



BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES FOR BUILDING A STRONG FAMILY



THE BATTLE FOR A MAN'S HEART

Proverbs 4:20-27- "*My son, **be attentive to my words; incline your ear to my sayings. Let them not escape from your sight; keep them within your heart.** For they are life to those who find them, and healing to all their flesh. **Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life.** Put away from you crooked speech, and put devious talk far from you. Let your eyes look directly forward, and your gaze be straight before you. Ponder the path of your feet; then all your ways will be sure. Do not swerve to the right or to the left; turn your foot away from evil.*"

John 7:37-39- "*On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. **Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'**" Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.*"

When I look at my favorite men in the Bible like Abraham, Joseph, Moses, David, and Paul, three important aspects in their lives stand out to me.

1. They were part of **God's story** of redemption.
2. They were **learning to live out of godly desires** that God had put in their hearts.
 - Psalm 37:4- "*Delight yourself in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart.*"
 - Philippians 2:13- "*For it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.*"
3. They were all on a **providential journey**.
 - Ephesians 2:10- "*For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.*"

I. INDICATIONS OF LOSING HEART

Proverbs 12:25-*“Anxiety in a man’s heart weighs him down, but a good word makes him glad.”*

Proverbs 13:12-*“Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a desire fulfilled is a tree of life.”*

- Personal conversation and communion with God is infrequent.
- In your relationship with God you most often experience shame, condemnation, a sense of being disqualified, or unable to please him.
- Your relationship with God is reduced to a focus on only external behaviors rather than internal realities (godly desires, joyful fellowship with others, and promptings of the Holy Spirit).
- You lose sight of the way things really are in your family relationships.
- You don’t see yourself as having a crucial role in God’s plan of redemption.
- You no longer live as if the world is at war.
- Life becomes exclusively routine, mundane, the same old thing.
- You have little or no passion for the beauty of God’s creation, life mission, adventure, and things you typically love to do and enjoy.
- You rarely laugh or feel sadness at appropriate times.
- You are bored; you have accepted or hidden addictions, habits, compulsive behaviors, excessive behaviors, pornography, anger, and worry.
- You are consumed and preoccupied with yourself, your needs, your desires, and your pain.

Psalm 73:26-*“My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever”*

Satan’s Goals

- Satan has already lost the battle in blinding your eyes to the Gospel. Now Satan’s goal is to keep the world (wife, children, friends, others) from feeling the impact of Christ working in your life.
- Satan will tempt us to become involved in sin and the pursuit of the false self.
- Satan wants us to misinterpret suffering, trials and tests.
 - ❑ Children of Israel had the wrong interpretation. Numbers 14:1-4 says, “Then all the congregation raised a loud cry, and the people wept that night. And all the people of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron. The whole congregation said to them, “Would that we had died in the land of Egypt! Or would that we had died in this wilderness! Why is the LORD bringing us into this land, to fall by the sword? Our wives and our little ones will become a prey. Would it not be better for us to go back to Egypt?” And they said to one another, “Let us choose a leader and go back to Egypt.”

- ❑ Joseph had the right interpretation. Genesis 50:19-21 says, “But Joseph said to them, “Do not fear, for am I in the place of God? As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today. So do not fear; I will provide for you and your little ones.” Thus he comforted them and spoke kindly to them.”
- ❑ Satan wants you to look to the wrong sources to find solace and affirmation.

II. REASON, EMOTION AND THE HEART

Hebrews 10:16- *“This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my laws on their hearts, and write them on their minds.”*

Hebrews 4:12- *“For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.”*

Mind

- The mind receives and processes information. (George Washington was the first President of the United States.)
- The mind deals in abstractions. (2+2=4)
- The mind takes in, processes, and stores information. (The hippocampus is our brain’s library.)
- Romans 12:2—“Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.”

Heart

- The heart knows and wrestles with realities. (Your daughter is late coming home tonight, how do you feel about that?)
- The heart lives in the realities of living and dying, loving and hating.
- Paul writes in Romans 9:1-3, “I am speaking the truth in Christ—I am not lying; my conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit— that I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my kinsmen according to the flesh.”
- Paul’s personal greetings at the end of Romans chapter 16.

Emotions

- The heart is the source of our emotions. But equating your heart as emotion is the same nonsense as saying that love is a feeling.
- Emotions are the voice of the heart, but they are not the heart.
- Emotions express the deeper movements of the heart, like when we weep for a lost loved one, or we cheer when our child scores a goal in a soccer game.

