

KEYS of MARRIAGE

A CATHOLIC GUIDE TO FAMILY HAPPINESS

Part Two

CHAPTER THREE

Two Keys to a Lasting Marriage

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WHEN God united the first man and woman in marriage, there was no indication that the union would be only temporary. Adam and Eve were to be together for life. (Genesis 2:24) "A man shall leave father and mother, and shall cleave to [stick to] his wife: and they shall be two in one flesh." (Genesis 2:24) Jesus Christ forbade divorce and the Church has followed in his footsteps, though at times permitting separation without the possibility of remarriage while the partners are alive. (See 1 Corinthians 7:11) God's standard for an honorable marriage is the uniting of one male and one female for life.

This is such an important element of marriage that it is worth quoting our Lord's teaching in its full context from Matthew chapter 19 verses 3 to 9.

"There came to him the Pharisees tempting him, and saying: 'Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?' [that is 'for any pretext whatever?'] Answering, Jesus said to them: 'Have you all not read, that He who made man from the beginning, 'made them male and female?' And that He said: "For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife, and they two shall be in one flesh."

"Therefore now they are not two, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let no man put asunder." They say to him: 'Why then did Moses command to give a bill of divorce, and to put away? Jesus said to them: 'Because Moses by reason of the hardness of your heart permitted you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so. And I say to you, that whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, commits adultery: and he that shall marry her that is put away, commits adultery.' (Matthew 19: 3 -9.)

Let us see what He taught earlier in His famous 'Sermon on the Mount' "I say to you, that whosoever shall put away his wife, excepting for the cause of fornication, makes her to commit adultery: and he that shall marry her that is put away, commits adultery.

- Matthew 5:32.

The exception that Jesus mentions points to a type of 'uncleanness', which invalidates the original marriage contract and is the basis for the Church's investigation of some marriages to see whether they should be annulled. Annulment is not divorce.

TWO KEYS TO A LASTING MARRIAGE

Is it possible for two individuals to live together happily for an indefinitely long time? Yes! and the Bible identifies two vital factors, or keys, that help to make this possible. If both the husband and the wife put these to

use, they will unlock the door to happiness and many blessings. What are these keys?

Review Questions:

- (a) For how long is marriage designed to last?
- (b) How is this possible?

THE FIRST KEY

FAMILY HAPPINESS

The first key is **love**. Interestingly, there are different kinds of love identified in the Bible. One is a warm, personal affection for someone, the kind of love that exists between close friends. (John 11:3) Another is the love that grows between family members. (Romans 12:10) A third is the romantic love that one can have for a member of the opposite sex. (See Proverbs 5:15-20) Of course, all of these should be cultivated by a husband and a wife. But there is a fourth kind of love, more important than the others.

Review Question: What three kinds of love should be cultivated by marriage mates?

A HANDY HINT

Mutual love and respect lead to success in marriage

In the original language of the New Testament, the Christian Greek Scriptures, the word for this fourth kind of love is *agape*. That word is used at 1 John 4:8, where we are told: "God is love."

Indeed, "we are to love, because He [God] first loved us." (1 John 4:19) A Christian cultivates such love first for God our Father and then for fellow humans. (Mark 12:29-31) The word *agape* is also used at Ephesians 5:2, which states: "walk in love, as Christ also has loved us, and has delivered himself for us, an oblation and a sacrifice to God." Jesus said that this kind of love would identify his true followers: "By this all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love [*agape*] one for another." (John 13:35) Notice, too, the use of *agape* at 1 Corinthians 13: 13: "There remain faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love [*agape*]." The Latin translation of this word is *caritas*, and it is sometimes rendered as *charity* in many English Bibles.

Review Question: What is a fourth kind of love?

TWO KEYS TO A LASTING MARRIAGE

What makes this *agape* love greater than faith and hope? It is governed by principles - right principles - found in God's Word for "Your word, O Lord, is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my paths. (Psalm 119:105 [Psalm 118: 105 in the Vulgate]) It is an unselfish concern for doing to others what is right and good from God's standpoint, whether the recipient appears to deserve it or not.

Such love enables marriage partners to follow the Bible's counsel: "Continue bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if any have a complaint against another: even as the Lord has forgiven you, so do you also." (Colossians 3:13) Loving married couples have and cultivate "a constant mutual charity [*agape*] among yourselves: for charity covers a multitude of sins." (1 Peter 4:8) Notice that love covers mistakes. It does not eliminate them, since no imperfect human can be free from error.

- Psalm 130: 3 &4 [Psalm 129: 3 &4]; James 3:22

When such love of God and of each other is cultivated by a married couple, their marriage will last and be happy, for "love (charity) [*agape*] never fails." (1 Corinthians 13:8) Love is "the bond of perfection (and union)." (Colossians 3:14) If you are married, how can you and your mate cultivate this kind of love? Read God's Word together, and talk about it. Study Our Lord Jesus' example of love and try to imitate him, to think and act like him. In addition, attend Church, go to Mass, listen to the Liturgy of the Word, and pay attention to the homilies where God's Word is taught. Above all, pray for God's help to develop this elevated kind of love, which is a fruit of God the Holy Spirit.

– Look up these Scriptures to help you: Proverbs 3:5, 6; John 17:3; Galatians 5:22; Hebrews 10:24, 25.

