

## CHAPTER 10 LET'S BUILD A STRONG HOME

When we speak of building a strong home, there are many avenues we can take. There is much that goes into building a strong home. There are many people and values that could be discussed. I want to limit our thoughts to the relationships in a family; particularly between the husband and wife for they are the key to a strong home. If the relationship of a marriage is right, then the home has a good chance of being a strong home.

Relationships are very fluid. That is, they are in constant change. The daily challenges of life have a tendency to either strain the relationships or build them up. Nevertheless, the relationships are changing.

Why is it that one home manifests happiness and joy while another home has strife and sorrow? Compare the people involved. Person for person, they may be equal. They may be of equal ability, or equal financial means, share the same educational environment and go to the same church. Yet, one family may seem to have all the ingredients of a successful home; whereas, the other family may constantly move from tragedy to tragedy.

The secret lies in the fact that one family has built their relationship upon a good foundation; whereas, the other has not.

What, then, are the foundational principles that make for a strong home?

First of all, the relationship must be founded upon the wills of the people involved. All too often, the relationship moves on emotions. If the wife is feeling good on a particular day or the husband had a great day at the office, the relationship is great. But, if it has been a bad day for the wife and things didn't go as well at the office, the day may be terrible.

There must be under girding the relationship a determination of the wills of the individuals to make of this relationship all that it can be. After all, the relationship began with the exercise of the will. If you are married, think back to the first time you met your partner. Maybe you were classmates in school and cannot remember your first meeting your mate. But you can, undoubtedly, remember the first time you either asked your mate for a date or were asked for a date. At that point, you exercised your will. You had the option to say "No!"

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The will was exercised at some time in a positive way or you would not have arrived at the relationship you now have. Your will, then, is the foundational building block in your marriage. It is that which is challenged every morning as you face a new day. What will you do with the challenges of the day? You have the option with every circumstance to react in a negative way or in a positive way to your relationship with your family.

There are definite times you must respond negatively if the challenge of the day is a threat to your home. The value of your commitments will then arise.

When your relationship began, your commitments were very shallow. They were "Yes, I'll have a coke" or "Yes, I'll go out on a date." Those commitments were also made upon surface observations. "She is a good-looking gal," "He is so much fun." But, as your relationship grew, the commitments became deeper and more meaningful until, at the last, you stood at the altar one day and were asked if you would take this person to be your life's partner "so long as you both shall live." You responded with an "I will" or "I do" which was a deep commitment of your will.

Every day, that building block must under gird your marriage. What do you want to make of your marriage and your home? Do you want to improve it: Do you want to make it a strong home? Do you want a happy home? It can be what you will it to be.

Now look up the choosing of the bride for Isaac.

Reference Group Number 1

- |   |                 |
|---|-----------------|
| a. Bride for Isaac.                             | Genesis 24:1-67 |
| (1) Note the will of the Father                 | v. 1-6          |
| (2) Note the prayer of the servant              | v. 12-14        |
| (3) Note the direction of the Lord              | v. 15-28        |
| (4) Note the will of the mother<br>and brother. | v. 29-56        |
| (5) Note the will of Rebekah.                   | v. 57-61        |
| (6) Note the will of Isaac.                     | v. 62-67        |
| b. Vows   | Numbers 30:1-6  |

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The next building block that is absolutely essential to building a strong home is respect. A couple must respect one another. The children must respect the parents. A marriage will not last long when there is no respect.

Then, we must ask, "What is it that causes us to respect a person?" We cannot simply will to respect them. We must respect them because of what we know them to be.

Qualities of life build respect. When we see qualities that are wholesome in a person, we are attracted to them. Possibly the qualities that will be the most attractive to us are those we lack the most. This is a very natural response that is triggered in each of us.

I mentioned that the first attraction to our partners were undoubtedly quite shallow like "She is very attractive" or "He is a lot of fun" Then there should have been some qualities that emerged that manifest some strength of character or quality of life that was much deeper than the pigment of the skin or the color of the eyes. It was these qualities that you began to think about in a positive way that caused you to be drawn to your partner.

