

The Seven Habits of Highly Effective Families

By Stephen Covey

Study guide by David Maxson

This year in our group we are going to be going through Stephen Covey's "The Seven Habits of Highly Effective Families." Here's the schedule of study:

10/27/2019	Introduction to the " Seven Habits of Highly Effective Families " Study
11/3/2019	Habit 1: Be Proactive <i>Becoming an Agent of Change in Your Family</i>
11/6/2019	Habit 1: Be Proactive <i>Becoming an Agent of Change in Your Family</i>
11/10/2019	Habit 2: Begin with the End in Mind <i>Developing a Family Mission Statement</i>
11/13/2019	Habit 3: Put First Things First <i>Making Family a Priority in a Turbulent World</i>
11/17/2019	Habit 4: Think "Win-Win" <i>Moving from "Me" to "We"</i>
11/20/2019	Habit 5: Seek First to Understand... Then to Be Understood <i>Solving Family Problems Through Empathetic Communication</i>
11/24/2019	Habit 6: Synergize <i>Building Family Unity Through Celebrating Differences</i>
11/27/2019	Habit 7: Sharpen the Saw <i>Renewing the Family Spirit Through Traditions</i>
12/1/2019	Husbands and Headship <i>Headship Requires Discipline, Courage, and Hard Work</i>
12/4/2019	Wives and Submission <i>Following a Leader is Not Passive</i>
12/8/2019	Case Studies Self-centeredness; separate lives / Annoyances & Unmet expectations / Spiritual leadership & Priorities
12/11/2019	Case Studies Maintaining roles (& role reversals) / Unfaithfulness & forgiveness / Tragedy, Crisis, Discouragement

This study guide is an overview of the major points from Covey's book with biblical principles that undergird these truths. This will be a **Bible study**, not just a discussion of what Covey has written. For that reason, it will not be necessary for you to purchase the book, but it would be helpful for you to read it. You can order it at Amazon for around \$10 (Kindle or paperback).

The first thing I want to make clear to everyone is that you **don't have to have kids or be married** to be a part of this study. For some of you this will be preparation for marriage and/or kids, but it doesn't even have to be viewed in that light. Covey's "Seven Habits" are principles for life that can be applied in any situation or relationship. In fact, this book followed up his bestselling book, "The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People," where these same seven habits were defined and shown how they help in (mostly) business relationships. It was only after Covey had gone around the country giving seminars as a guest speaker for large corporations that someone recommended that he write a follow up book for families. So, there is something for everyone in this study, though we will be directing most of our applications to family relationships.

Next, I want to give a strong recommendation to the principles behind these seven habits. It has been over 15 years since I first read this book, and I think I had forgotten how profound it's influence was on

me, not only as a husband and a father, but as a man. This is not a "how to" book. This is a book that challenges you to think introspectively about the fundamental ways you think and respond to problems. It's about being intentional and "proactive" (chapter 1) and about living by principle and not just by what your emotions and feelings dictate. It's about how we make choices and establishing priorities and about choosing and thus living by a higher calling.

I was still a relative newly wed husband when I first read the "Seven Habits" and the kids were very small (I'm not even sure that Katie was born yet). But now, at least 15 years later, I look back and realize that I should have reread this book over and over. It's been so easy at times to let life and circumstances and emotions and feelings control my life and my family. There are so many things in the broader context of society and in the immediate concerns of day to day life that have tugged and pulled at me. It would have been good, every now and then, to revisit this book and the principles behind it.

That's why I'm excited about going through it again now. My family life is entering a new stage and will be facing new challenges. These habits are more important than ever for us if we are going to maintain the family culture and unified mission that we want to have.

My prayer for everyone in this class whatever your family situation might be, is that we will all grow together, that we will open our Bibles and see how these habits are supported by eternal truths and principles contained in the Word of God. I pray that we will grow as husbands and fathers, wives and mothers, and as brothers and sisters and children in our nuclear families and in the spiritual family of God. May God bless us all as we seek to live intentionally, desiring to be more like our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God!

1. Among the options below, what are the biggest challenges that you face right now in your family?
 - Time management
 - Stress, worry, and a feeling of being overwhelmed
 - Teaching respect and obedience to kids
 - Distractions pulling the family apart from each other
 - Feeling distant from spouse
 - Feel like you and your spouse are not on the same page when it comes to discipline (one more strict while the other is more permissive; differences in discipline styles; etc.)
 - Financial stress
 - Struggles over control (feeling ignored, dominated, or manipulated by spouse or children)
 - Constant arguing, yelling, sarcasm, hyper criticism, etc.
 - Cold indifference among family members (silence, sulking, shutting down, etc.)
 - A feeling you can't please certain family members or don't measure up to their expectations
 - Other: _____
2. Stephen Covey talks about the end goal should be a "beautiful family culture." In your own words, describe what that would look like.
3. What personal goals would you like to set? What are some of the specific ways you would like to change as a spouse or a parent or as an individual who is a part of a family (sibling, child, etc.)?

Habit 1: Be Proactive

Becoming an Agent of Change in Your Family

What It Means to “Be Proactive”

1. The quote at the beginning of the chapter sums up the main idea behind the chapter:

*Between stimulus and response, there is a space.
In that space lies our freedom and power to choose our response.
In our response lies our growth and our freedom.*

2. Being proactive is the ability to act based on principles and values rather than merely reacting emotionally to our circumstances. Covey argues that this is a uniquely human trait, that animals simply respond to stimulus. He describes four uniquely human gifts:
 - a. Self-awareness - The ability to stand back from yourself and objectively evaluate your behaviors and thoughts.
 - b. Conscience - That “inner voice” that tells you something is right or wrong.
 - c. Imagination - The ability to imagine a principled response that is far superior to the negative response you feel compelled to do (by your emotions) at the time.
 - d. Independent will - The power of choice. The ability to act on your principles and not on your passions.
3. Now read Genesis 4:1-7. Cain is filled with rage. His anger is about to move him to kill his brother. Can you find any evidence for the four unique human gifts in God’s conversation with Cain? How does God appeal to Cain to be self-aware? Does God appeal to his conscience or imagination? Is it implied that God has given him independent will?
4. Covey argues that “love is a verb.” He contrasts Hollywood’s portrayal of love (based on feelings) and what true love is (based on the will). Read Genesis 4:8-16. Is there anything in Cain’s response to God that betrays a misunderstanding of what true love is?

