

I. Family Dynamics

- A. Headship in the Family - There does seem to be biblical implications that the father carries the primary responsibility and role of head of the family unit. We covered husband and wife dynamics in our last session so we are going to focus on what this means when it comes to parental roles and responsibilities. The headship of the father implies that he carries the primary responsibility of providing and protecting the children. Biblically, this responsibility is carried out by laying down one's own life and serving those he has authority over. (Eph. 1:22-2:10, 5:22-29; Col. 1:18-20)
- B. Children Honor Your Parents - Scripture commands believers to intentionally honor their parents as a lifestyle throughout their days. There is no debate concerning this command itself, however, the debate abounds concerning the practicals of this command. Scripture itself gives us some very clear guidelines for the healthy practical ways this is to be walked out. (Mat. 18:21-22; Mk. 7:9-13; Eph. 4:14-16; 1 Tim. 5:3-8; 1 Thes. 5:12-13)
1. Obedience to Parents - The command to obey is a form of honoring parents but different in that it is only given to children. Obedience to parents is to be done because it's righteous and loving unto the Lord, not because parents are always right. (Eph. 6:1; Col. 3:20)
 - Children are not obligated to obey when the parents ask them to sin nor are they to carry this obligation of obedience into adulthood. (Num. 14:29)
- C. Parents do not Provoke your Children - The word provoke can be translated to exasperate, or embitter. Parents are called to walk out their role of leadership by leading like Jesus leads us in the fruits of the Spirit. As we looked at earlier, fathers hold the primary responsibility, so this command is primarily pointed at fathers, but mothers should not exasperate their children either. (Eph. 6:4; Col. 3:21)
- D. Unhealthy Dynamics - The signs or practices of what the bible teaches as unhealthy or dysfunctional in parent/child relationships are universal. If you find yourself walking any of these things out in your marriage, or have friends in these types of situations, you need to make a priority of eliminating these kinds of practices or behaviors.

1. Neglect of Parenting - There is a growing philosophical trend in our day that promotes non-parenting as a loving and virtuous parenting tactic that allows children to truly express and find themselves. This is absolute nonsense and extremely unhealthy. Children need parental guidance and discipline because they are children. (Pro. 22:6,15; Heb. 12:5-9)

2. Unchecked Carnal Parenting Tactics - All of us have stumbled into carnal or non-loving (according to the fruit of the Spirit) parenting tactics. When this happens we need to adjust and ask forgiveness from our kids. Carnal parenting will result in teaching or training your kids to be carnal. It's as simple as that. Here are some common carnal parenting tactics to avoid. (Pro. 15:1; Gal. 6:7-9)
 - a. Disciplining in Anger or Haste - It's generally a mistake to react or respond in disciplining your children when you're angry. Godly parenting requires forethought and guidance from the Lord, not from hasty reaction done in the moment.

 - b. Constant Yelling/Screaming - Raising your voice can be a very helpful parenting tool to get attention or to convey the extreme seriousness of the situation. Yelling all of the time (daily or multiple times daily) actually results in ineffectiveness, fuels disdain, and teaches your children that yelling is the correct way to communicate when upset.

 - c. Withholding Forgiveness - Do not create a demand for obedience without creating an atmosphere of forgiveness. Without this, the child doesn't know what to do with his own sins, which he knows he commits. Every kid knows he does bad things. Therefore, every command starts to feel like a potential digging of a deeper hole of guilt. Without a pattern of confession and forgiveness, the children become secretive and deceitful. They also need to feel forgiven by you once the disobedience has been addressed.

 - d. Demanding without Reason - Insisting on obedience without reason is not teaching or training. The "Because I said so" tactic will simply lead children to resentment and resistance.

E. Abusive Dynamics

1. Insisting on obedience past childhood - Parents should never insist upon their children obeying them once they become adults. This is a very unbiblical practice and does not uphold the dignity of the free will that God gives all mankind. When your children become adults hopefully they will desire your advice, and when you give it, it should be given without expectation. (Eze 34:4; 1 Pet. 5:2-3)
2. Physical Abuse - There is a massive difference between spanking a toddler when it's appropriate and physically beating a child. Physical beatings are abusive and wrong no matter what the circumstance. (Gal. 5:19-21)
3. Manipulation through Spiritual Fear - Parents should never use fear of demonic spiritual repercussion or God's punishment as a manipulative leverage tool to solicit obedience. Manipulation and control tactics through fear are always wicked and egregious to the Lord's heart, especially when it comes to children, and in my opinion, is the worst form of spiritual abuse. (Mat. 18:5-6)