Review Questions:

- (a) Why is love greater than faith and hope?
- (b) What are some reasons why love will help make a marriage last?

THE SECOND KEY

FAMILY HAPPINESS

If two married people really love each other, then they will also have respect for each other, and **respect** is the second key to a happy marriage. Respect is defined as "giving consideration to others, honoring them." God's Word counsels all Christians, including husbands and wives: "Continue loving one another with the charity of brotherhood, with showing honour take the lead." (Romans 12:10) The apostle Peter wrote: " You husbands, likewise continue dwelling with them [your wives] according to knowledge, giving honour to the female as to the weaker vessel, and as to the co-heirs of the grace of life: that your prayers be not hindered." (1 Peter 3:7) Ephesians 5:33 says: "Nevertheless let every one of you in particular love his wife as himself" and then the wife is counseled:" and let the wife fear, that is, have deep respect for, her husband." If you want to honour someone, you are kind to that person, respectful of that one's dignity and expressed views, and ready to fulfill any reasonable request made of you.

Review Question: What is respect, and who should show respect in marriage?

Those who wish to enjoy a happy marriage show respect for their mates by "each one not considering the things that are his [or her] own, but those that are other men's [here think of 'those that are their spouses']". (Philippians 2:4) They do not consider what is good only for themselves - which would be selfish. Instead, they consider what is best also for their mates. Indeed, they give that the priority.

Respect will help marriage partners to acknowledge differences in viewpoint. It is not reasonable to expect two people to have identical views on everything. What may be important to a husband may not be as important to a wife, and what a wife likes may not be what a husband likes. But each should respect the views and choices of the other, as long as these are within the boundaries of God our Father's laws and principles. ("Behave as free people, and do not behave so as making liberty a cloak for malice, but behave as the servants of God." - 1 Peter 2:16; compare Philemon 1:14. "But without your advice I would do nothing: so that your good deed might not be as it were of necessity, but voluntary.") Further, each should respect the dignity of the other by not making that one the object of demeaning comments or jokes, whether in public or in private.

TWO KEYS TO A LASTING MARRIAGE

Yes, love of God and of each other and mutual respect are two vital keys to a successful marriage. How can they be applied in some of the more important areas of married life?

Review Question: What are some ways that respect will help to make a marriage union stable and happy?

CHRIST-LIKE HEADSHIP

The Bible tells us that the man, ('Adam') was created with attributes that would make him a successful family head. As such, the man would be responsible before God our Father for the spiritual and physical well-being of his wife and children. He would have to make balanced decisions that reflect God the Father's will and be a good example of godly conduct. "Let women (wives) be subject to their husbands, as to the Lord: Because the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ is the head of the church. He is the saviour of his body [the Church]. Therefore as the church is subject to Christ, so also let the wives be to their husbands." (Ephesians 5:22-24) However, the Bible says that the husband also has a head, One with authority over him. The apostle Paul wrote: "But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God. (1st Epistle of Saint Paul To The Corinthians 11:3) The wise husband learns how to exercise headship by imitating his own head, Christ Jesus.

Review Question: Scripturally, who is the head in a marriage?

The quote from Saint Paul raises a fascinating theological mystery. The second key truth of our Catholic faith, after that of the Trinity is the mystery of the Incarnation. God the Son, the Word who 'was God' and who 'was with God' 'in the beginning, well, that Word 'was made flesh'. He became incarnate of the Virgin Mary. (See John 1:1 & 14 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we saw his glory, the glory as it were of the only begotten Son of the Father,) full of grace and truth.) Thus Jesus Christ is True God and True Man. He is one person but He has two natures, a Divine Nature and a human nature. It is as man that Christ has a head namely the Father.

Thus, St Paul teaches that Jesus too has a head, God the Father, and he is properly subject to Him. Jesus said: "I cannot of myself do any thing. As I hear, so I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not my own will, but the will of him that sent me." (John 5:30) What an excellent example! Jesus is Son of his love "who is the

image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature, [of all creation]" (Colossians 1:15) "The firstborn" . . . That is, first begotten; as John the Evangelist declares, the only begotten of his Father: hence, St. John Chrysostom explains firstborn, not first created, as he was not created at all, but born of his Father before all ages; that is, coeval [co-equal] with the Father and with the Holy Ghost. He became the Messiah. He is the Head of the Church, the assembly of anointed Christians, and the chosen King of God's Kingdom, above all the angels. (Philippians 2:6-11 says "Christ Jesus, who had his being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but he emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men, and in habit [fashion] he was found as a man. He humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross. For which cause God also has exalted him, and has given him a name which is above all names: that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those that are in heaven, on earth, and under the earth: and that every tongue should confess that the Lord Jesus Christ is in the glory of God the Father." Hebrews 1:2-4 says "In these days God has spoken to us by his Son, whom he has appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the world. This Son, being the brightness of his glory, and the figure of his substance, and upholding all things by the word of his power, making purgation of sins, sits on the right hand of the majesty on high. He is made so much better than the angels, as he has inherited a more excellent name than they") Despite such a lofty position and such elevated prospects, the man Jesus was not harsh, unyielding, or overly demanding. He was not a despot, constantly reminding his disciples that they had to obey him. Jesus was loving and compassionate, especially toward the downtrodden. He said: "Come to me, all you that labour, and are burdened, and I will refresh you. Take up my yoke upon you, and learn of me, because I am meek, and humble of heart: and you shall find rest to your souls. For my yoke is sweet and easy, and my burden is light. " (Matthew 11:28-30) It was a delight to be in his company.