The Circle of Influence and the Circle of Concern

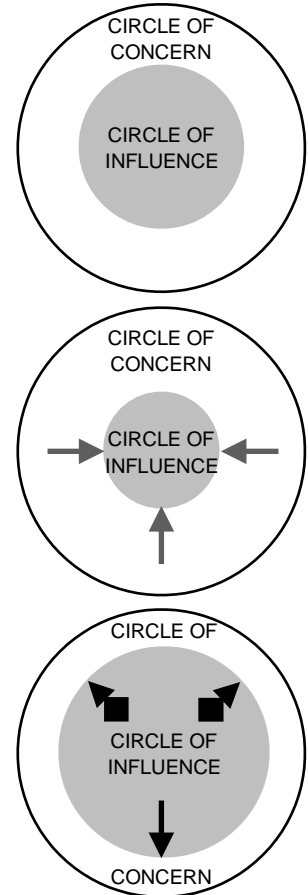
4. The Circle of Concern is defined by Covey as a large circle that includes everything in your life you are concerned about. The Circle of Influence is a smaller circle within the Circle of Concern that only includes the things you can change.
 - a. Can you see these circles in the Prodigal Son? (Lk 15)

5. When we only react to problems, we are focusing on the Circle of Concern. This causes the Circle of Influence to be diminished.
 - a. How might Paul be addressing this in Col 3:19, 21?

 - b. What about Proverbs 21:9; 25:24; 27:15?

6. When we are proactive, we are focusing our attention on the Circle of Influence. Being proactive and not just reactive actually causes our influence to increase.
 - a. How did Abigail maximize her influence? (1 Sam 25)

 - b. How was Nehemiah proactive and not reactive? (Neh 4:6-14)



Building the Emotional Bank Account

7. Quote from the book: "The Emotional Bank Account represents the quality of the relationship you have with others. It's like a financial bank account in that you can make 'deposits,' by proactively doing things that build trust in the relationship, or you can make 'withdrawals,' by reactively doing things that decrease the level of trust. And at any given time, *the balance of trust in the account determines how well you can communicate and solve problems with the other person.*" (pg 46)

8. Covey lists five ways we can make deposits. List any passages or stories in the Bible that you think would relate to each.
 - a. Being kind.
 - b. Apologizing.
 - c. Being loyal to those not present. (Meaning you talk about others in the family as if they were present. Even defending them when they are not there.)
 - d. Making and keeping promises.
 - e. Forgiving.

The Primary Laws of Love

9. These deposits into the Emotional Bank Account are successful because they are based on the primary laws of love. Covey defines these three laws as:
 - a. Acceptance rather than rejection.
 - b. Understanding rather than judgment.
 - c. Participation rather than manipulation.

10. How do these laws work and what are some passages that would reflect the truths behind these principles?
 - a. How does acceptance help grow our circle of influence? Why does rejection reduce our influence to change family members? What are some scriptures that support or illustrate this idea?
 - b. Why is understanding more important than judgment? Does this mean you don't correct bad behavior? What is the fundamental difference between the two? Can you think of any scriptures?
 - c. Why does participation (changing what you can change in yourself to help solve the problem) work better than manipulation (attempting to change the other person)? Scriptures?

Conclusion

11. Covey argues that every problem is an opportunity to make a deposit. Why is this true?

12. What did you learn from the Miracle of the Chinese Bamboo Tree? (pg 22-24)

Habit 2: Begin with the End in Mind

Developing a Family Mission Statement

The End in Mind: Your “Destination”

1. This habit is all about purpose and direction. It is “to create a clear, compelling vision of what you and your family are all about.” (pg 71) As Covey says, it’s about vision. And “vision is greater than baggage.” (pg 72) All of the negative baggage from our past can be overcome if we have a clear and purposeful idea of what we want as a family.
2. Read Nehemiah 4:6-14 again (we looked at this already in lesson 1) and note how impactful Nehemiah’s speech was. Why were his words so effective? If Nehemiah had merely reacted emotionally in this situation, what might have he said? Why would an emotional reaction be counterproductive and discouraging to the work?

Creating Our Own Family Mission Statement

3. The kids were very young when we created our mission statement. (I think Anna and Josh were 5 and Katie was 2.) We asked each of the kids to describe our family. The responses were simple (Katie kept saying “We are nice”) but the simplicity actually made the finished product more powerful.
4. We would recite the motto every night. The kids would all line up on the fireplace hearth side by side and we would all say it together. (And at the conclusion of the motto the kids would always run into the kitchen!)
5. I can’t think of any specific situations where I can say the motto helped us in a practical way. What I can tell you is this motto helped to develop:
 - a. A shared sense of “we” & unity. (“*We are the Maxsons!*”)
 - b. A shared identity: who we are and what we are all about. (“*We love God. We praise God. We obey God.*”)
 - c. A reminder that our commitment to each other is bigger than the mistakes we make (“*Sometimes we are nice. Sometimes we are mean. But we love each other. And we forgive each other.*”).

The Maxson Family Motto

We are the Maxsons!

We love God.

We praise God.

We obey God.

We like our friends.

We like our toys.

We like to sleep at night.

Sometimes we are nice.

Sometimes we are mean.

But we love each other.

And we forgive each other.

We are the Maxsons!

We are goofy.

We are nice.

And we really like our food!

A Destination and a Compass

6. There are many examples in scripture of mission statements. Examine the following mission statements and comment on how they were helpful to the ones who made them:
 - a. Matthew 9:13
 - b. Luke 4:18-19
 - c. Luke 19:10
 - d. Acts 20:24
 - e. Galatians 2:20
 - f. 1 Timothy 1:15 (Note this is not Paul's mission statement, but a mission statement assigned to Jesus by early disciples which Paul endorses.)