- 2 Corinthians 2:4—“For I wrote to you out of much affliction and anguish of heart and with many tears, not to cause you pain, but to let you know the abundant love that I have for you.”

The mind stands detached while with the heart we experience and respond to life and all its fullness.

III. ADDRESSING THE STRONGHOLDS THAT IMPACT A MAN’S HEART

1. Unresolved Rejection

Men become emotionally locked and have a difficult time expressing themselves at a heart level. Men can have a limited emotional vocabulary, a lack of understanding how others feel. Primary emotion displayed is anger. Anger is a secondary emotion that helps us not to feel other emotions that we do not want to feel, like pain, sadness, shame, guilt, fear, disgust, hopelessness.

- **Father wound**-the abusive father, the lost-in-his-own-battle father, the neglectful-teach-you-what-it-means-to-be-a-godly-man father, the nothing-is-ever-good-enough father.
- **Mother wound**-the controlling mother, the emotionally dependent mother, the emotionally distant mother, the stressed-out angry mother, the neglectful mother.

Psalm 27:9-11-“Do not hide your face from me, do not turn your servant away in anger; you have been my helper. Do not reject me or forsake me, O God my Savior. Though my father and mother forsake me, the LORD will receive me. Teach me your way, O LORD; lead me in a straight path because of my oppressors.”

- Acknowledge the impact of your wound (men typically do not like to go there) and grieve the loss. Accept the loss as a part of something that God can use for good in your life. (Romans 8:28).
- Forgive those who have wounded you. (Ephesians 4:32).
- Release all rejection, pain and anger to Christ and ask him to heal your heart. (Isaiah 61:1).
- Replace the lies from your pain with the truth of God’s Word. (John 8:32).
- Accept the fact that you are accepted in the beloved. (Ephesians 1).
- Discover your identity in Christ. (Colossians 2:7-10).
- Build healthy life-giving relationships with other men. (1 John 1:4).

2. Pride

In Proverbs 13:10 we read, “Only by pride cometh contention...” Regardless of the conflict in marriage, pride is sure to be at the root. Many individuals view pride as arrogant bigotry and egotism, and automatically conclude that pride is not a problem for them. The reality is that pride can reveal itself in more subtle and even religious ways. Resolving pride is imperative to building marriage harmony. The following prayer and the list Symptoms of Pride are designed to help you identify and resolve areas of pride that may be blocking marriage harmony.

Introductory Prayer

“Dear Heavenly Father,

You have said that pride goes before destruction and an arrogant spirit before stumbling. I confess that I have been thinking mainly of myself and not of others. I have not denied myself, picked up my cross daily, and followed you. As a result, I have given ground to the devil in my life. I have sinned by believing I could be happy and successful on my own. I confess I have placed my will before yours, and I have centered my life around myself instead of you.

I repent of my pride and selfishness and pray that all ground gained in my members by the enemies of the Lord Jesus Christ would be cancelled. I choose to rely on the Holy Spirit’s power and guidance so I will do nothing from selfishness and empty conceit. With humility of mind, I will regard others (fill in the blank with specific names) as more important than myself. And I choose to make You, Lord, the center of my life.

Please show me now all the specific ways I have demonstrated pride in my life. Enable me through love to be sympathetic to others and not to react in pride. I ask this in the gentle and humble name of Jesus Christ, my Lord. Amen.”

The Symptoms of Pride

Please check off all the ways in which you have demonstrated or struggled with pride in your life.

- Perfectionist-I set up standards for myself that are beyond the normal requirement.
- Lack of love-I am indifferent to the needs of others; I am hasty in judgment, insensitive, and critical.
- I am self-righteous. I often think that I am more humble, spiritual, religious, or devoted than others.
- I have a poor relationship with God (God resists the proud).
- Legalism-I believe that I can gain more favor with God or those in spiritual authority by performing.
- I am selfish with my time and possessions.
- I am constantly comparing myself to others.
- I am discontent and ungrateful. I have a hard time accepting my suffering.
- I am unforgiving and bitter-I cannot release my offenders to God.
- I cannot forgive myself for the past—I cannot receive God’s forgiveness.
- I desire the acceptance of men rather than having God’s approval in the choices I make.
- I am self-willed, rather than seeking the will of God.
- I lean on my own understanding rather than seeking God’s guidance.
- I rely on my own strength and abilities rather than depending on the power of the Holy Spirit.
- I am more concerned about controlling others than developing self-control.