The times you thought the most about these qualities were when you were actually separated from one another. As you ran these positive thoughts over and over in your mind, you were drawn more and more to your partner.

The difficulty that arises in many family relationships is that the members of the family cannot respect one another. It must be admitted that all of us are less than we would like to be. This is a consequence of our sinful nature. However, we do not have to remain as we are if we do not want to.

Now, we are back to the will. Do you desire to change for the better? God has promised to help. He wants us to move from glory to glory as we are changed into the image of His Son.

Below are four different passages of Scripture which list the virtues we are to manifest as believers. Look these up and list the virtues in each passage. Then, think of what would be just the opposite and list it opposite the virtue. Then ask yourself, "How do I respond to my mate and children?"

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Reference group number 2

2. In A Strong Home, There is Respect.

A. Qualities of life build respect.

1. As you think of the positive qualities in a person, you gain respect for the person.
2. Your thought patterns about the qualities of the person draw you to the person.

B. Our sinful nature.

1. Hinders the wholesome qualities
2. We are to surrender to the Lord to gain His help to change in our character.                      2 Corinthians 3:18

Reference Group Number 2

1 Timothy 6:11

List six virtues

1. Righteousness (example)
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.

The opposite

1. Sin (example)
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.

Question: How do I respond to my mate and children?

2 Peter 1:5-6 (some of these are the same, but list them anyhow.)

List Seven Virtues

1. Virtue (moral excellence)
- 1.
- 3.

The opposite

1. Sinful thoughts and actions
- 2.
- 3.

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- |    |    |
|----|----|
| 4. | 4. |
| 5. | 5. |
| 6. | 6. |
| 7. | 7. |

Question: How do I respond to my mate and children?

2. In relation to what we do.
  - a. God will do what He says He will do. 2 Corinthians 1:20
  - b. Man is to do what He says He will do. James 5:12
3. In relation to others of the opposite sex.
  - a. Trust in a virtuous woman Proverbs 31:1-11
  - b. The strange woman who allures. Proverbs 7:5-23
  - c. The sin of fornication. 1 Corinthians 6:12-20

As you looked over these passages of Scripture, I trust the Holy Spirit of God directed your attention to areas of your life that could be developed in your relationships to your family.

As you gain respect for a person, your commitments should become deeper. However, you do not make life-long commitments simply because you respect a person. This commitment leads to the next building block of the relationship which is trust.

When we say we trust someone, we are saying we can rely upon that person's integrity. We can have confidence in the person. What is it that causes us to trust a person? We can't simply say we will trust someone and have any confidence that they will keep that trust. We can only trust those who have demonstrated themselves to be faithful.

There are three areas in which we need to be faithful in our homes if we are to gain the trust of those we love.

We should, first of all, be what we say we are and say what we mean. We can trust God because He is what He says He is, we know He says what He means. All too often, we color the picture of ourselves in our favor.

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Then when we get married and settle into the daily routine of life, we do not manifest the qualities we boasted were ours.

This leads to mistrust. We have proven to our mate that we are less than we stated we were. This causes our partner in marriage to question the quality of our character. If we have proven to be less than we said in one area, what will the other areas of our life reveal as the time of the relationship progresses? This begins to undermine the respect our partner has for us. We should do everything in our power to be what we said we would be; unless the boast was of an immoral or a negative quality trait. If areas of our life need to change, we need to ask God for the power to make us into the kind of person He would want us to be.

Next, we need to do what we say we will do. Again, we can trust God because He does exactly what He says He will do. God is as good as His Word.

In James, we are admonished to let our yea be yea and our nay be nay. That is, if we say we are going to do something, we should do! If we say we are not going to do something, we should not do it!