Review Question: What fine example did Jesus set both of showing; subjection and of exercising headship?

FAMILY HAPPINESS

The husband desiring a happy family life does well to consider Jesus' fine traits. A good husband is not harsh and dictatorial, wrongly using his headship as a club to browbeat his wife. Rather, he loves and honors her. If Jesus was "lowly and humble in heart," the husband has even more reason to be so because, unlike Jesus, he makes mistakes. When he does, he wants his wife's understanding. Therefore, the humble husband admits his mistakes, even though the words, "I'm sorry; you were right," might be difficult to say. A wife will find it much easier to respect the headship of a modest and humble husband than that of a proud and stubborn one. In turn, the respectful wife also apologizes when she is in error.

God created the woman with fine attributes that she can use in contributing to a happy marriage. A wise husband will recognize this and will not stifle her. Many women tend to have greater compassion and sensitivity, qualities that are needed in caring for a family and in nurturing human relationships. Usually, the woman is quite adept at making the home a pleasant place in which to live. The "capable wife – the perfect wife – the valiant woman" described in Proverbs chapter 31 had many wonderful qualities and excellent talents, and her family benefited fully from them. Why? Because the heart of her husband "has confidence and trust" in her.-Proverbs 31:10, 11.

Review Question: How will a loving husband exercise his headship, in imitation of Jesus?

TWO KEYS TO A LASTING MARRIAGE

In some cultures, a husband's authority is over-emphasized, so that even to ask him a question is considered disrespectful. He may treat his wife almost like a slave. Such a wrong exercise of headship results in a poor relationship not only with his wife but also with God. (Compare 1 John 4:20, 21.) On the other hand, some husbands neglect to take the lead, letting their wives dominate the household. The husband who is properly subject to Christ does not exploit his wife or rob her of dignity. Instead, he imitates the self-sacrificing love of Jesus and does as Paul counseled: "Husbands, love your wives, as Christ also loved the church, and delivered himself up for it." (Ephesians 5:25) Christ Jesus loved his followers so much that he died for them. A good husband will try to imitate that unselfish attitude, seeking the good of his wife, rather than be demanding of her. When a husband is subject to Christ and displays Christ-like love and respect, his wife will be motivated to subject herself to him. – "So also ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loves his wife, loves himself. For no man ever hated his own flesh; but nourishes and cherishes it, as also Christ does the church. . . Nevertheless let every one of you in particular love his wife as himself: and let the wife fear [show profound respect for her husband]." Ephesians 5:28, 29, 33.

Review Question: How can a husband show Christ -like love and respect for his wife?

WIFELY SUBJECTION

FAMILY HAPPINESS

Some time after Adam was created, "the Lord God said: 'It is not good for man to be alone: let us make him a help like unto himself.'" (Genesis 2:18) God created Eve as "a help, a help-mate, a complement," not as a competitor. Marriage was not to be like a ship with two competing captains. The husband was to exercise loving headship, and the wife was to manifest love, respect, and willing submission.

Review Question: What qualities should a wife display in her relationship with her husband?

However, a good wife is more than just submissive. She tries to be a real helper, being supportive of her husband in the decisions he makes. Of course, that is easier for her when she agrees with his decisions. But even when she does not, her active support can help his decision to have a more successful outcome.

A wife can help her husband to be a good head in other ways. She can express appreciation for his efforts in taking the lead, instead of criticizing him or making him feel that he can never satisfy her.

In dealing with her husband in a positive way, she should remember that a "quiet and meek and mild spirit . . . is of great value and rich in the eyes of God," not just in the eyes of her husband.

(‘The adorning of wives, let it not be the outward plaiting of the hair, or the wearing of gold, or the putting on of apparel: but the hidden man of the heart in the incorruptibility of a quiet and a meek spirit, which is rich in the sight of God.’ 1 Peter 3:3, 4; ‘All of you, put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy, and beloved, the clothes of mercy, kindness, humility, modesty and patience, and gentleness.’ Colossians 3:12)

What if the husband is not a practicing Catholic or not even a believer? Whether he is or not, the Scriptures encourage wives "to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, [to be wise and sound in mind,] to be chaste, sober, having a care of the house and home, gentle, obedient to their husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed and spoken of abusively." (Titus 2:4, 5)

If matters of conscience come up, especially over the matter of God’s abhorrence of contraception, an unbelieving husband is more likely to respect his wife's position if it is presented with a "mild temper and deep respect." Some unbelieving husbands have been "won without a word by the conduct of their wives, because of having been eyewitnesses of their chaste conduct and conversation together with deep respect.”

St Peter wrote: ‘In like manner also let wives be subject to their husbands: that if any believe not the word, they may be won without the word, by the conversation of the wives, considering your chaste conversation with fear and deep respect’. And later: ‘But sanctify the Lord Christ in your hearts, being ready always to satisfy every one that asks you a reason of that hope which is in you.' - See 1 Peter 3:1-2, &15.