- I am too busy doing “important” things to spend time with God and my family.
- I have a tendency to think that I have no needs, spiritual or otherwise.
- I am overly concerned about getting the credit I feel I deserve.
- I am driven to obtain recognition and significance by attaining degrees, titles, or positions, rather than finding my significance in Christ.
- I become defensive when criticized by those that really care about me.
- I have difficulty recognizing and admitting when I am wrong. I tend to want to deflect blame.
- I talk most often about myself and I am not interested in others when conversing with people.
- I draw attention to my abilities and achievements in a boastful way.
- I feel sorry for myself when I really should not (pity parties).

Prayer of Renunciation

“Heavenly Father, I come to you in the name of Jesus Christ. I thank you for dying on the cross for my sins. I ask now that you would cleanse me of my sinful pride.

Your Holy Spirit has convicted me, and I renounce that I have been prideful in the following ways (List those checked). I repent and renounce these ways I have lived out of the flesh in pride. I ask that you would take back the ground I have given the enemy in this area of my life. I ask you Lord Jesus Christ that you will continue to convict me when I am responding in pride in the future. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.”

3. Lies Regarding Our Identity in Christ

Taken from Dr. Neil T. Anderson’s book, *Helping Others Find Freedom in Christ*

Go through the list below and check the lies that you believed, lies that Satan has used to shape and control your life, your view of yourself, and your view of God.

I Renounce the Lie That...	I Announce the Truth That in Christ...
I’ll never be accepted by God or others.	I’m already accepted.
Everyone, including God, accepts me if I work hard to please them. All love must be earned.	God accepts me because I’m His child (John 1:12).
I must be accepted by certain others to feel okay about myself.	I am accepted by Christ as His friend (John 15:5).
I must do everything well or right to be accepted.	I am justified, made right with God through Christ (Romans 5:1).
Sooner or later God will reject me and turn away from me.	I am united with God, one spirit with Him (1 Corinthians 6:17).

I have no real value to God, so He will reject me sooner or later. I feel worthless as a person.	He bought me with the price of His Son, I am of infinite value to Him (1 Corinthians 6:20).
I can't break free from sin because I'm just a sinner.	I'm a saint, a holy one who may struggle with sin, but need not be mastered by it (Ephesians 1:1).
No sane person would choose to love me.	God chose to love me for all eternity and to adopt me into His family (Ephesians 1:5).
God loves other Christians more than me. If I were like them, I could get closer to God.	I have the same direct access to my Heavenly Father as all other believers (Ephesians 2:18).
Some things I've done can't be forgiven. God can't keep on forgiving me. I'm a hopeless case.	I have been redeemed and forgiven of all my sins (Colossians 1:14).
I'll always be abandoned.	I'm already secure.
I'm unworthy of love and deserve to be condemned and abandoned. God is basically angry with me and always wants to punish me.	I am free forever from condemnation (Romans 8:1-2).
Sooner or later, my life always falls apart. If God really loved, life would be easier.	I am assured that all things work together to make me more like Christ, and that is good (Romans 8:28-29).
Others tell me I'm bad or worthless, so I must be bad or worthless.	I am free from any condemning charges against me (Romans 8:31ff).
Sooner or later, God will give up on me and abandon me.	I cannot be separated from God's love (Romans 8:35ff).
My relationship with God depends on me trying harder to please Him.	I have been established, anointed, and sealed by God (2 Corinthians 1:21-22).
Sooner or later, people will find out about me and reject me, abandon me, or hurt me.	My life is hidden in Christ, and therefore secure (Colossians 3:3).
Since I still struggle with sin, God will quit working in my life and give up on me.	I am confident that the good work that God has begun in me will be perfected (Philippians 1:6).
I'll never know if I'm going to make it to heaven.	I am already a citizen of heaven (Philippians 3:20).
I'm afraid I'll be abandoned, so I have to be weak, meet everyone's demands, or pretend I'm dumb.	I have not been given a spirit of fear, but of power, love, and a sound mind (2 Timothy 1:7).
When the chips are down, everyone always leaves me.	I can find grace and mercy in my time of need (Hebrews 4:16).
I can't really defeat Satan because he has me under his control.	I am born of God, and the evil one cannot touch me (1 John 5:18).
My significance or success is based on something I do.	I'm already significant.

