

Families in the Family of God
Homes of Peace and Healing

Lesson #9 for March 4, 2006

Scriptures: Ps. 37:8, Matt. 5:22, 12:1-14, 18:15-18, Mark 7:6-13, Phil. 2:1-16, Col. 3:12-15.

1. "Teachers Aim: 1) to show how maintaining peace in the home can bring about harmony. 2) to understand that anger is a natural emotion that can be controlled when surrendered to Christ. 3) to show that Christians should display emotions that are not abusive."
Romans 12:18: "do everything possible on your part to live in peace with everybody." (GNB).
2. **Do we have emotions or do they have us?**
3. This lesson deals with the problem of conflicts in the home. "The week at a glance: the Bible gives us principles that, if applied, can help minimize family conflict and turmoil." (Sabbath, March 4, 2006). **Does it help to say that the way to control anger is to deal with it?** There are a lot of passages in this lesson which seem like stating the obvious.
4. "Make every effort to keep the unity of the spirit through the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:3, NIV). Christians should seek to keep conflicts to a minimum but also find ways to resolve them quickly. How does this actually work in practice?
5. It is well known that some conflicts have gone on unresolved for hundreds of years! This seems to be particularly true in some parts of the world. Is there any way that Christians can possibly contribute to resolving such differences?
6. Arabs and Jews have been at each other almost as long as recorded history. Why do you think this is? With such hatred festering for millennia is there any possibility of resolving it in our time? What about Christians, Catholics and Protestants, fighting in Northern Ireland?
7. Very few people enjoy conflict. Many people try to avoid it almost at any cost! Think of some of the ways people try to deal with conflict without actually facing it: some deny that it exists. Others just avoid thinking and talking about it. Some withdraw emotionally. Some are determined to have their own way and go about forcing this no matter what other parties may be involved. Are these healthy ways to deal with conflict?
8. What are some of the most common causes of conflict? Selfishness, Cultural upbringing, differences between males and females, personal choices, even ignorance or misunderstanding.
9. When realizing that a conflict is imminent one of the first things we must do is to take personal responsibility for our share of the conflict. How do we best accomplish this?
10. What is anger? Usually anger is a secondary emotion. It grows out of fear, hurt, or frustration. Think of some examples that you know. What were the causes of the anger?
11. Did Jesus ever become angry? If so, for what reason? At times anger arises because there is inequity or injustice or perhaps oppression of the innocent.
12. Jesus seemed to become angry most often when the true meaning of the Sabbath was distorted and abused and those in need of real help were ignored.
13. Is it OK to be angry? How do you understand Ephesians 4:26,27: ²⁶"If you become angry, do not let your anger lead you into sin, and do not stay angry all day. ²⁷"Don't give the Devil a chance"?
14. **Clearly the best way to deal with anger is to resolve the cause of the anger as quickly as possible.** What should we do when someone is in conflict with us and may not even want to resolve the issue?
15. Does it help to speak about your anger? Solomon suggests: "A gentle answer quiets anger, but a harsh one stirs it up." (Proverbs 15:1). How do you understand this passage?
16. What are the most common areas of conflict within marriages? Many research projects and

surveys have demonstrated that **the most common areas of conflict are money, communication, children, and sex. Other perhaps less common causes are in-laws, recreation, alcohol and drugs, religion, careers, and housework.** Have you ever been in conflict over any of these areas in your own life? Why? Did you resolve it satisfactorily?