St Paul said in 1 Corinthians 7:13-16: “if any woman has a husband that believes not, and he consent to dwell with her, let her not put away her husband. For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the believing wife; and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the believing husband: otherwise your children should be unclean; but now they are holy. But if the unbeliever depart, let him depart. For a brother or sister is not under servitude in such cases. But God has called us in peace. For how do you know, O wife, whether you shall save your husband? Or how do you know, O man, whether you shall save your wife?”

Review Question: What are some ways that a wife can be a real helper to her husband?

What if a husband asks his wife to do something forbidden by God? What if he asks her to violate God’s laws against contraception or abortion? If that happens, she must remember that God is her primary Ruler. She takes as an example what the apostles did when they were asked by authorities to violate God's law. Acts 5:29 relates: "But Peter and the apostles answering, said: ‘We ought to obey God, rather than men.’”

Review Question: What if a husband asks his wife to break God's law?

GOOD COMMUNICATION

TWO KEYS TO A LASTING MARRIAGE

Love and respect are essential in another area of marriage - communication. The loving husband will converse with his wife about her activities, her problems, her views on various matters. She needs this. A husband who takes the time to speak with his wife and really listens to what she says demonstrates his love and respect for her. (James 1:19) Some wives complain that their husbands spend very little time conversing with them. That is sad. True, in these busy times, husbands may work long hours outside the home, and economic circumstances may result in some wives holding a job also. But a married couple need to reserve time for each other. Otherwise, they may become independent of each other. It could lead to serious problems if they felt compelled to seek sympathetic

companionship outside the marriage arrangement.

Review Question: What is a vital area in which love and respect are essential?

FAMILY HAPPINESS

The way wives and husbands communicate is important.

"Well ordered, kindly and pleasant words are as a honeycomb: sweet to the soul, and health to the bones." (Proverbs 16:24) Whether a mate is a believer or not, the Bible counsel applies: "Let your speech be always in grace seasoned with salt, [that is, graciousness in good taste] that you may know how you ought to answer every man." (Colossians 4:6) When one has had a difficult day, a few kind, sympathetic words from one's mate can do much good. "To speak a word in due time, is like apples of gold on beds of silver." (Proverbs 25:11) The tone of voice and the choice of words are very important. For example, in an irritated, demanding manner, one may tell the other: "Shut that door!" But how much more "seasoned with salt" are the words, said in a calm, understanding voice, "Would you mind closing the door, please?"

Review Question: How will proper speech help to keep a marriage happy?

Good communication flourishes when there are gently spoken words, gracious looks and gestures, kindness, understanding, and tenderness. By working hard to maintain good communication, both husband and wife will feel free to make their needs known, and they can be sources of comfort and help to each other in times of disappointment or stress. "Speak consolingly to the depressed," urges God's Word. (1 Thessalonians 5:14 says: "we beseech you, brethren, rebuke the disorderly, comfort the feeble minded, support the weak, be patient towards all") There will be times when the husband is downhearted and times when the wife is. They can "speak consolingly," building each other up.

- Romans 15:2 says: "Let every one of you please his neighbour unto good, to edification."

Review Question: What attitudes do couples need in order to maintain good communication?

TWO KEYS TO A LASTING MARRIAGE

Marriage partners manifesting love and respect will not see every disagreement as a challenge.

They will work hard not to be "bitterly angry" with each other. (Colossians 3:19 says: "Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter towards them.") Both should remember that "A mild answer breaks wrath and rage: but a harsh word stirs up fury." (Proverbs 15:1) Be careful not to belittle or condemn a mate who pours out heartfelt feelings. Instead, view such expressions as an opportunity to gain insight into the other's viewpoint. Together, try to work out differences and come to a harmonious conclusion.

Recall the occasion when Sarah recommended to her husband, Abraham, a solution to a certain problem and it did not coincide with his feelings. Yet, God told Abraham: "Hearken to her voice." (Genesis 21:9-12) Abraham did, and he was blessed. [Bear in mind, of course, that this particular incident was part of God's overall plan for Isaac and Ishmael. Without God's intervention Sarah would have been wiser to have been 'submissive' to her husband's more charitable advice in dealing with an abusive stepson.] Similarly, if a wife suggests something different from what her husband has in mind, he should at least listen. At the same time, a wife should not dominate the conversation but should listen to what her husband has to say. (Proverbs 25:24. Go on, read it!) For either the husband or the wife to insist on his or her own way all the time is unloving and disrespectful.

Review Question: How will love and respect help when there are disagreements? Give an example.

Good communication is also important in a couple's sexual relationship. Selfishness and a lack of self-control can seriously damage this most intimate relationship in marriage. Open communication, along with patience, is essential. When each unselfishly seeks the well-being of the other, sex is rarely a serious problem. In this as in other matters, "Let no one seek his own [advantage], but that which is another's." - First Corinthians 10: 24. 1 Corinthians 7:3-5 says: "Let the husband render the debt to his wife, and the wife also in like manner to the husband. The wife has not power of her own body, but the husband. And in like manner the husband also has not power of his own body, but the wife. Defraud not one another, except, perhaps, by consent, for a time, that you may give yourselves to prayer; and return together again, lest Satan tempt you for your lack of self-control."