Creating Your Own Family Mission Statement

7. **Step One:** *Explore What Your Family Is All About*
 - a. Call a family meeting.
 - Make sure everyone gets a say.
 - Listen empathetically.
 - Write things down.
 - Don't feel like you have to do this in one sitting.
 - Remember that the process is just as important as the finished product.
 - b. Ask questions and discuss what your family is all about.
 - What is the purpose of our family?
 - What kind of family do we want to be?
 - What kinds of things do we want to do?
 - How will we handle finances?
 - How will we resolve differences?
 - What makes you want to come home?
 - What things are truly important to us as a family?
 - What are our responsibilities as family members?
 - What principles and guidelines do we want to follow as a family?
 - Who are our heroes? What is it about them that we want to emulate?
 - What families inspire us and why do we admire them?
 - How can we contribute to society and become more service-oriented?
 - What is our ultimate mission as a family?

8. Step Two: Write Your Family Mission Statement

- a. Think of phrases that capture the essence of your family values and goals.
- b. Decide on 10 (or fewer) big ideas.
- c. Put all of this together into a concise mission statement.
- d. Some examples of other mission statements:

Our mission:

May our first word be adventure and our last word be love.

We live lives of passion.

We dream undreamable dreams.

We are travelers not tourists.

We help others to fly.

We love to learn.

We don't like dilemmas, we like solutions.

We push through. We believe!

We know it's okay to make mistakes.

We bring people together.

We are joy, rapture, yay!

Our Family Mission Statement:

We love and serve God.

We strive to make our home a refuge from the cares and troubles of the world.

We do hard things.

We're creators, not consumers.

We stay hungry and humble.

We face adversity with stoicism.

We show kindness to our family members and others.

We help each other reach our potential.

We're devoted to life-long learning.

We know that sacrifice brings forth the blessings of heaven.

We face life with a sense of humor and a lot of laughter.

Our family mission:

To love each other...

To help each other...

To believe in each other...

To wisely use our time, talents, and resources to bless others...

To worship together...

Forever.

Our family mission is to:

Value honesty with ourselves and others.

Create an environment where each of us can find support and encouragement in achieving our life's goals.

Respect and accept each person's unique personality and talents.

Promote a loving, kind, and happy atmosphere.

Support family endeavors that better society.

Maintain patience through understanding.

Always resolve conflicts with each other rather than harboring anger.

Promote the realization of life's treasures.

9. Step Three: Use It to Stay on Track

Habit 3: Putting First Things First

Making Family a Priority in a Turbulent World

When First Things Aren't First?

1. In the first half of this chapter, Covey discusses all of the forces at work against families spending time together in 1997. Of course, that's 20 years ago and there are many more forces at work. List some of the things that pull families apart in 2017.
2. Read Luke 10:38-42. This is not a story about prioritizing family time, but it is a lesson about priorities. This story is all about distinguishing between the things that are important (Martha was serving Jesus), and the things that are necessary (Mary was sitting at Jesus' feet learning). Make a list of things that are a part of your family life that important and things that are necessary.

IMPORTANT	NECESSARY

3. Read through the following passages and comment on what they say about making priorities and how these principles apply to family life:
 - Matthew 6:22-24
 - Ephesians 5:15-17
 - 1 Timothy 4:15-16
 - Job 1:5
 - 2 Chronicles 29:3-5
 - Deuteronomy 6:4-9
 - Psalm 1:1-3

“Outside in” No Longer Works

4. Covey noted that the culture in which families were raising their children in the 90’s was very different than it was 50 years prior.

	Family Culture 40-50 years ago	Family Culture in 90’s
Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Radio • Little or no TV 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Computer games • Internet • TV larger than life
School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers valued • School prayer allowed • Top disciplinary problems: gum, noise, dress code, littering, running in halls 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers’ moral voice is silenced • Assaults on teachers up 700% since 1978 • Top disciplinary problems: drugs, alcohol, pregnancy, suicide, rape, robbery, and assault
Juvenile Violent Crime	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 16.1 incidents per 100,000 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Up 500% since 1950s • Up 22% since 1990 • 75.8 incidents per 100,000
Neighbors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Usually know neighbors well and trust them 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most Americans know well only 3 in 5 neighbors
Extended Family	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Live closer together • More frequent contact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Live farther apart • Less frequent contact and involvement
Religion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 70% of people feel religion is increasing its influence on American life 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 60% of people feel religion is losing its influence on American life • 90% feel the U.S. is slipping deeper into moral decline
Parents at Work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 40-hour work week • Less than 20% of children need day care because of parental work demands 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 45 to 50-hour work week • More than 60% of children need day care because of parental work demands
Children’s chances of growing up with both parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 80% with both parents • Divorce rate 1 in 5 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less than 50% with both parents • Divorce rate 1 in 2 • Single parent families increase 350%
Family Rituals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family dinner • Family gatherings • Little or no TV 	Each week a school age child spends <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1.8 hours reading • 5.6 hours doing homework • 21 hours watching TV

5. We might think that society is as bad as it ever has been. Consider some examples from Scripture where children were being raised in a difficult culture. Comment briefly on what the culture was like in each of these examples. Then consider what these families did to raise their children to love God and put him first.

- a. Noah’s family: Genesis 6:5, 9-12
- b. Josiah’s childhood: 2 Chronicles 33:1-9, 21-25; 34:1-3 (I believe Manasseh, Josiah’s grandfather, worked hard to encourage his grandson - 2 Chron 33:10-13)
- c. The family of Aristobulus (Rom 16:10) and Narcissus (Rom 16:11): Romans 1:18-32

Weekly Family Time

6. Since we can't depend on the culture to support and encourage faith in our children ("outside in") we must create structure which will maximize our ability to encourage faith in each other ("inside out"). Consider the following scriptures and suggest ways to translate these examples and/or exhortations into practical action in our families.
 - a. Exodus 12:24-27; 13:14-16; Joshua 4:19-24
 - b. Deuteronomy 4:9; 6:4-9; 20-25; Psa 78:1-8; 2 Tim 3:14-15
 - c. 2 Jn 12; 3 Jn 14
 - d. Exodus 20:8-11; Mark 6:30-32
 - e. Luke 5:29; 7:36; 11:37; 14:1; 15:2; 22:14; 24:30
 - f. Acts 16:3; Phil 2:22; 2 Tim 3:10-11

Putting the Big Rocks in First

7. Covey uses the analogy of putting big rocks and tiny pebbles in a jar to represent the big priorities and small daily tasks which can make us feel like we "just don't have time" to do the things that matter most. The trick is to put in the big rocks first into your jar and let the small pebbles fit in around them as they can. Now go back to the chart where you listed the "important" and "necessary" things in your life. Think about the priorities you have and any changes you need to make in your life. Ask your spouse if there are any changes that need to be made in your family. Include your children by calling a family meeting and ask them if there are any changes they would like to see made. (You might be surprised to hear the things they would be willing to give up having more time with you!) If you would like to share any changes you are challenging yourself to make or any practical steps you are going to take to change the structure of your family life, feel free to share those in class.



