

# **BUILDING UNITY IN YOUR FAMILY**

## **I. DESTROYERS OF FAMILY UNITY**

### **A. Attitudes and Behaviors that Destroy Families**

- Pride vs. Humility

Proverbs 8:13: “The fear of the LORD is to hate evil: pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the forward mouth, do I hate.”

- Honor vs. Disrespect

Ephesians 5:2,4: “Honor your father and mother (this is the first commandment with a promise) that it may go well with you)...Fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath...”

- Obedience vs. Rebellion

1 Samuel 15:23: “For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, he hath also rejected thee from being king.”

Hebrews 3:8: “Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, on the day of testing in the wilderness.”

- Encouragement vs. Strife

Proverbs 29:22: “A man of wrath stirs up strife, and one given to anger causes much transgression.”

Philippians 2:1: “So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy,”

## **II. RECONCILIATION IN RELATIONSHIPS**

### **A. Understanding One Another (1 Peter 3:8-12)**

*“ Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind. Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless, for to this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing. For whoever desires to love life and see good days, let him keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit; let him turn away from evil and do good; let him seek peace and pursue it. For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayer. But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.”*

#### **How walls build around our hearts in marriage & family relationships:**

1. Unresolved hurts bring rejection (lack of emotional understanding and heart forgiveness).
2. Most people do not know how to resolve ruptures in a relationship so that they both feel better.
3. Each hurt is a brick in the wall they build around their hearts.

## Responding to others to bring reconciliation (heart-felt living and true forgiveness)

1. **“Be ye all of one mind”**
  - To think the same regarding the need to love each other.
2. **“Having compassion one of another”**
  - Five English words for one Greek word: Verb form of *sumpatheo*—*sumpathes*—literally means, “to feel together with.”
3. **“Love as brethren”**
  - *Phileo* love as a fellow countryman (family type)
4. **“Be pitiful”**
  - compassionate at heart.
5. **“Be courteous”**
  - demonstrate humility in your attitude.

## B. Forgiveness (Matthew 18:21-35)

1. **Bitterness is something Satan can use to bring destruction to a marriage and family.** When unresolved within a person’s spirit, bitterness creates resentment, anger, and emotional damage. Paul traces the development of unresolved bitterness in Ephesians 4:31. Bitterness leads to wrath (outbursts of anger), wrath leads to anger (rage, constant state of anger), anger leads to clamor (making a public scene), clamor is followed by slander (derogatory, injurious speech), and slander leads to malice (inner hatred of heart). The natural consequence of harboring an attitude of bitterness is that it eventually controls you.
2. **Scripture warns against bitterness.** Paul warns that bitterness is like a “root.” The longer it is allowed to grow, it becomes more difficult to get rid of it. Hebrews 12:15 states that a root of bitterness left to grow will bring defilement to many. This root will produce the blighted fruit of anger, ungratefulness, a critical attitude, insensitivity to others, revenge, mistrust and depression. Unresolved bitterness is also like a highly contagious disease that has a contaminating and destructive effect on others.
3. **The cure for bitterness is heart forgiveness.** In order to resolve bitterness, we must first understand and experience God’s forgiveness of our sin. God chose to focus on His desire to forgive us rather than to hold us accountable for our failures (Isaiah 43:25; 55:7; Psalm 103:12). He could have demanded justice and required us to pay for our sins, but instead placed them on Jesus Christ. He satisfied the payment on our behalf. The moment we believe by faith that Christ died for us, we are set free from the penalty of our sins.
4. **Forgiveness demands a payment.** When someone has sinned against us and hurt us, our sense of justice demands that a fair payment be made to us for their failure. If that person cannot pay or chooses not to pay, we resent the injustice and either become bitter and angry, leading to depression, or we can exercise forgiveness leading to peace. If we choose to forgive, as God forgave us, and assume the emotional debt or payment for the pain that person caused us, we will be free from resentment, bitterness, anger, and depression. As we free the offender through forgiveness, we become free from the effects of holding on to those damaging attitudes.
5. **Forgiveness isn’t easy.** We never feel like forgiving someone who has hurt us because deep inside we believe they deserve to pay for the damage they caused us. Forgiveness involves our willingness to go to the cross for the person who has hurt us and to embrace the emotional pain they have caused us. Jesus didn’t feel like going to the cross, but chose the

Father's will (Matthew 26:39). Forgiveness is taking the focus off of ourselves and graciously choosing to go to the cross on behalf of the wrongdoer.