Review Question: How will good communication contribute to happiness in the intimate aspects of married life?

FAMILY HAPPINESS

What fine counsel God's Word offers! True, every marriage will have its ups and downs. But when spouses

submit to God our Father's thinking, as revealed in the Church and in the Bible, and base their relationship on principled love and respect, they can be confident that their marriage will be lasting and happy. They thus will honor not only each other but also the Originator of marriage, the Lord God, our Father.

Review Question: Even though every marriage will have its ups and downs, how will listening to God's Word help married couples to find happiness?

HOW CAN THESE BIBLE PRINCIPLES HELP. . .

A COUPLE TO ENJOY A LASTING, HAPPY MARRIAGE?

True Christians love one another.
-John 13:35.

Christians are ready to forgive one another.
- Colossians 3:13.

There is a proper order of headship.
- 1 Corinthians 11:3.

It is important to say the right thing in the right way.
- Proverbs 25:11.

CHAPTER FOUR

How Can You Manage a Household?

"THE world as we know it is passing away." (1 Corinthians 7:31) This world is changing. Those words were written over 1,900 years ago, and how true they are today! Things *are* changing, especially with regard to family life. What was viewed as normal or traditional even only 40 or 50 years ago is often not acceptable today. Because of this, successfully managing a household can present enormous challenges. Nevertheless, if Scriptural counsel is heeded, you can meet those challenges. There is also an enormous wealth of wisdom in the social encyclicals of the Popes, especially since Leo XIII's time.

Review Question: Why can managing a household be so difficult today?

LIVE WITHIN YOUR MEANS

HOW CAN YOU MANAGE A HOUSEHOLD?

Today many people are no longer satisfied with a simple, family-oriented life. As the commercial world produces more and more products and uses its advertising skills to try to entice the public, millions of fathers and mothers spend long hours at work so that they can buy these products. Other millions face a day-to-day struggle just to put some food on the table. They have to spend far more time at work than used to be the case, perhaps holding down two jobs, simply to pay for necessities. Yet others would be happy to find a job, since unemployment is a widespread problem. Yes, life is not always easy for the modern family, but Bible principles, as practiced by millions of your fellow Catholics throughout the world and down through the ages can help families to make the best of the situation.

Review Question: What economic circumstances cause stress in a family?

FAMILY HAPPINESS

The apostle Paul experienced economic pressures. In handling them, he learned a valuable lesson, which he explains in his letter to his friend Timothy. Paul writes: "For we brought nothing into this world: and certainly we can carry nothing out. But having food, and wherewithal to be covered, with these we are content." (1 Timothy 6:7, 8.) True, a family needs more than just food and clothing. It also needs somewhere to live. The children need an education. There are medical bills and other expenses. Still, the principle of Paul's words applies. If we are content to satisfy our *needs*

rather than indulge our *wants*, life will be easier.

Review Question: What principle did the apostle Paul explain, and how can applying it help one to be successful in managing a household?

Another helpful principle is found in one of Jesus' illustrations. He said: "For which of you having a mind to build a tower, does not first sit down, and reckon the charges that are necessary, whether he have wherewithal to finish it?" (Luke 14:28) Jesus is here speaking of forethought, planning ahead. We saw in a previous chapter how this helps when a young couple are thinking of getting married. And after the marriage, it is also helpful in managing a household. Forethought in this area involves having a budget, planning in advance to make the wisest use of available resources. In this way a family can control expenses, setting money aside for spending on essentials each day or each week, and not live beyond its means.

In some countries, such budgeting might mean having to resist the urge to borrow at high interest for unnecessary purchases. (It should be pointed out that charging exorbitant interest, especially when it is exploitative of those who are poor or in straitened circumstances, is a sin and a crime that the good God holds in particular abhorrence.) In other countries, it might mean keeping a tight rein on the use of credit cards. (See Proverbs 22:7.) It might also mean resisting impulse buying-purchasing something on the spur of the moment without weighing needs and consequences. Further, a budget will make it apparent that selfishly wasting money on gambling, smoking tobacco, and excessive drinking harms the family's economic situation, as well as goes contrary to Bible principles. See: - Proverbs 23:20 &21, 29-35; Romans 6:19; Ephesians 5:3-5.

Review Question: How can forethought and planning help in household management?

HOW CAN YOU MANAGE A HOUSEHOLD?

What, though, of those who are forced to live in poverty?