Habit 4: Think “Win-Win”

Moving from “Me” to “We”

Previewing the Next Three Habits

1. In the intro to Habit 4, Covey talks about how Habits 4-6 go together and work together as a unit.
 - Habit 4—Think “win-win.” This habit is a decision to win by losing. When I decide to give up myself, I actually find something infinitely more valuable. (Seems like Jesus might have said something about this...). Habit 4 is a mentality that says that I am going to seek what is best for my spouse, my child, my parent, my sibling because the family unity is more important than the individual. And when the family wins, I win.
 - Habit 5—Seek first to understand... then to be understood. This habit is all about empathetic listening. And this habit builds off the previous one. If I have already put myself second, then I am prepared to ask questions and to truly listen seeking to know what the other family members are thinking and feeling.
 - Habit 6—Synergize. This habit is the result of losing (Habit 4) and listening (Habit 5). What results is real solutions to problems that are produced by a selfless spirit and a listening heart.

Three Possible Outcomes to Any Disagreement in the Home

1. Win-Lose.
 - This kind of scenario happens when you are bigger, stronger, or have the greater determination of will to get your way. This is almost always a me-first approach.
 - There are some specific cases where win-lose is necessary (especially when children are small and they don't know the difference between “wants” and “needs”), but in most cases the win-lose interaction is devastating to the relationship.
 - What are the consequences of win-lose decisions?
2. Lose-Win.
 - There are many causes for this mentality, but it can sometimes be a lack of self-esteem. You can develop the mentality that “I'm a martyr. Go ahead, step on me. Have your way with me. Everyone else does.”
 - This disposition can disguise itself as humility. But resentment and bitterness grows as trust erodes in the relationship. Eventually the decision to give in on everything will lead to a boiling point when the true feelings are revealed, and regrettable choices are made.
 - What are some other causes for “lose-win” and what are some other consequences?

3. Win-Win.

- This is when a choice is made when all sides are heard, respected, and acknowledged. Everyone walks away with a good feeling and an understanding that the family unit is bigger than any single individual.
- As Covey states, “the only long-term viable alternative is win-win. In fact, it is the essence of a beautiful family culture. Both win-lose and lose-win will ultimately result in lose-lose.”
- What are some of the positive outcomes that come from thinking “win-win?”

Biblical Principles Behind “Win-Win”

4. Comment briefly on how each of the following passages teach the importance of finding “win-win” solutions to family problems:

- Philippians 2:3
- Romans 12:10
- Matthew 7:12
- Matthew 5:41
- Matthew 20:26-27
- 1 Corinthians 13:4-8
- 1 Corinthians 10:24
- Ephesians 5:21
- James 1:19
- Proverbs 18:2, 13

Habit 5: Seek First to Understand... Then to Be Understood

Solving Family Problems Through Empathetic Communication

Overview of What Covey Had to Say About the Fifth Habit

1. The importance of perception.
 - Covey emphasizes the importance of perception. We don't all see things the same way.
 - When we stop listening, we fail to see where the other side is coming from. Productive conversation is impossible when this happens.

2. The importance of expectation.
 - Covey also addressed the fact that some of the baggage we carry into our conversations are the expectations we have coming into marriage.
 - "Basically, our satisfactions come from our expectations. So if we're aware of our expectations, we can adjust them accordingly and—in a very real sense—adjust our satisfactions as well." (pg 208)
 - "The reason we judge is that it protects us. We don't have to deal with the person; we can just deal with the label. In addition, when you expect nothing, you're never disappointed." (pg 209)
 - "But the problem with judging or labeling is that you begin to interpret all data in a way that confirms your judgment. That is what is meant by 'prejudice' or 'pre-judgment.' If you have judged a child as being ungrateful, for example, then you will subconsciously look for evidence in his behavior to support that judgment. Another person looking at the exact same behavior may see it as evidence of gratitude and appreciation. And the problem is compounded when you act on the basis of what you consider reconfirmed judgment—and it produces more of the same behavior. It becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy." (pg 209)

3. The importance of empathy.
 - "Really listening to get inside another person's mind and heart is called 'empathetic' listening... It's trying to see the world through someone else's eyes." (pg 222)
 - "Even though you may be emotionally involved in a particular exchange with somebody, you can push your pause button and step outside of that emotion if you simply change the way you see your role—if you think of yourself as a 'faithful translator.' Your job, then, is to translate and communicate back to the other person in new words the essential meaning (both verbal and non-verbal) of what that person communicated to you. In doing this you're not taking a position yourself on what the person is talking about. You're simply feeding back the essence of what he or she said to you." (pg 224)
 - "Psychologist and author John Powell has said: 'Listening in dialogue is listening more to meanings than to words... In true listening, we reach behind the words, see through them, to find the person who is being revealed. Listening is a search to find the treasure of the true person as revealed verbally and nonverbally. There is the semantic problem, of course. The

words bear a different connotation for you than they do for me. Consequently, I can never tell you **what you said**, but only **what I heard**. I will have to rephrase what you have said, and check it out with you to make sure that what left your mind and heart arrived in my mind and heart intact and without distortion.” (pg 224)

What the Bible Has to Say About Empathy & Listening

1. What do the following verses have to say about the importance of empathy?

- Psalm 56:8
- John 11:33-35
- Romans 12:15
- Romans 15:1
- 1 Corinthians 12:25-26
- 2 Corinthians 11:29
- Galatians 6:2
- Ephesians 4:29
- Ephesians 4:32
- Philippians 2:2-4
- Colossians 3:12
- Hebrews 4:14-16
- Hebrews 13:3
- 1 Peter 3:8

2. What do these verses have to say about listening?

- Proverbs 1:5
- Proverbs 18:2
- Proverbs 18:13
- Proverbs 19:20
- Proverbs 25:12
- Matthew 7:12
- Matthew 11:15
- James 1:19