Once again, this is harder to fulfill in practice than it is in word. When we come right down to the daily living, it is so easy to promise your partner you are going to fulfill a commitment to the family on a given day. But then friends press for your attention or a big event we forgot about comes up, and it is hard not to save face before others rather than our families.

Let me illustrate. My schedule has always been very full. I have not always taken a day off a week as I should. At one particular time of stress, I had made a commitment to my wife to stay home and do something with her. That day began very beautifully and was actually a bright, sunny day. Then, one of the men with whom I had been studying the Scripture stopped by in his new Cadillac to take me to the private golf course where he belonged. That really put me in a bind. I did not want to turn this man down and yet I had made a commitment to my wife to spend the day with her. I kept my commitment to the wife to spend the day with her and declined the opportunity to play golf at Salem's only private golf course.

It is important to keep our word to those we love.

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We must not only be what we say we are, and do what we say we will do, but we must be careful in regard to other people of the opposite sex.

First of all, we should have eyes only for our partner. This can easily be detected by our partner. Sometimes nothing immoral has happened and yet, if one of the partners is constantly looking elsewhere, it will cause a strain in the relationship. At one time, there was a man in my church who, in so far as I know, was not unfaithful to his wife in sexual relations. However, he was constantly looking at other women. This man's wife was a very attractive woman, however, she constantly had emotional problems which could not be pinpointed in so far as physical difficulty was concerned. Had this man publicly shown love for his own wife and a concern for her, it may have helped her emotionally a great deal.

Certainly a person must be faithful to their partner sexually if they are going to have trust in their marriage. This matter of faithfulness and trust is a very deep-seated part of the couple's total relationship. Everyone comes into contact with those of the opposite sex. It may be at the grocery store, or at the office, or it may be a neighbor or a friend. The relationship prior to the marriage affects the trust for these other acquaintances. Are these acquaintances viewed as threats or potential hazards to the marriage? Care and discretion should be exercised with those of the opposite sex to sustain trust in marriage.

The trust that was or was not developed in courtship will play a large part in just how these new people affect the couple's relationship. If the couple could not control their emotions physically before marriage, it subconsciously or even consciously raises questions in the mind of the partner in relation to trust. Both parties know they could not contain themselves before they were committed in marriage to one another. Yet both parties know that it is wrong to have such relationships before the public commitments are made. They know they have cheated. They may justify their acts by thinking they were in love or they were going to get married anyway. The couple, nevertheless, has planted some seeds of doubt that could destroy the trust that is needed in their relationship.

If you have failed your partner here, you need to confess to him or her your failure and begin to communicate openly to one another so that trust may be in your relationship.

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Look up the verses in Reference Group Number 3

- a. God is what He says He is. James 1:17
  - b. Man is to say what he is. Proverbs 14:2 & 4
  - c. God says what He means Titus 1:2
  - d. Man is to say what he means. Proverbs 28:23
2. In relation to what we do.
- a. God will do what He says He will do.  
2 Corinthians 1:20
  - b. Man is to do what he says he will do. James 5:12
3. In relation to others of the opposite sex.
- a. The trust in a virtuous woman. Proverbs 31:10-11
  - b. The strange woman who allures. Proverbs 7:5-23
  - c. The sin of fornication. 1 Corinthians 6:12-20

Now we come to the fourth important building block of a good relationship -- Communication.

I have witnessed on several occasions marriages which were shattered because of sexual licentiousness. One of the partners has sexual relations with a third party and yet the marriage is stronger today than it was before the third party came on the scene. In each case, the couples began to communicate with one another as never before. Of course, there are several ways people communicate with one another, but verbal communications is what we are considering now. Some couples never learn to communicate verbally before they are married and often do not develop the practice even though they may live together for years.

One psychologist suggests that eighty-five out of one hundred who come to him for counseling have trouble communicating. Communication does not always bring about unity, but it does bring clarity. At least two factors must act as a backdrop to communication that will build a relationship. One factor is a correct heart attitude. There must be a will to improve and strengthen the relationship. This is imperative or the communication could destroy the relationship. Then there must be care taken to answer questions in such a way that it does not threaten the other person. Thought should be given to conversation so that the other party is not offended.