For one thing, they can be comforted to know that this worldwide problem is only temporary. "For we have not here a lasting city, but we seek one that is to come." (Hebrews 13:14) One day Christ shall return and there shall be "a new heavens and a new earth," Revelation 21:1. In this new world, God our Father will have eliminated poverty along with all other evils that cause misery to mankind. There will be no more sin. Solomon, as a Psalmist, prayed the following prayer. Much of it was fulfilled at the first coming of Jesus the Messiah. The remainder foresaw His glorious return at His Second Coming and used beautiful language to describe the bliss of Heaven which "eye has not seen, nor has ear heard, neither has it entered into the heart of man, what things God has prepared for them that love him. (1 Corinthians 2:9) here is the Psalm- prayer:

"A psalm on Solomon: Give to the king your judgment, O God: and to the king's son your justice: To judge your people with justice, and your poor with right judgment. . . For he shall deliver the poor from the mighty: and the needy that had no helper. He shall free and spare the poor and needy: and he shall save the souls of the poor. He shall redeem their souls from exploitation (usuries) and iniquity: and their names shall be precious and honourable in his sight. He shall live, and to him shall be given of the gold of Arabia, for him they shall always adore: they shall bless him all the day. There shall be a firmament on the earth [allegorically this will be His Church] grain everywhere to the tops of mountains, above Mount Lebanon shall the fruit thereof be exalted: and they of the city shall flourish like the grass of the earth. " (Psalm 72: 1, 12-16 [in the Vulgate Psalm 71: 1-2, & 12- 16])

In the meantime, true Christians, even if they are very poor, do not feel total desperation, for they have faith in God our Father's promise: "for he has said: 'I will not leave you, neither will I forsake you.'" (See Deuteronomy 31: 6. Hence, a believer can confidently say: "The Lord is my helper: I will not fear what man shall do to me." (Hebrews 13: 5&6) (And consult Psalm 118:6 [Vulgate Psalm 117:6]) In these difficult days, God our Father has supported his worshipers in the Catholic Church in many ways when they live by his principles and put his Kingdom first in their lives, just as Jesus promised in Matthew 6:33. (I want you to go and look this verse up in your Bibles.) Great numbers of them, Catholics all over the world, can testify, saying, in the words of the apostle Paul: "I know both how to be brought low, and I know how to abound in riches (everywhere, and in all things as I am instructed). I know how both to be full, and to be hungry; both to have plenty and to suffer need. I can do all these things in Him who strengthens me. (Philippians 4:12 & 13)

Review Question: What Scriptural truths help those who have to live in poverty?

A HANDY HINT

Caring for the household is a family project

SHARING THE LOAD

FAMILY HAPPINESS

Toward the end of his earthly ministry, Jesus said: "You must love your neighbor as yourself." (Matthew 22:39) Applying this counsel in the family helps enormously in household management. After all, who are our nearest, dearest neighbors if not those who share the family dwelling – husbands and wives, parents and children? How can family members show love for one another?

Review Question: What words of Jesus, if applied, will help in successful household management?

HOW CAN YOU MANAGE A HOUSEHOLD?

One way is for each family member to do his fair share of household chores. Thus, children need to be taught to put things away after using them, whether these be clothes or toys. It may take time and effort to tidy the bed each morning, but it is a big help in the management of the household. Of course, some minor, temporary disarray is unavoidable, but all can work together to keep the home reasonably neat, as well as to clean up after meals. Laziness, self-indulgence, and a grudging, reluctant spirit have a negative effect on everyone. (Proverbs 26:14-16) On the other hand, a cheerful, willing spirit nourishes a happy family life. "God loves a cheerful giver." - 2 Corinthians 9:7.

Review Question: How can love be expressed within the family?

FAMILY HAPPINESS

Consideration and love will help prevent a situation that is a serious problem in some homes. Mothers have traditionally been the mainstay of home-life. They have cared for the children, cleaned the home, done the family laundry, and purchased and cooked the food. In some lands, women have also customarily worked in the fields, sold produce in the market, or contributed in other ways to the family budget. Even where this was not the custom previously, necessity has compelled millions of married women to find employment outside the home. A wife and mother who works hard in these different areas deserves commendation. Like the "capable wife, - the perfect wife" described in the Bible, her days are well filled. "Who shall find a perfect wife? She is far and above the price of precious pearls . . . She has looked well to the conduct of her household, and she has not eaten the bread of idleness and laziness." (Proverbs 31: 10, 27) This does not mean, though, that a woman is the only one who can work in the home. After a husband and a wife have both worked all day outside the home, should the wife alone bear the burden of work in the house while the husband and the rest of the family relax? Surely not. (Compare 2 Corinthians 8:13, &14.) So, for example, if the mother is going to get a meal ready she may be grateful if other family members help with the preparation by setting the table, doing some of the shopping, or cleaning up a little around the house. Yes, all can share the responsibility.-Compare Galatians 6:2.

Some may say: "Where I live it is not the role of a man to do such things." That may be true, but would it not be good to give this matter some consideration? When the Lord God our Father originated the family, he did not mandate that certain work would be done only by women. On one occasion, when the faithful man Abraham was visited by special messengers from the Lord God, he personally shared in the preparation and serving of a meal for the visitors. (Genesis 18:1-8) The Bible counsels: "So also ought the men [husbands] love their wives as their own bodies. He that loves his wife, loves himself." (Ephesians 5:28) If, at the end of the day, the husband is tired and wants to rest, is it not likely that the wife feels the same way, perhaps more so? (1 Peter 3:7 says: "Husbands, likewise dwelling with their wives according to knowledge, giving honour to the female as to the weaker vessel, and as to the co-heirs of the grace of life: that your prayers be not hindered.") Then, would it not be appropriate and loving for the husband to help out at home? – See Philippians 2:3, 4.

Review Questions:

- (a) What burden often rests on the woman of the house, and how can this be lightened?
- (b) What balanced view of house-work is suggested?