Habit 6: Synergize

Building Family Unity Through Celebrating Differences

Overview of What Covey Had to Say About the Sixth Habit

1. The metaphor of the body.
 - “A great way to understand synergy is through the metaphor of the body. The body is more than just hands and arms and legs and feet and brain and stomach and heart all thrown together. It’s a miraculous, synergistic whole that can do many wonderful things because of the way the individual parts work together. Two hands, for example, can do far more together than both hands can do separately. Two eyes working together can see more clearly, with greater depth perception, than two eyes working separately. Two ears working together can tell sound direction, which is not the case with two unconnected ears. The whole body can do far more than all the individual parts could do on their own, added up but unconnected.” pg 249
2. The celebration of differences.
 - “The key to creating synergy is in learning to value—even celebrate—the difference. Going back to the metaphor of the body, if the body were all hands or all heart or all feet, it could never work the way it does. The very differences enable it to accomplish so much.” pg 251
3. The process in action.
 - “Synergy is not just teamwork or cooperation. Synergy is creative teamwork, creative cooperation. Something new is created that was not there before and could not have been created without celebrating differences. Through deep empathetic listening and courageous expressing and producing new insights, the third alternative is born.” pg 258
 - Read through the case study on pages 258-259 (the couch story) and answer the inserted questions that Covey asks during the story. {If you don’t have the book, no worries—this will be read and discussed in class.}
4. “You See It Differently. Good! Help Me Understand.”
 - “‘Family’ is about learning the lessons of life, and feedback is a natural part of that learning. Problems and challenges give you feedback. Once you realize that each problem is asking for a response instead of just triggering a reaction, you start to learn. You become a learning family.”
 - “But in order to do this, you have to get beyond the blaming and accusing. You have to get beyond the criticizing, complaining, comparing, and competing. You have to think win-win, seek to understand and be understood, and synergies. If you don’t, at best you’ll end up satisfying, not optimizing; cooperating, not creating; compromising, not synergizing; and, at worst, fighting or fighting.” pg. 262

5. Involve People in the Problem and Work Out the Solution Together

- Read the personal story Covey relates in this section (pg 264-268) and answer the following questions: {Again, if you don't have the book, this story will be summarized so everyone can discuss it in class.}
 - Considering how important this issue (of watching TV) was to Covey, could (or should) he have made this a "Win-Lose" situation where he simply decided how much the family could watch?
 - If not, are there occasions when that is necessary?
 - If not, what made this situation unique? Why should he have involved the family in the decision making process?

6. An Exercise in Synergy

- There's a good exercise that we should all participate in that's described on pages 268-269.
- "Take some issue that needs to be resolved, an issue where people have different opinions and different points of view. Try working together to answer the following four questions:
 - "*What is the problem from everyone's point of view?* Really listen to one another with the intent to understand, not to reply. Work at it until other people can express each person's point of view to that person's satisfaction. Focus on interests, not positions.
 - "*What are the key issues involved?* Once the viewpoints are expressed and everyone feels thoroughly understood, then look at the problem together and identify the issues that need to be resolved.
 - "*What would constitute a fully acceptable solution?* Determine the net results that would be a win for each person. Put the criteria on the table and refine and prioritize them so that everyone is satisfied they represent all involved.
 - "*What new options would meet those criteria?* Synergies around creative new approaches and solutions."

What the Bible Has to Say About Synergy

1. Covey uses the body analogy to illustrate the importance of synergy. Of course, he stole this analogy from the Bible itself. What points can you draw out of 1 Corinthians 12 and Romans 12 that could be applied to marriage and family life?
2. It has often been pointed out that the 12 apostles Jesus chose were very different: fishermen, tax collector, a zealot, and (later) a converted Pharisee. What are some of the possible strengths that came out of the synergy required to get such a diverse group of men working together?

Habit: Sharpen the Saw

Renewing the Family Spirit Through Traditions

Sunday, February 11, 2018

Lesson 10: Husbands and Headship

A. What are some of the spiritual principles about our relationship to God that marriage is used to illustrate?

1. Eph 5:27; II Cor. 11:1-3
2. Eph 5:23,25,26
3. Eph 5:28b-31; Rom 7:3,4
4. Eph 5:24; I Cor. 11:3
5. Rev 21:2

B. Male Character: the Basis of Leadership.

1. List the activities, reputation, disposition, and inner character commanded of men (I Tim 2:8; Tit. 2:2, 6-8).
 -
 -
 -
 -
 -
2. How is this character expressed in family roles?
 - Eph 5:28
 - Col 3:19
 - I Pet 3:7
 - Col 3:21
 - Eph 6:4
 - I Tim 3:4,5
3. Is this the ideal “manly” character in our culture? List qualities of the worldly male stereotype.

C. Headship is Defined by Christ’s Example (Eph 5:22-33)

1. What is the character & motivation of earthly (“gentile”) leaders (Matt 20:25-28)? How is the husband’s headship enforced? (Eph 5:22-33)
 - 22, 24
 - 33
2. What is the pattern of Christ’s leadership?
 - 23

I Timothy 2:8 – Therefore I desire that the men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting

Titus 2:2, 6-8 – ² that the older men be sober, reverent, temperate, sound in faith, in love, in patience...

⁶ Likewise exhort the young men to be sober-minded, ⁷ in all things showing yourself to be a pattern of good works; in doctrine showing integrity, reverence, incorruptibility, ⁸ sound speech that cannot be condemned, that one who is an opponent may be ashamed, having nothing evil to say of you.

Ephesians 5:22-33 - Wives submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. ²³For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. ²⁴Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything.

²⁵Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, ²⁶that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, ²⁷that 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.

²⁸So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. ²⁹For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church. ³⁰For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. ³¹For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” ³²This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church. ³³Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

I 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.

