



April 2024

Some friends commented, with a touch of humor, that they had been disagreeing about a number of issues in their marriage and home. They mentioned some specifics, which gave us an idea of what they were talking about.

I was curious and asked if they thought God had anything to say about those particular issues. Did God mind whether they did this... or that? They responded that they figured God did not mind either way about those specifics... they were simple life issues for them to decide between themselves.

I referenced Romans 12:10, *Be kindly affectionate... giving preference to one another* (NKJV). It also made me think of one of our "marriage texts," Acts 20:35, where we learn that Jesus said, *It is more blessed to give than to receive*. As we purpose to be **kind**... to **prefer the other**... to **give** rather than **expect**, a lot of those "small, simple issues" can get decided without great fanfare or disagreement.

PLUS, practicing the qualities listed in the teaching below will make any relationship much sweeter! - John



## Building Blocks for Life

*"...Giving all diligence, add to your **faith**, **virtue**, to virtue **knowledge**, to knowledge **self-control**, to self-control **perseverance**, to perseverance **godliness**, to godliness **brotherly kindness**, and to brotherly kindness **love**. For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the **knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ**." 2 Peter 1:5-9*

Most children (and, yes, even many adults) enjoy playing with building blocks. Some of the structures turn out to be pretty shaky, toppling with just a touch of a finger. Others actually have a good foundation and are stable and strong. In the scripture verse above, God talks about excellent "life" building blocks for building a structure in which we will be *fruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ*.

For a valuable family project, why not work together to develop/increase these traits in your household?

**FAITH** The most important building block for constructing a life of stability and strength is *faith*. A good question to ask from time to time is, "Do we really believe that God is who He says He is?" Is our faith just an intellectual nod, or is it a life-changing commitment? If we really believe in a God who loves us and cares about our lives, we will spend time talking with Him, asking Him for specific help and living by His guidelines.

Discuss these questions as a family, talking about adjustments you can make as you genuinely walk by faith. Develop a family prayer request list, praying together daily for specific answers. Talk about how to move from just asking, to *expecting* God's involvement!

**VIRTUE** This could be better translated as **courage**. A genuine faith in God will naturally produce greater courage. Invite your children to list the things they sometimes fear. Then look at each one in the light of promises God has made. Check out the following verses: Psalm 34:4, 1 Peter 5:7, Philippians 4:8, Joshua 1:9, Isaiah 41:10, Isaiah 41:13, Psalm 73:23-24, 1 John 4:18, Proverbs 3:5-6, Matthew 6:26-34, Psalm 91:4. Encourage each family member to choose one activity they would

normally avoid (because they are afraid) and, instead, step out in faith to conquer it. Perhaps a 3-year-old could trust God to help her go to her Sunday School class without crying, or a 13-year-old could sign up for the week of wilderness camping he had been dreading. Maybe Dad and Mom could choose to invite a neighbor family over for dinner, steering the conversation to spiritual topics. Without faith, courage can only be based on human effort... but with faith in God as our foundation, we can have a courage that goes far beyond our own strength.

**KNOWLEDGE** If we believe that God is real and His Word is truth, we will want to know more about Him. Just like dating couples who love to spend time with each other, talking and finding out about the other person, we also should desire to grow closer to our heavenly Father and to learn more about Him. Why not start a Bible reading or memorization program? There are all kinds of apps that provide easy schedules and/or plans. Play Bible trivia games. Your child may join a Bible quiz team. Purchase a good devotional book for each family member and discuss the daily entries at mealtimes or when in the car.

**SELF-CONTROL** The more we learn about God, the more we recognize that His ways are often exactly opposite our natural tendencies. Talk about what happens in your household when family members disagree or become upset with each other. Do voices become loud, facial expressions harsh, body language cold? God wants to empower His children to live, not in the way that is most "natural" but in a "supernatural" way. Describe what conversations would look and sound like, if each person was being controlled by God's Spirit, rather than by their own human nature. Put a chart on the wall and award points each time a younger family member responds in a Spirit-controlled way. Reward the family with a special treat when you accumulate 25 or 50 points.

**PERSEVERANCE** This is *stick-to-it-tiveness*... never giving up. Most people don't succeed in breaking bad habits, or in establishing new good habits, because they quit after only one or two weeks of trying. Decide on a family project that you can work on together over the coming months... perhaps organizing the garage, getting rid of old toys from the playroom, building a tree house, raising money for a missions project, etc. Or maybe there are some personal habits you want to develop such as having a daily time of personal devotions, writing weekly

notes to people who need encouragement, praying daily with your spouse, etc. Put a chart on the refrigerator and check off each day you work at your project.

**GODLINESS** This is the development of God-like character as well as a God-like perspective. At dinner some evening, ask each person to share how another family member often demonstrates a Godly trait... e.g. patience, hope, honesty, moral purity, helpfulness, etc. Then discuss how families of different nationalities have unique practices that reflect their culture. Ask how your family reflects that it belongs to **God's** kingdom, rather than this world's system. Be willing to make some changes if you realize that you need to be living in a way that more accurately reflects God's character.

**BROTHERLY KINDNESS** God is always concerned about the needs of others. Jesus said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35). Instead of spending for a family vacation that caters to the entertainment of your family, how about deciding to participate in a short-term missions trip, or planning a couple of Saturdays to help neighbors with needs they might have. Host an exchange student, or volunteer at Vacation Bible School. Encourage each family member to choose one project which will focus on giving, not getting.

**LOVE** God's type of love is an unconditional love that sacrifices for the good of others. It is a love that forgives and looks for ways to bless others. Talk about situations your family has faced when someone has been unkind toward you. Decide on ways that you can demonstrate love and forgiveness... perhaps praying for that person, baking cookies for them, offering to help them with a chore, writing a note of encouragement. Such practical expressions of love can turn enemies into friends.

There is a saying, "Please, be patient. God is not finished with me yet!" God never gives up on us. He is always at work, constructing the image of Jesus in each of His children. Why not dedicate the next six weeks to improving in one of the above areas,.. so God can build His amazing structure in each family member...

**one  
beautiful  
block  
at a time!**

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