Jesus is the best example of one who pleased God and brought happiness to his associates. Although he never married, Jesus is a good example for husbands, as well as for wives and children. He said of himself: "Even as the Son of man is not come to be ministered unto, but to minister," that is, to serve others." (Matthew 20:28) How delightful are those families in which all members cultivate such an attitude!

Review Question: In what way did Jesus set a fine example for each member of the household?

CLEAN WATER, GOOD HEALTH

The World Health Organization offers some practical suggestions for people in countries where clean water may be difficult to obtain and sanitary conditions may be primitive.

"Collect and store drinking-water in clean containers. Keep the storage container covered and do not allow children or animals to drink from it. . . . Take out water only with a long-handled dipper that is kept especially for that purpose. Empty and rinse out the container every day.

"Boil water that will be used to make food or drinks for young children. . . . Water needs to boil for only a few seconds."

CLEANLINESS-WHY SO IMPORTANT?

HOW CAN YOU MANAGE A HOUSEHOLD?

Another Bible principle that can help in the management of a household is found at 2 Corinthians 7:1. There we read: "Having therefore these promises [from God], dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of the flesh and of the spirit, perfecting sanctification in the fear of God." Thus, having been called to be God's children we are called to the perfection of holiness. Those who obey these inspired words are acceptable to God our Father, who requires "Religion that is clean and undefiled before God and the Father, and it is this: to visit the fatherless and widows in their tribulation: and to keep one's self unspotted from this world." (James 1:27) And their household receives associated benefits.

Review Question: What does God our Father require of those who serve him?

The Bible assures us that the day will come when disease and sickness will be no more. Upon Christ's return in glory, as promised in Revelation 21:1, we will live in the "lasting city that is to come" (which is how Hebrews 13:14 speaks of Heaven and the Resurrection of the dead). Many prophets foresaw this glorious destiny and often spoke of it, frequently using very concrete and material illustrations of what a perfect state of bliss it will be. Thus Isaiah in 33:24 says that at that time, "Neither shall he that is there, say: 'I am feeble and sickly'. The people that dwell therein, shall have their iniquity taken away from them." Saint John the Revelator wrote of the New Jerusalem coming down from Heaven and of those destined to enjoy it: "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes: and death shall be no more, nor mourning, nor crying, nor sorrow shall be any more, for the former things are passed away. And He that sat on the throne, said: 'Behold, I make all things new'. And He said to me: 'Write, for these words are most faithful and true'." Revelation 21:4, 5) Until then, however, every family has to handle sickness from time to time. Even Saint Paul and Saint Timothy got sick. (Galatians 4:13; 1 Timothy 5:23) Still, medical experts say that much sickness is preventable. Wise families escape some preventable illnesses if they avoid fleshly and spiritual uncleanness. Let us consider how. - Compare Proverbs 22:3 which says: "The prudent man saw the evil, and hid himself: the ignorant passed on, and suffered loss."

Review Question: Why is cleanliness important in household management?

FAMILY HAPPINESS

Cleanness of spirit includes moral cleanness. As is well-known, the Bible promotes high moral standards and condemns any kind of sexual intimacy outside marriage. "Know you not that the unjust shall not possess the kingdom of God? Do not err: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor the effeminate catamites (men kept for unnatural purposes), nor the sodomites with mankind, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor slanderers, nor extortionists, shall possess the kingdom of God" (First Corinthians 6:9, 10) Observing these strict standards is very important for Christians living in today's degenerate world. Doing so pleases God and also helps to protect the family from sexually transmitted diseases such as AIDS, syphilis, gonorrhea, and Chlamydia. – See Proverbs 7:10-23 for a fatherly warning against the temptations of a wanton harlot and adulteress.

Review Question: In what way can moral cleanness protect a family from sickness?

'Cleansing oneself of every defilement of flesh' ('and of the spirit') helps to protect the family from other sicknesses. Many diseases are caused by a lack of mere physical cleanness. One example is diarrhea and dysentery. Another is the smoking habit. (It is to be recalled that Native Americans only smoked tobacco on rare formal occasions and did not readily succumb to the addiction that became so prevalent following the Industrial Revolution.) Not only does smoking befoul the lungs, the clothes, and the very air but it also makes people ill. (Smoking, however, unhealthy as it is, is not one of the sinful habits. This is not the case when you consider the abuse of another of God's gifts to mankind, alcohol. Drunkenness, involving the surrender of one of God's greatest gifts, man's

free-will, is seriously sinful.) Nevertheless, let's not forget that millions of people die each year because they smoked tobacco. Think of it; each year millions of people would not have fallen ill and died prematurely if they had avoided that 'defilement of the flesh'!

Review Question: Give some examples of a lack of physical cleanness that can cause unnecessary illness.

A HANDY HINT

Keeping things clean is cheaper than buying medicine

HOW CAN YOU MANAGE A HOUSEHOLD?

Consider another example. About 3,600 years ago or so, God gave the nation of Israel his Law in order to organize their worship and, to a degree, their every-day life. Moses said to the people on one occasion: "For what other nation is there so renowned that has ceremonies, and just judgments, and all this law, which I will set forth this day before your eyes?" (Deuteronomy 4:8) Israel's law was the envy of the ancient nations due, among other things, to the wisdom of the health regulations which were embodied within that Law. That Law helped to protect the nation from disease by putting in place some basic rules of hygiene. One such law had to do with the disposal of human waste, which had to be properly buried away from the camp so that the area where people lived would not be polluted. (Deuteronomy 23:12&13) That ancient law is still good counsel. Even today people get sick and die because they do not follow it.