- 26
- 27
- 29

3. What is the motivation/goal of family headship? (1 Pet 3:7)

D. Headship requires discipline and courage is hard work.

1. Protector/provider—courage, skill, strength, foresight, perseverance, sacrifice
2. Visionary—spiritual vision: knowledge, faith & hope in trial, “discerning good & evil”
3. Problem solver: taking the initiative, first in confession & forgiveness, making sacrifices
4. Decision maker: making, and sticking to, and taking the blame for unpleasant decisions based on confidence in immutable values (but not knowing the future).
5. Nurturer—for growth & admonishing for improvement (Eph 6:4)
6. Example of personal discipline— personal, financial, spiritual self-discipline

E. Practical Exercise

1. Strategic *Planning*
 - Evaluate spiritual status of the family (knowledge, faith, influences...)
 - Evaluate habits, attitudes, and implicit values
 - Imagine 5 yrs, 10 yrs hence: Where will the family be in spiritual growth?
 - What is missing? What must be done?
2. Near-term *Initiatives* (Tactical)
 - Daily, Weekly, Monthly Practices (including, for example, worship attendance)
 - [Your Example] & Specific Guidance/Standards for: Entertainment, Language, Behavior, Associations, Financial Practices, Use of Time, Integrity,
 - Expressions of both affection and direction (more habits to start).

Godly Marriages

Sunday, February 11, 2018

Wives and Submission Lesson 11

A. *Submission is defined by the (ideal) Church in submission to Christ (Eph 5:32).*

1. How is the Church related to Christ with respect to identity, survival, and purpose? (e.g. John 15:1-6).
2. Note agreement implied in “one flesh” (I Cor. 6:16, 17).
3. How are members of Christ’s body animated and directed? (Gal 2:20)
4. What does the “Helper”/ “Companion” terms suggests about participation in common goals?
5. Is an inner confidence required for this voluntary submission? (I Pet 3:6b, and see vs. 13,14)
6. What attitudes/character are required? (Mark the scriptures on the following page.)

Practical:

7. What family organizational structures or practices will detract from this ideal?
8. What activities or habits of the wife will detract from this ideal?
9. Are there some *necessary* distractions and separating influences? If yes, give examples. How can they be overcome, or their effects mitigated?
10. How would a worldly view of the purpose of life (pleasure/fulfillment) discourage the above?

A. *Following a leader is not passive.*

1. Is a leader’s role easier (and more likely successful) when those following contribute information and insight into the assessment and planning? How can a wife contribute in this way? Why?
2. Can she help by requesting and or clarifying goals, plans, and initiatives?

Practical:

3. How can information and insight be offered, or direction requested, without being threatening or sounding critical? Can positive feedback be helpful?
4. Give examples of active implementation of direction set by spiritual leadership.

B. *The ideal wife’s attention is on her home (locus of the relationship) and family.*

1. Based on the roles described above, why do you think the home is mentioned as the center of the wife's work? (see I Tim 5:14, Titus 2:5; Prov 31) [and note I Tim 5:13: not the homes of others].
2. Does "ruling" and "managing" imply ownership, accountability, planning, and execution?
3. How does the emphasis on home help with the "hospitality" commanded of women, for example: elders and their wives (I Tim 3:2), care of widows indeed (I Tim 5:10, 15).

Practical:

4. What are the activities that Christian couples should engage in, that center around the home?
5. What are the difficult areas of home management? Is it easier now than 50-100 years ago? Are some things harder or more time consuming? How can affairs of home be kept under control?
6. Are the opportunities for hospitality and service enhanced because of the cultural changes of the last few years? How can opportunities be found and expanded?

C. Helping/loving/honoring (Titus 2) fills needs unique to men.

1. Providing honor to offset (or out-shine) the treatment in the world.
2. Compare Abigail's techniques (I Sam 25:23ff) to Michal's (II Sam 6:20ff)

Practical:

3. What are your husband's insecurities, known or felt weakness, struggles, defeats, doubts?
4. What are his victories, known strengths, accomplishments?

Case Studies

Lesson 12

Sunday, February 11, 2018

Consider the following case study:

Rob and Laura believe they have a good marriage – after all they have been married for ten years. Finding time together, though, has become more difficult in recent years; the children are getting older and the purchase of a house the year before has kept them both very busy. Rob's job is relatively stable, but bonuses they were counting on to help pay for the house have been smaller than expected. They feel fortunate that Laura has been able to earn some additional income through a part-time job at a local Art Gallery. She learned about the job while helping as a volunteer in the art classes at her children's school. Most weeks the hours are manageable, but she particularly loves the work because it keeps her connected with the passion she developed while majoring in art in college.

After a hectic weekend in which it seemed they barely saw or spoke to each other (Dave had played golf all day Saturday, Laura had been busy with the kids), on Monday morning, they both pledged to have a date night on Friday. Neither checked their schedule before making this plan.

Tuesday, Rob had to work late; he missed dinner and ate alone at the table while reading the newspaper. Laura was upstairs looking over details for an art showing scheduled the next day. They were both extra tired and went to bed with little conversation. On Wednesday, the rush to get ready for church was full of stress (lost shoes, last minute phone call, misplaced lesson sheets). On the way to church, Laura tried to tell a story of something that had happened to her that day, but was interrupted several times. At church, Laura went to one class (her favorite teacher was leading this class) and Rob went to another (he had always been interested in Old Testament history).

On Thursday night, Rob coached their daughter's soccer team and kept an eye on their son at the same time so that Laura could have dinner with two of her friends from work. He had agreed to this but only if Laura would pay for the dinner out of her checking account. She had accepted, but felt it was a little unfair since his golf game had come from their joint entertainment budget. Besides, she really was trying to save up for a new kitchen sink and faucet that Rob had still not recognized they needed. Later that evening Laura was finally able to complete her story from the day before, but Rob didn't comment; he was trying to hear the score of one his favorite teams. At 10:30, she asked Rob who was going to babysit the next night and where they were going on their date. Rob was a little irritated at the question. "You were supposed to find a sitter", was his reply, "that's always been your job, and you know I haven't had time this week to even think about tomorrow". Laura thought: I have no idea what your work schedule has been like this week, and responded, "My schedule hasn't been any better." This led to a near argument, but she agreed to try to find someone as long as Rob paid for it out of his account. They both went to bed frustrated with the other.

The next day Laura called Rob to say that no one was available to watch the kids. That evening after successfully getting the kids to bed early, Rob drove alone to pick up their take out dinner. After an unsuccessful attempt to find a movie On Demand that they both liked, they finally settled on a rerun of a show they had each seen before. Laura tried to read during the show but fell asleep, while Rob looked over the team roster for his daughter's soccer team.

Going to bed that night, Laura felt uneasy about the way the week had ended. Rob had not only forgotten the disappointment of the evening, he was in a pretty good mood; he had decided to try a new formation for the next day's soccer game that he remembered using when he played in college.