17. In order to resolve conflict we should begin by trying to discover as far as possible the real facts in the case. Many times conflicts can be resolved just by clarifying what actually happened and what led up to the anger.
18. One area of conflict/abuse that should never be found in a Christian home is sexual abuse of children. It is defined as “the engaging of a child in sexual activities the child does not understand, to which the child can’t give informed consent, which are developmentally inappropriate and/or which violate the laws or taboos of society”. Children that are sexually abused feel that they are not loved or valued for who they are. “There is practically nothing else that can do more harm to a child’s picture of God as a heavenly Father than being abused by an adult -- especially an adult who is that child’s primary caregiver.” (Teachers comments).
19. One of the ancillary issues related to anger is punishment. We have learned in a previous lesson that parents should never punish in anger, it only gives the child permission to be angry also! There is a wide variety of norms culturally around the world for punishment within a family. In some areas of the world physical punishment is considered very normal and occurs on a very regular basis. In other cultures there are even national laws against physical punishment!
20. When a real difference of opinion or conflict has arisen that has stirred up anger it is often best resolved by a true repentance or forgiveness. Forgiveness implies that you choose voluntarily to set the matter aside and not to dwell on it anymore. It further implies that we truly wish the very best and would be willing to pray for the one with whom we are in conflict. It does not imply that we necessarily approve of their prior behavior.
21. **It may be hard to believe but the home (or perhaps we should just call it the place where we live) is the single most violent place in society.** Violence could be defined as “an assault of any kind—verbal, physical, emotional, sexual, or active or passive neglect—that is committed by one person or persons against another in the family” Think of the stories of Joseph (Genesis 37) Absalom (2 Samuel 13) and even the times when the kings of Israel sacrificed their children to pagan deities! (2 Kings 16:3; 17:17; 21:6)
22. If there were child sacrifice today wouldn’t there be an enormous even international furor? What types of abuse might today be considered similar?
23. There is no excuse for abusive behavior. No matter what the victim does they cannot be held responsible. We cannot excuse our behavior because we “get angry”! There is no justification for abuse because a person wishes to fulfill their sexual desires, they are under stress or even under the influence of alcohol!
24. There’s professional help available for abusers in our day. And certainly it should be the goal of any church that cares for its members to see that anyone involved in abuse is able to get the necessary help.
25. **Incredible as it may seem, one of the great areas of conflict in our world is religion! Why do you think this is? What is it about religion that leads to conflict?**
26. One of the most incredible examples of forgiveness under abuse was Jesus forgiving those who were crucifying Him. (Luke 23:34).
27. Our Bible study guide provides an opportunity for us to think about and test our understanding of abuse: which of the following statements appear to be correct in your opinion?
 - A) people who are abused should turn the other cheek.
 - B) wives should be submissive, regardless of what their husbands do to them.
 - C) violent behavior by a spouse or a parent is just a cross some people have to bear.
 - D) the pain we encounter in life is ultimately for our good.

28. How do you feel about these statements? It has been demonstrated repeatedly that times of domestic violence and experiences of this nature are times of real crisis in spiritual matters? Often the abused will ask the question “where was God when I was being abused?”
29. People have used scripture in many very evil ways. Can you think of any scriptures that could be used to try to support abuse? (Ephesians 5:22; 6:1)
30. Read 1 John 4:18: There is no fear in love; perfect love drives out all fear. So then, love has not been made perfect in anyone who is afraid, because fear has to do with punishment. (GNB) Would real love remove most of the ills in our world? Would we have peace?
31. How did God deal with Adam and Eve’s sin? Was his behavior redemptive and corrective?
32. How should the church deal with groups or people who: A) chronically gossip and criticize? B) embezzle money from the church? C) assail the doctrines of the church and demand an open hearing in Sabbath school and during worship service? D) commit adultery and insist that “the church has no business poking into a person’s private life”? E) sexually seduce young Sabbath school students? F) solicit money from members for their own independent ministry without approval from the church board?
33. **How can the church or the church board be redemptive and corrective without being judgmental?**
34. What is the role of forgiveness in Christianity? In some ways of thinking, forgiveness is the central core issue in salvation. Why do you think this is? How do you understand for example the expression “for by the blood of Christ we are set free, that is, our sins are forgiven”? **Does God have any problems with forgiveness?** From a human standpoint we should learn to practice forgiveness because it releases us from the festering wound of revenge. Once again we need to be reminded that this does not release the perpetrator from the need to repent or from the consequences of their behavior.
35. How could we determine if someone was truly repentant for their behavior? They should stop the offending behavior, give a sincere apology, take responsibility for their previous behavior and whatever damage was done as far as possible, show care for the pain of the person who was wronged, and make restitution in every possible way. They should also seek to prevent any reoccurrence.
36. Have you ever questioned God’s forgiveness toward you? How many times is God willing to forgive you? Are you certain that you really have been forgiven? Does this knowledge/ this experience of God make it easier for you to forgive others?
37. “It is true there is an indignation that is justifiable, even in the followers of Christ. When they see that God is dishonored, and His service brought into disrepute, when they see the innocent oppressed, a righteous indignation stirs the soul. Such anger, born of sensitive morals, is not a sin. But those who at any supposed provocation feel at liberty to indulge anger or resentment are opening the heart to Satan. Bitterness and animosity must be banished from the soul if we would be in harmony with heaven. {*Desire of Ages* 310.4}
38. Do cultural norms make it easier for abuse to occur in some settings? Why? Or why not? Does the fact that abuse may occur and be tolerated in a society make it acceptable in God’s sight? Are we known for losing our tempers? Do we get angry often. What should we do in such a case?

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Last modified: February 11, 2006
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