Footnote: In a manual advising how to avoid diarrhea - a common disease that leads to many infant deaths - the World Health Organization states: "If there is no latrine: defecate away from the house, and from areas where children play, and at least 10 metres from the water supply; cover the faeces with earth."

"In harmony with the principle behind that Israelite law, the family's bathroom and toilet area - whether inside or outside the dwelling - should be kept clean and disinfected. If the toilet area is not kept clean and covered, flies will gather there and spread germs to other areas of the home-and onto the food we eat! Further, children and adults should wash their hands after visiting this area. Otherwise, they bring germs back with them on their skin. An Indian doctor, Dr T.V. Rao, M.D. has this to say: "The two biggest killers of children in the developing world today are diarrheal disease and respiratory tract infections. The simple act of washing hands with soap can cut diarrhea risk by almost half, and respiratory tract infection by a third. This makes hand washing a better option for disease prevention than any single vaccine." What is true of digestive and respiratory infections is also true of skin infections.

Review Questions:

- (a) What particular law given by God our Father protected the Israelites from certain illnesses?
- (b) How can the principle behind Deuteronomy 23:12, 13 be applied in all households?

FAMILY HAPPINESS

True, cleanliness is a challenge in a poor neighborhood. Once a missionary who is acquainted with such localities explained: "The oppressively hot climate makes the work of cleaning doubly hard. Dust storms cover every crevice of a house with fine brown powder. Burgeoning populations in cities, as well as in some rural areas, also create health hazards. Open sewers, piles of uncollected garbage, filthy communal toilets, disease-carrying rats, cockroaches, and flies have become common sights."

Maintaining cleanliness under these conditions is difficult. Still, it is worth the effort. Soap and water and a little extra work are cheaper than medicine and hospital bills. If you live in such an environment, as far as possible, keep your own house and yard clean and free of animal droppings. If the path to your home tends to get muddy during rainy periods, could you put down gravel or stones to help keep mud out of the house? If shoes or sandals are used, can these be removed before the wearer enters the home? Also, you must keep your water supply free from contamination. It is estimated that at least two million deaths a year are due to diseases associated with dirty water and poor sanitation.

Review Question: What suggestions are given for maintaining a clean house even in a poor neighborhood?

HOW CAN YOU MANAGE A HOUSEHOLD?

A clean home depends on everyone-mother, father, children, and visitors. One mother of eight children in Uganda said: "All have learned to do their part." A clean, tidy home reflects well on the whole family. A Sicilian proverb states: "There is no conflict between poverty and cleanliness." Whether one lives in a mansion, an apartment, a humble home, or a shack, cleanliness is a key to a healthier family.

Review Question: If the house is to be clean, who must share the responsibility?

ENCOURAGEMENT MAKES US FLOURISH

When discussing the capable wife, the perfect wife, the book of Proverbs says: "Her children rose up, and called her blessed and happy: her husband also, and he praised her." (Proverbs 31:28) When was the last time you commended a member of your family? Really, we are like plants in springtime that are ready to blossom when they receive some warmth and moisture. In our case, we need the warmth of commendation. It helps for a wife to know that her husband appreciates her hard work and loving care and that he does not take her for granted. ("A word in due time is best." Proverbs 15:23. See also Proverbs 25:11.) It is also so pleasant when a wife commends her husband for his work outside and inside the home. Children too blossom when their parents praise them for their efforts at home, at school, or in the Church (at Mass and elsewhere). And how far a little gratitude goes! What does it cost to say: "Thank you"? Very little, yet the return in family morale can be great.

Review Question: In harmony with Proverbs 31:28, what will help to bring happiness to a household'?

FAMILY HAPPINESS

For many reasons, managing a household is not easy. Still, it can be done with success. A Bible proverb says: "By wisdom the household shall be built, and by prudence and discernment it shall be strengthened." (Proverbs 24:3) Wisdom and discernment can be gained if all in the family strive to learn God's will and to apply it in their lives. A happy family is surely worth the effort!

Review Question: What is needed for a household to be "strengthened and firmly established." and how can this be obtained?

HOW CAN THESE BIBLE PRINCIPLES HELP...

A FAMILY TO MANAGE THEIR HOUSEHOLD?

It is wise to be satisfied with the necessities of life.

"For we brought nothing into this world: and certainly we can carry nothing out. But having food, and wherewithal to be covered, with these we are content."

- 1 Timothy 6:7, 8.

God our Father will not forsake those who serve him.

"The Lord is my helper: I will not fear what man shall do to me."

- Hebrews 13:5,6.

Love for others is an outstanding Christian quality.

"You must love your neighbor as yourself."

- Matthew 22:39.

"A new commandment I give unto you" says Jesus: "That you love one another, as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love, one for another.

- John 13:34-35

Christians keep clean in body and spirit.

"Dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of the flesh and of the spirit, perfecting sanctification in the fear of God."

- 2 Corinthians 7:1.