I have nothing of real value to offer others.	I am the salt and light of the earth (Matthew 5:13-14).
The only way I can make an impact in this life is by being in control and asserting myself. My significance comes from what I do, not who I am.	I am a branch of the True Vine, a channel of His life (John 15:1-5).
My life will never really amount to anything.	I have been chosen and appointed to bear fruit (John 15:16).
I have no right or ability to tell others about Christ because my life isn't perfect.	I am a Spirit-empowered witness of Christ (Acts 1:8).
Significance is found only in a beautiful appearance, superior intelligence, or an image of success.	I am God's temple, significant because I have God indwelling me (1 Corinthians 3:16).
I have to be perfect for God to really use me.	I am a minister of reconciliation for God because I am His new creation (1 Corinthians 5:17ff).
If people really knew me, they wouldn't want to work with me.	I am God's co-worker (1 Corinthians 3:9).
God has no use for me. I must put myself down or others down to make me feel better.	I am seated with Christ in the heavenly realm (Ephesians 2:6).
I am an accident, a cosmic mistake, and therefore worthless, I wish I were someone else.	I am God's workmanship (Ephesians 2:10).
I can only be significant through much effort and hard work. I can never be really sure of God's love.	I can approach God anytime with freedom and confidence (Ephesians 3:12).
I can't change. It's just too hard, so I give up. I can't take risks because I might fail.	I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me (Philippians 3:6).

4. Temporal Values

Another root problem at the source of many marriage conflicts is temporal values—a problem of valuing material possessions, positions, hobbies, goals, or career above relationship with God, your spouse, and children. It is impossible to maintain divided loyalties between temporal values and your spouse (Matthew 6:24).

When temporal values become the all-consuming passion of a husband's life, he leaves his wife feeling neglected and unloved. Furthermore, a temporal focus can result in many financial pressures in an effort to live higher than one's income, thus adding additional undue stress to the marriage relationship. When a wife is driven by temporal values, she makes her husband feel inadequate to provide. The reality is that she has not learned the difference between needs and wants. I Timothy 6:6-8 reminds us, "But

godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content.”

To overcome temporal values, it is necessary to make Christ the central focus. When Christ has His rightful place in your life and when your family is second to Christ, Christ promises to meet your temporal needs. Matthew 6:31-33 states, *“Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? Or, What shall we drink? Or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your Heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.”*

Check the areas you view as more important than your relationship with God or others.

- Job/work/career
- Money
- Possessions/things
- Prestige
- Recreational activities/sports/hobbies
- Excessive focus on entertainment
- TV/video games/computers
- Personal goals
- Other _____

Prayer

“Lord, I acknowledge that I have placed a higher value on (Item checked above) to the neglect of my relationship with You and others. I ask Your forgiveness and I make a commitment to value my relationship with You and others above (Item checked above).”

5. Sexual Immorality

Taken from Dr. Neil T. Anderson’s book, *Helping Others Find Freedom in Christ*

It is our responsibility not to allow sin to have control over our bodies. We must not use our bodies or another person’s body as an instrument of unrighteousness (see Romans 6:12, 13). Sexual immorality is not only a sin against God, but also it is a sin against your body, the temple of the Holy Spirit (see 1 Corinthians 6:18,19). To find freedom from sexual bondage, begin by praying the following prayer:

“Lord, I ask You to bring to my mind every sexual use of my body as an instrument of unrighteousness so that, in Christ, I can renounce these sexual sins and break their bondage. In Jesus’ name. Amen.”

As the Lord brings to your mind every wrong sexual use of your body, whether it was done to you (rape, incest, sexual molestation) or willingly by you (pornography, masturbation, sexual immorality), renounce every occasion:

“Lord, I renounce (name the specific use of your body) with (name any other person involved). I ask You to break that sinful bond with (name) spiritually, physically, and emotionally.”

After you are finished, commit your body to the Lord by praying:

“Lord, I renounce all these uses of my body as an instrument of unrighteousness, and I admit to any willful participation. I choose now to present my eyes, mouth, mind, heart, hands, feet and sexual organs to You as instruments of righteousness. I present my whole body to You as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable. I choose to reserve the sexual use of my body for marriage only. I reject the devil’s lie that my body is not clean or that it is dirty or in any way unacceptable to You as a result of my past sexual experiences. Lord, thank You that You have totally cleansed and forgiven me and that You love and accept me just the way I am. Therefore, I choose now to accept myself and my body as clean in Your eyes. In Jesus’ name. Amen.”