1. Do you agree with Rob's and Laura's assessment that theirs is a good marriage?
2. Do you see any signs of obvious sin on either of their part?

- Sunday, February 11, 2018
Character Traits We Have
3. Be prepared to comment on their strength or weakness in terms of the character traits we have discussed: godliness, selfless and sacrifice, forbearance and forgiveness, kindness and contentment.
 4. Are they beginning to drift away from one another? What would be the effect of such isolation on a marriage?
 5. Do they appear to be concerned that they are not as close as they once were?

Case Study on Unmet Expectations

Leonard and Loni have been married for 5 years and have a three-year-old son and a nine-month-old baby girl. Leonard is an accountant: disciplined, on-time, a good planner, has a great career, has impressive Bible knowledge and speaking ability, teaches classes and fills in preaching on occasion, and was recently appointed a deacon. Loni is very pretty (which is why he noticed her), good-natured, and comes from a large and loving family. However, Loni was never a good student and just barely finished high school. After high school she began working in her father's store—where she met Leonard, while he was auditing the books for her Dad. She is not very good at keeping things organized. She is late for everything, especially now with the kids, and struggles to keep the house in order and cannot explain where the money goes. Leonard often gets frustrated, and has tried to impose order in the form of schedules, checklists, logbooks, filing systems, etc., but with little success.

With his increased duties, Leonard feels he just needs everything organized and on time. As head of the house, and for the good of the family, he has begun to leave her 'to-do' lists in the morning, call during the day to check on her progress and remind her to write down expenses, and quiz her at the end of the day on how all her time was spent. This approach has not improved the relationship. Loni is discouraged, wondering if she will ever live up to his expectations. Last Sunday, he mentioned to some of their friends at church how hard it was to get things under control at home, she got very upset and, unannounced, took the kids to her mom's house for the afternoon.

(Men please answer the questions below as if you were counseling Leonard only. Women please answer as if you were counseling Loni only.)

1. What Bible principles apply to Leonard and Loni's situation? List the Bible references.

2. What obvious sins are present? List Bible references.

3. What specific, immediate actions would you recommend that each of them take?

4. Given what you know, what additional advice would you give each of them?

5. What challenges or obstacles will there be in taking the above actions and advice? Why will it be difficult? What steps can be taken to overcome these obstacles?
 - Difficulty/steps to overcome:
 - Difficulty/steps to overcome:
 - Difficulty/steps to overcome:

Case Studies on Spiritual Leadership & Priorities

Sunday, February 11, 2018

Rob & Ramona met at work in their early twenties and have been married for six years. They have two little girls, 3 and 5 years old. Rob had a denominational upbringing, is honest & pure, but is very weak in his knowledge of the Bible. He is outgoing & personable, a funny guy, and really enjoys spending time with the girls. He has changed jobs about every two years, takes chances in business ventures (some unsuccessful), but has always provided adequately for the family despite these frequent changes in plans. The great news is that he obeyed the gospel a few months ago. He was at first very excited about his new life in Christ and all his new brothers & sisters—who welcomed him into the local church.

Ramona stays home caring for the girls. She is a good organizer and likes to have a plan and follow it. She “grew up in the church” and knows the Bible well. She is generally satisfied with their standard of living, but often worries about the future: college for kids, emergency expenses, retirement, etc. After Rob’s conversion, Ramona’s expectations for stability and family spirituality soared. She imagined that they would begin lots of spiritual family activities, and has made several suggestions that they begin devotions, etc., to which Rob replies, “Sure, sure,” but doesn’t take any action. In desperation, Ramona has started to lead an evening Bible study (on great Bible characters) and lead prayers with the girls just before bedtime. Rob has not objected, but usually goes into another room and seems somewhat subdued afterward. Rob recently made the comment that it seems like his conversion has “hurt the relationship, rather than helped it.”

(Men please answer the questions below as if you were counseling Rob only. Women please answer as if you were counseling Ramona only.)

1. What Bible principles apply to Rob and Ramona’s situation? List the Bible references.
2. What obvious sins are present? List Bible references.
3. What specific, immediate actions would you recommend that each of them take?
4. Given what you know, what additional advice would you give each of them?
5. What challenges or obstacles will there be in taking the above actions and advice? Why will it be difficult? What steps can be taken to overcome these obstacles?
 - Difficulty/steps to overcome:
 - Difficulty/steps to overcome:

Case Studies

Lesson 13

Sunday, February 11, 2018

Consider the following case study:

John and Jackie have been married for five years. They attend a congregation of about 60 members in the suburbs of a large metropolitan area, where there are few other churches. John has a steady job as an assembler/technician with a small manufacturing firm, and could grow to become a supervisor in a few years, but because of his education (only one unsuccessful year of college) will not grow much beyond that. John's health care coverage is not great, and John & Jackie have incurred some debt because of the house, some car trouble, and the baby. Jackie worked until their only child (Annie) was born, about 2 years ago. Jackie has an aptitude for computers and since quitting her job as an administrative assistant (where she learned many of the advanced computer skills), has created a surprisingly good income doing web design at home. Her work is much in demand (by referrals) from several small companies all over the United States. One of these companies has grown such that they require a full-time web-design lead, and have offered to pay Jackie about twice what John makes to come and work full time. The job offer also will cover all relocation expenses, including buying their current house, so that they can move to another state. The company offers free child-care as a part of a great benefits package. There are two or three companies similar to the manufacturing firm where John works in the city where Jackie's new job would be. They are struggling with the decision whether or not to take the offer.

1. What Bible principles (with references, if possible) might apply to this decision?
2. Do you see any signs of obvious sin on either of their part?
3. Be prepared to comment on the importance of the character traits we have discussed – godliness, selfless and sacrifice, forbearance and forgiveness, kindness and contentment – in making this decision.
4. What additional information would you ask of John and Jackie to further understand their choices? (this additional information will be made available if you ask in class)
5. What other decisions are they likely considering or will have to make if:
 - a. They decide to stay?
 - b. They decide to go?
6. Based on what you know, what would you advise about the job offer, and any other things in their lives?

