother recover from theirs

B. Biblical Model (Matthew 18:15-20)

- 1. Rebuke in private
- 2. Take 1 or 2 others with you
- 3. Tell the church
- 4. Kick him out

References: -Thompson Chain-Reference Bible (NIV) & Ask It by Andy Stanley

PRACTICAL ASPECTS OF MARRIAGE

I. What does a Good Marriage Look Like?

A. A Biblical Perspective

- 1. Mark 10: 6 – 9 (Two become one)**
- 2. 1 Corinthians 7: 3 – 7 (Submission to one another)**
- 3. 1 Corinthians 11: 11 -12 (God is above all)**
- 4. Hebrews 13: 4 – 6 (Honor of marriage)**

B. The Practical Aspect

- 1. Listening to each other**
 - **Restate**
 - **Clarify**
 - **Revise**
- 2. Roles**
 - **Celebrate each other's skills**
 - **Be humble**
 - **Avoid comparisons**
- 3. Worship together**
 - **Public**
 - **Private (devotional/prayer time together)**

II. What Am I to Do?

A. Considering Marriage?

- 1. Traits I am looking for in a life mate**
 - **Love (what is your love based upon?)**
 - **Family history (yours and your potential mate)**
 - **Do you truly enjoy being with this person? (Work, play, etc.)**
 - **Are your aspirations, beliefs and goals compatible?**
- 2. Is this the right environment for marriage?**
 - **Is it the right time? (Are we both ready for a life commitment?)**
 - **Is it the right place? (Can our marriage be successful in this place?)**
 - **Is there a support system? (church – family – friends)**

B. If I Am Already Married

- 1. Few if any “perfect marriages” but could it be better?**
 - **Acknowledge shortcomings and make adjustments**
 - **Realize marriage is a three-legged stool: your partner, yourself and God**
 - **Understand difficult times do happen, some can be avoided, but all provide an opportunity for growth**

2. **What is your model for a good marriage?**
 - Be wary of the “media” perspective
 - If it is more about “getting” than “giving” it becomes a dictatorship rather than a partnership
 - Choose a couple whose marriage has stood the test of time to be mentors

III. Is It a Wise Thing to Do? (Ephesians 5: 15 – 17)

A. All of Our Choices Can Be Framed Within That Question

1. **If there is nothing wrong, it must be okay**
 - If it is not illegal, immoral or unethical, it can be an option so goes current thinking
 - How close can I get to sinning without committing the sin?
 - How did I (we) get myself (ourselves) into this mess?
2. **The better question to ask: what is the wise thing to do?**
 - Do not be foolish
 - Understand what the Lord’s will is
 - Face up to what you know in your heart that God would have you to do

B. Reference Points

1. **Past experiences**
 - Rear view mirror: In light of my (our) past, what is the wise thing to do?
 - The past becomes the grid to evaluate new decisions
2. **Current status**
 - Based upon my (our) current circumstances, what is the wise thing to do?
 - Remember life is seasonal so what may be wise in this season may not be so in the next and vice versa
3. **Future aspirations**
 - In light of my (our) future hopes and dreams, what is the wise thing to do?
 - By asking the question to consider the future causes us to get rid of the often used excuses that have formulated our misguided decisions of the past

C. Outcomes

1. **An abundant life**
 - God wants the best for each of us so he set a standard that reaches past cultural norms, not a “just get by life” or a life of regret but an abundant life
 - To foolproof your life, you must ask the question of every invite, opportunity and relationship

2. True wisdom

- **If you want to make good decisions about marriage/love and family, you must be willing to submit to the One who knows more about those things than any one else ever will**
- **A paraphrase of Proverbs 9: 10 “Wisdom begins when we recognize that God is God and that we respond accordingly. The proper response, of course is surrender. Once we have surrendered, God is more than happy to reveal more and more of himself. And as we discover more and more of the character and nature of the Father, we gain greater understanding of the world he created. Our expanded understanding results in improved ability to choose wisely. Thus true wisdom begins with a proper recognition of who God is coupled with a proper response – surrender.”**

IV. What Do I Do If My Marriage Is Not What It Should Be?

A. Great First Step!

1. Recognize and acknowledge shortfalls

- **Not a blame game or one – sided review**
- **Listen to each other**

2. Commit to a change

- **The desire to improve must be mutual**
- **Work on the small steps**

B. Seek Counsel

1. God

- **Prayer**
- **Carefully read the Bible (Not what you want it to say but in the context of what it does say)**

2. Mentors

- **Seek a spiritually strong, experienced couple**
- **Not just an “answering machine” but a guide**

3. Unhealthy situations

- **Abuse and neglect (THIS IS A VERY REAL ISSUE)**
- **Just hoping that it will get better is not a plan, seek assistance**

V. The Role of the Parent and Children

A. Biblical Perspective

1. “Honor your father and mother...” Exodus 20:12

2. “Fathers do not exasperate your children; instead. Bring them up in training and instruction of the Lord” Ephesians 6: 4

B. Practical Aspect

1. The position

- **It may be true that the person you know as your father or mother may not seem worthy of your honor, the position of “father” or “mother” has been ordained by God as worthy of honor**
- **Honoring our parents creates an environment for our children to experience the love God has for family**
- **One of the greatest gifts a father can give his children is to show and express his love to their mother**

2. Hints for raising children

- **Communication – Keep open channels to what your child may be feeling or experiencing**
- **Involvement – Be aware of what your child is doing and concern yourself with their progress in school work as well as the friends they are keeping**
- **Spiritual Upbringing – This is a parent responsibility, reading the Bible to and with them as well as attending church. It is critical in your child’s spiritual growth**
- **“But the greatest of these is love” – Tell and show your child (children) you love them**

References: New International Version Bible & Ask It by Andy Stanley