One man has divided communication up onto five different levels.



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Level one has to do with the "cliché" conversation. "How are you?" "It's good to see you." "It's a great day today." We ask very general questions and expect to get very general answers. If we ask someone in a greeting, "How are you?" and they begin to tell us all their troubles and problems, we might be thinking, "I'm sorry I asked!" There is nothing wrong with the "cliché" greeting even in marriage, but communication must go further than this if there is to be a meaningful relationship.

Level two is the "fact" level. It is noting the rain we have been having or the high temperatures for this time of year. It is on this level that the news broadcaster communicates. They tell what people have said or done. It is not giving judgments but just the facts. There is not much threat to the person reporting the facts. Consequently, a great deal of the communication in a marriage is on this level. The husband reports what happened at work. The wife tell what the children have done what has happened in the neighborhood.

Level three is the "Idea" level. This is the level where the caution begins. The fear of disapproval arises when we share an idea or judgment. It is on this level that the partners in a marriage begin to retreat. If one or the other of the relationship will not listen to the idea or judgments of the other the relationship is bound to be strained. It is here that we who are parents need to be very sensitive to listen to the ideas of our children. When children discover their ideas are of no value, they tend to withdraw and will not share their ideas with their parents. This strains the relationship. We must be swift to hear even if we do not agree.

Level four goes a step deeper to the "feelings and emotions" of the person. Not only the idea is expressed but how the person feels about the idea. How does he feel about the fact or judgment? The matter of values comes in here. On this level, the person makes judgments and expresses them out of the qualities that make up his own character. Couples need to communicate here. Even here, however, not everything one feels is expressed.

Level five is a level of complete honesty and truthfulness on any given matter. Often when we express our feelings, we do so with guarded statements. We do not share our deepest feelings or convictions on a matter for fear of rejection. A husband or wife ought to be able to express

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themselves fully without the fear of rejection. Not everyone is at this point in their marriage relationship and must build up to it. Communication is only one part of entering into this openness in the relationship. The will must not be wavering with either party. The respect for one another must be strong and growing. The trust must be secure. The love must be a determinate expression if the couple is to communicate at this level five. This is where a couple needs to be in their relationship. They need to be unthreatened by the emotional feelings or the personal thoughts of the other. It can be that way. You need to move your marriage toward this intimacy in your communications.

Last of all, but as important as anything I have said about communication, is the need for praise. A study of the conversation around the dinner table found that most of the things shared were criticisms. The children might criticize one another. The mother may complain because the family was slow to gather to eat the warm meal. The father may criticize the way the food was prepared. Often this is the time to reprimand for misconduct during the day or to point out the faults of one another. Sometimes it is simply to criticize the neighbors, or school teachers, or church, or any one of a hundred areas of our interests.

We need to minister grace to one another. We need to find areas where we can praise one another. This can be a tremendous motivational force. We want acceptance from those we love.

I remember the first time I became aware of this concept. I decided I would praise my wife and each one of my children for something they had done. Right away, I found something for which I could praise my wife. Then I began to watch the boys to find something they had done that I truly appreciated. I waited nearly a month before each of them received their praise! I nearly gave up on the idea at the time, but finally each of them had done something to make me happy. Praise is a great motivator. Praise one another in the home.

Look up the outline and Reference Group Number 4.

4. In a Strong Home, There Must be Communication.

A. There must be a correct heart attitude.

Matthew 12:34; 15:11, 18, 19

B. There must be care in the answers given.

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Proverbs 15:1 and 28; Proverbs 18:4

- C. There are five levels of communication.
1. "Cliché" conversation: "How are you?"
  2. "Fact" level: Noting facts
  3. "Idea" level: Fear of disapproval may arise here.
  4. "Feeling and emotions" level: How one feels about facts and ideas.
  5. "honesty" level: Complete honesty and truthfulness.