6. **Forgiveness involves:**

- A choice: The offended person can choose to forgive or not to forgive.
- Releasing: It is the voluntary act of releasing someone from the emotional damage caused by his sin and no longer holding him responsible for the consequences of that failure.
- Substitution: One person pays for the emotional pain that another caused. In doing so, the debt of emotional damage is paid (assumed).

7. **Resolving bitterness involves:**

- Make the choice to forgive your husband unconditionally.
- Accept and release the emotional pain from within your heart by forgiving him.
- Allow the Lord to heal the pain within our hearts.
- Begin to build trust in your relationship again.

### **III. HELP IN RESOLVING CONFLICTS**

#### **A. Good Communication Skills**

##### **Rules of Communication (Eph. 4:25-32)**

*“Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love. Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart.”*

- The Greek imperative—speak, people cannot read our minds.
- Speak truth—we are always to speak the truth!
- Speak the truth in love—we must not be brutal with the truth.
- We must have the person's best interest in mind.
- Care must be given not to just what we say but how we say it.
- Godly communication is evidence of a changed life.

##### **Effective Communication**

- One of the most difficult things in life is communication. Effective communication has not occurred until the following things happen.
  1. Person A — tells the message or feelings to person B.
  2. Person B — listens to the message of person A.
  3. Person B — repeats the message back to person A and says, “Is this what you meant?”
  4. Person A — responds by either “Yes” or “No.”
  5. If the answer is no then the whole process is repeated.
  6. Then person B shares his message or feelings with person A, and the whole process is repeated.

##### **Elements Assumed if not Communicated Effectively**

- Assumptions—false assumptions are well-packaged lies. On the outside they appear to be true to us, but on the inside they are deceptive and cause us great harm in relationships.

- Perception of events—specific details of circumstances as you perceived or understood them.
- Mood—what mood are you in?
- Feelings—emotional response.
- Meaning of Words—meaning of words as in the person- not in the dictionary.
- Values—how important is something to you on a scale of 1-10.
- Motives—reasons or why?
- Meaning of tone of voice used—what was meant by your tone of voice?
- Meaning of body language—what did your body language express?
- Anticipated response—how well do you think others will respond?
- Personal preferences—what would you prefer to be done?

## B. Biblical Solutions

<b><i>Destructive when in the Flesh</i></b>	Constructive when in the Spirit
Family members do not understand the value of conflict that naturally comes when other opinions and perspectives are shared.	Family members understand the need to hear the other side so responsible decisions can be made (Ephesians 5:21).
There is a competitive climate that implies a win-lose situation.	There is a cooperative spirit and commitment to the marriage that searches for a win-win situation (1 Peter 3:7).
“Getting my own way” is all important.	Doing it God’s way is all important (Colossians 3:23; Ephesians 5:10,17).
People employ all kinds of defense mechanisms including: projection, suppression, blame, withdrawal and aggression.	People are not defensive and know that disagreements evolve from the other person’s sincere concern for the marriage (Philippians 2:3).
People are locked into their own viewpoints, unwilling to consider the perspective and ideas of their mates.	People believe they will eventually come to an agreement that is better than any one individual’s suggestion (Philippians 2:2).
People resort to personal attacks instead of focusing on the issues.	Disagreements are confined to issues rather than personalities (Ephesians 4:15).
Personal ideas and opinions are valued over the marriage and family relationship.	The marriage and family relationship is more important than the need to win or be right (Philippians 2:14-15).