"The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." (Rom. 8:15)

II. Church Dynamics

- A. Church Government - The elders and deacons of the church family have been given the responsibility of provision and protection of the members, just as the fathers of the household have been given that same authoritative responsibility to provide for and protect their families. They have been given authority (strength and responsibility) by the Lord to sacrificially serve the needs of the church family. (Acts 20:28; 1 Tim. 3:2-5; 1 Pet. 5:1-4)
- B. Submission to Elders - In the same way that parents are to be honored and submitted to, God asks us to submit ourselves to our elders as unto the Lord, making a free-will love-based choice to do so. (Heb. 13:17; 1 Pet 5:5)

- C. Elders Chosen Based on Merit - This is a massive point and cannot be stressed enough. Authority in the church is given to those who have shown through faithful ongoing Godly character that they are deemed worthy to carry the mantle of elder for a season. This worthiness of position is maintained through merit of Godly character, even while they are in the seat of elders by their accountability to the members. The same goes for the position of deacon. (1 Tim. 3:1-13)
1. Elders have Authority not Apostles - The scriptures make a very clear distinction between the spiritual gift of “apostle” and the original 12 disciples or “apostles” of Jesus who had governmental authority. It is critical that we understand that in our day those that have the gift of an apostle are given that gift by grace, not through merit of character. This is the case for all of the spiritual gifts. In other words, no matter how powerful or impactful the spiritual gift someone has, they can have severe character deficiencies and as such, shouldn’t hold any authority of governance in the church family. (Rom. 12:3-8; 1 Cor. 12-14; Eph. 4:7-11)
 2. Spiritual Covering - This term is used to imply a form of spiritual protection from demonic influence and positioning for blessing. This idea is usually accompanied by some form of submission to authority (elders or leaders) which then positions you to be “covered”. There is no explicit verse in the bible where this idea is mentioned and the term “spiritual covering” is also foreign to the scripture. There is no such thing as some kind of spiritual force field that keeps demonic activity out because you have biblical church governance in place. The strength of protection from demonic influence lies within the fellowship, ministry, prayers, and accountability of a church family. (1 Cor. 5:5; 1 Tim. 1:20)
- D. Unhealthy Dynamics - If any of these dynamics are at play in your church family, or in the church family of someone you know, they are in an unhealthy church environment. Intentional changes are needed in order to bring it back into alignment with the instructions of scripture concerning church family health.
1. Authority Based Upon Gifting - There is a difference between someone who brings a message and someone who has authority. There is nothing wrong with the elders giving someone who has a gift a platform to use it; in fact, that is one of the roles of an elder. The issue arises when elders or deacons are chosen or put in place because they have a strong gifting.

2. Autonomous Authority - The elders are accountable to the church family and therefore there needs to be a system of accountability in place to the members, or another group or two of leaders in the church. Otherwise, a few individuals will end up operating unchecked autonomously. Autonomous authority is in general fertile soil for unhealthy leadership dynamics. (1 Tim. 5:19-20)
 3. Sole Authority - There is no biblical model put forth by scripture for church governance where there is one individual who holds sole authority. Over and over we are instructed that there should be a plurality of elders who share the authority and responsibility of overseeing the church. (1 Tim. 5:17; Titus 1:5; James 5:14; 1 Pet. 5:1)
- E. Abusive Dynamics - If you find yourself in any of these situations in your church family dynamics, you need to bring it to light immediately.
1. Spiritual Control/Manipulation - Any church leader or leaders who would threaten you with demonic oppression or being out of God's blessing or protection if you don't submit to them, or if you bring an accusation against them, is being manipulative. Not only is their threat empty, it is extremely evil. (Eph 6:12-16; 2 Cor. 12:7; 1 Pet. 4:12)
 2. Touch not the Lords Anointed - Elders are called to hear out accusations against church leaders in order to make sure there is accountability and transparency in the church family. If there is no place for this, or this accountability is viewed as wicked because you're touching the Lords anointed, this is an abuse of leadership and a very unhealthy environment. (Ps. 105:5-15)
 3. Weaponizing of Matthew 18 - Many times in cases of abusive control, Matthew 18 will be weaponized as a way for unhealthy leaders to silence or not allow church members to bring accountability. If our concerns are not heard or deferred through the guise of Matthew 18 repeatedly, then you're in a very difficult situation. (1 Tim. 5:19-20)