Reference Group Number 4.

- D. There must be praise. Proverbs 12:18
1. We need to administer grace. Ephesians 4:29
  2. We need to have a proper attitude toward one another.  
Philippians 2:2-4
  3. We need to listen to each other James 1:19

Love is the last of the building blocks in a lasting relationship. Many would make love the foundational building block, but this is not true to have a wholesome relationship. Our society would tell us romantic love is a basis for marriage, but the divorce rate testifies against that. Rather, love is dependent upon marriage for its continued existence. Marriage brings to love, a stability and permanence which allow it to grow into maturity.

Wholesome love is a result of the building blocks that have been mentioned so far in this study. People do not simply fall in love. There is first of all the will to love. For love to be all that it can be, the partners must respect one another, trust one another, and communicate with one another. It is then that love can rest upon a secure foundation.

Even though we have only one word for love in the English language, we recognize there are different types of love. We may love beef-steak, but it is not the same type of love that we have for our children. We love our children, but it is not the same type of love we have for our wife or husband. We love our partner with a different type of love.

The Greeks used different words for love in order to more clearly define the types of love people may have. They speak of an ERAO love which expresses a fleshly passion. Unfortunately, this is often the only type of love many people have for each other when they marry. They are simply

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seeking the satisfaction of a fleshly appetite. A second word for love is PHILEO. This type of love is based upon that which affords us pleasure. It is a word used to speak of friendly affection. The third word for love is AGAPAO. This is a love which has an appreciation for the value of the object loved. This is the strongest word for love. It is used over and over in the New Testament to speak of God's love for us and the love that we should have for God.

All three types of love should be exercised in the home and toward one another as partners in marriage. We should first of all love our partners because of the intrinsic value that is in them. If we lack the qualities of life that we should have, this can hurt this form of love. This is the reason it is imperative for the partners to mature as people. Qualities of life cause us to respect each other more and it shall increase the AGAPAO love.

The entire family should enjoy one another. They should love with a PHILEO love. The husband should find pleasure in his wife and the wife with her husband. The parents should find pleasure in the lives of their children and the children should with the parents.

Then the partners in the marriage should be able to satisfy the fleshly passions of the other. God has given us these appetites and they are not wrong in and of themselves. They can become a source of trouble to us if we direct them toward others besides those God has given to us. It is wrong to covet or lust for another man's wife or husband, but the bed is undefiled for those who are married. The partners should find every type of love fulfilled in their marriage. They can if they will to do so.

God designed the home. It was the first institution He founded. He desired that it would be a haven of rest from the cares and concerns people may encounter daily.

Your home is becoming what it will be. You are responsible to make it all it can be. If you develop these principles in your relationship, it will be a home where there is the happiness and security there should be.

It will then be a home where love rides secure on the building blocks that support it.

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Look up Reference Group Number 5 and list the names of the building blocks from the bottom up that should support love in the relationship of marriage.

5. In a Strong Home, There Must be Love.
  - A. Love is the capstone of a strong relationship
    1. Love does not exist alone.
    2. Love is dependent upon the strength of the other four building blocks.
  - B. The types of love.
    1. AGAPAO: "To love because of the intrinsic value of the object".
      - a. God' love for us 1 John 4:10; John 3:16
      - b. We are to love God. Matthew 22:37
      - c. Men are to love their wives. Ephesians 5:25
    2. PHILEO: "To love because the object brings us pleasure."
      - a. Pharisees loved to pray Matthew 6:5
      - b. We are to love the Lord Jesus Christ.  
1 Corinthians 16:22
    3. ERAO: "to love with a fleshly passion" The word is not used in the New Testament, however, the bed is undefiled. Hebrews 13:4

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**LOVE**

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Fill in the name of each building block  
that supports love in a good relationship.

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CONCLUSION: Your relationship is becoming what it will be.

Each person has a responsibility to build the home with the right relationships