Sunday, February 11, 2018

Remember in the last lesson, we took a look at Leonard and Loni. As a reminder, this was their situation at that time:

Leonard and Loni have been married for 5 years and have a three-year-old son and a nine-month-old baby girl. Leonard is an accountant: disciplined, on-time, a good planner, has a great career, has impressive Bible knowledge and speaking ability, usually teaches classes and fills in preaching on occasion, and was recently appointed a deacon in the church. Loni is very pretty (which is why he noticed her), good-natured, and comes from a large and loving family. However, Loni was never very good at school and just barely finished high school. After high school she began working in her father's store--where she met Leonard while he was auditing the books for her Dad. She is not very good at keeping things organized. She is late for everything, especially now with the kids, and struggles to keep the house in order and cannot explain where the money goes. Leonard often gets frustrated, and has tried to impose order in the form of schedules, checklists, logbooks, filing systems, etc., with little success.

With his increased duties, Leonard feels he just needs everything organized and on time. As head of the house, and for the good of the family, he has begun to leave her 'to-do' lists in the morning, call during the day to check on her progress and remind her to write down expenses, and quiz her at the end of the day on how all her time was spent. This approach has not improved the relationship. Loni is discouraged, wondering if she will ever live up to his expectations. Lately, after he mentioned to some of their friends at church about all his efforts to get things under control, she got very upset and, unannounced, took the kids to her mom's house for the afternoon.

In this class, we consider their situation again:

A little over five years have passed. Their son is eight years old, their daughter is six, and they have been blessed with another daughter who is three. On the surface, they dealt with their issue in the previous case: Leonard apologized for mentioning his frustrations to friends at church and has not spoken of them again to others. Other than the one incident, Loni has not left the house unannounced. Beyond their family, and especially among church friends, they appear to have a good marriage. But the important issues were never really faced.

Leonard continues to need everything organized and on time, but he no longer tries new methods to help Loni accomplish more, instead he simply criticizes her when things fail to get done on time, or when an error or surprise is found in their finances. He has even made disparaging remarks about her failures within the hearing of their son. Loni no longer wonders whether she will ever live up to his expectations; she now believes it will be impossible. She resents Leonard for that, but she has also "kept it in the family", speaking only to her mom and her sister who live in the same town and worship at the same congregation.

Last night in a moment of guilt and emotion she confessed to Leonard she had committed adultery with a co-worker of his. She was attracted in part by how different and understanding the man was. They were only intimate twice (it being nearly impossible for them to be alone). She is literally sick with guilt, has asked to be forgiven, but fully expects Leonard to want a divorce. She wonders what will happen to her children. She almost wishes she could take back the confession in order to avoid the consequences, but she fears condemnation by God. Along with that fear however, is also a sense she will never live up to God's expectations and will be condemned anyway.

1. What Bible principles (with references, if possible) might apply to this situation?
2. What should Leonard do? What should guide his decision?
3. What advice would you give Loni?

4. Be prepared to comment on the importance the character traits we have discussed (or the lack of those traits) – godliness, selfless and sacrifice, forbearance and forgiveness, kindness and contentment – have played in leading to this situation. Think also on the crucial role they will play if Loni and Leonard are to restore their relationship.
5. Comment on the difficulty of reestablishing trust.
6. Keeping in mind that we can only control our own actions:
 - a. What does Leonard control?

 - b. What does Loni control

For the Teacher - additional information to be provided during class discussion:

- They each have family where they live but none in the city where they might move.
- The “some debt” they have is very manageable especially with the income earned at home by Jackie.
- They are very active in the church where they are – Jackie constantly teaching, John already being discussed as a possible deacon
- There are many sound churches of different sizes in the city where they might move
- They know no one in the prospective city
- They definitely want to have more children (at least two), ideally one within the next 12-15 months.
- Jackie will have to supervise someone in her new role. She will hire the individual.

Consider the following case:

Walt and Kathy have been married for 21 years. They were married before either turned twenty, and struggled financially early on. Walt briefly helped with his father’s homebuilding business, but was soon able to fulfill a desire to preach the gospel fulltime. A small church in the Carolinas hired him and they stayed for four years, but with three small children, financial pressures forced them to return to their hometown where Walt took over much of his father’s business. He was very successful at this endeavor making more money in one year than in the first five years of their marriage, but his conscience bothered him because he was not preaching. After much discussion, he and Kathy agreed to move to a Northeastern city where Walt would preach for a congregation of 70 members. Not long after, Walt began to build a few homes while preaching. Three years ago he stopped preaching altogether and concentrated on a homebuilding business. During the years Walt preached, he and Kathy spent a great deal of time together, but that has not been true while he has concentrated on the business. The family was also much more involved in church activities and home Bible studies when Walt preached, but that has diminished dramatically since.

Nine months ago, they were awakened at 1:00 a.m. with a call from the local hospital. A drunken driver had hit the car their oldest son, Ryland aged 21, was driving. Initially, Ryland was not expected to survive, but the doctors were able to save his life, though he is paralyzed from the neck down. The accident has had a dramatic effect on their lives. Prior to the accident, they were financially more secure than they had been at any point in their marriage. Now, they have drained all of their savings and still have significant costs ahead. Kathy has spent almost every waking moment with Ryland since the accident occurred. Walt has begun to question the goodness of God and the sincerity of other Christians; he also finds himself resenting Kathy’s exclusive attention to Ryland. In the last week, they have argued

every day about a number of topics, and the arguments have begun to trouble their already discouraged other children – a son aged 17 and two daughters aged 15 and 12.

Sunday, February 11, 2018

1. What Bible principles (with references, if possible) might apply to this situation?

2. What words were likely in Walt and Kathy's wedding vows that should have even greater meaning now? Did you make a similar vow to your spouse?

3. Be prepared to comment on the importance of the character traits we have discussed – godliness, selfless and sacrifice, forbearance and forgiveness, kindness and contentment – in addressing the crisis Walt and Kathy face. What is your assessment of the extent to which each of them possessed these qualities prior to the accident?

4. What does Walt need to do for the family (each member) in order to prevent this crisis from damaging their souls? What should guide his decisions? What does he need to do for himself?

5. What advice would you give Kathy? What can she do to avoid further damage to their marriage?

6. Comment on the stress and worries being felt by the other three children.

7. Keeping in mind that we can only control our own actions:
 - a. What does Kathy control?

 - b. What does Walt control?