

Lesson 8

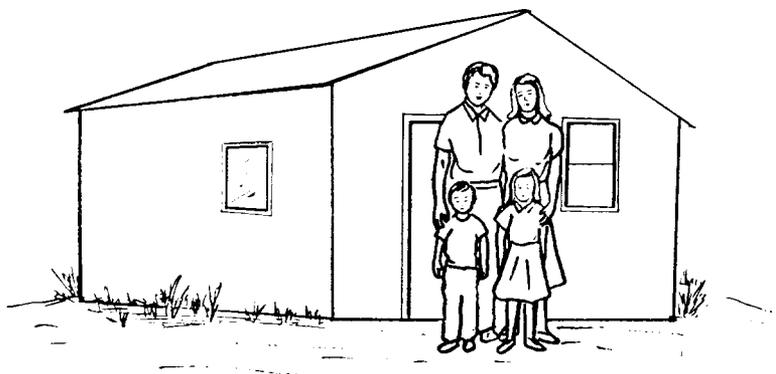
Our Homes

To know how to manage money and possessions is not the only important requirement for being a workman of the Lord. The apostle Paul tells us that one of the basic requirements of a church leader or helper is to be a good steward of his home also. In fact, his argument is very simple: If a man does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of the church of God (1 Timothy 3:5)? Of course, Paul refers here to managing a family according to God's instructions.

As a Christian worker or believer, you need to know what to do in order to be a good steward of your home. This lesson has been written to help you to meet this need. Through your study of this lesson, you will learn how to manage your family and to use your house as God wants you to. You will also be able to share these teachings in your church or community.

lesson outline

The Christian Family
The Christian's House



lesson objectives

When you finish this lesson you should be able to:

- Describe the duties of each member of the Christian family including those of its steward.
- List several ways you can use your home for God's glory.
- Realize the importance of exercising stewardship over your home.

learning activities

1. Be sure to carefully read the lesson and study every part of it.
2. Answer the study questions, then check your answers with the ones that are given. When you have completed the lesson, review it. Then take the self-test and check your answers.
3. As you study this lesson, ask the Lord to help you make the truths you learn in it a part of your life. You may discover some principles that you can begin to apply even now!

key words

abnormality

arbitrary

authority

commitment

dictatorial

founder

harbor

integrity

oasis

source

symbol

lesson development



THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY

Its Founder

Objective 1. *Identify the reason why God is the founder and owner of the family.*

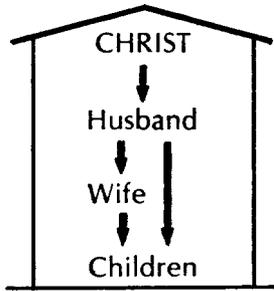
God is the founder of the family. He set it up when He created the man and the woman (Genesis 1:27) and gave them the command to have children (Genesis 1:28). As founder of the family, God has the ownership rights over it. It is *His* family and therefore He is its owner.

- 1 God is the founder and owner of the family because He
 - a) knew man would fail.
 - b) created it.
 - c) commanded it to obey Him.

Its Pattern

Objective 2. *Describe the pattern that the Christian family should follow.*

The Christian family is one whose members live together according to the pattern established by God. Read 1 Corinthians 11:3 and Ephesians 5:22—6:4 to see the principles of authority and relationship which God intends to be part of this pattern. Christ is shown as head of the husband and the husband as the head of the wife. The children are subject to their parents. In other words, each family member is subject to the respective authorities God has placed over him or her. These relationships can be seen in the following diagram.



But there is more to it. These verses also show *how* this authority is to operate within the family. The pattern is the relationship between Christ and the church. It is Christ's example of authority, leadership, and love which is to be followed by those who exercise authority in the family. Christ was never a dictatorial or arbitrary leader. He led His disciples by giving loving direction and guidance, and by offering His life as an example.

Above all, Christ must be recognized as the supreme authority by all family members. Only then does the family operate as God designed it to. Actually, it would be impossible to imagine a truly Christian family without Christ as its head.

2 In your notebook, write out two or three sentences in your own words which describe the pattern a Christian family should follow. Give the Bible reference to the verses which tell about this pattern.

Its Members' Duties

Objective 3. *Identify statements about the relationships between family members that agree with what the Bible teaches.*

In order for a family to work according to God's plan, each of its members should fulfill his or her respective duties.

Married Couples

God took the married couple into account in His plans for the family. In fact He said: "It is not good for the man to live alone. I will make a suitable companion to help him" (Genesis 2:18). But God made the woman from the man's body, and then ruled

that the man and the woman would be one body again through marriage (Genesis 2:24)! What a deep mystery there is in all of this (Ephesians 5:32-33)!

To preserve this unity God has established certain rules that both partners should follow alike. These rules are the following:

1. *Do not deny yourselves to each other.* This is how the apostle Paul says it in 1 Corinthians 7:3-5, referring to the marital relations. Does this surprise you? The Bible has a lot to say about the wrong use of sexual relations, but this is almost the only passage which teaches the rightful use. And of course, the rightful use of sexual relations is limited to the sphere of marriage.

Marriage begins with the physical union of the couple (Genesis 2:24). It is very natural, then, that the Scripture gives us a norm for the continuation of this union. According to this norm, each partner should satisfy the sexual needs of the other, because they are *no longer owners of their own bodies; each one belongs to the other*. If the couple obey this principle and follow the norm which comes from it, their marriage will be happier and unfaithfulness will be greatly discouraged.

3 Read 1 Corinthians 7:3-5 and answer the following questions.

a What is the only time when marriage partners should deny sexual relationships to each other?

.....

b What condition must be met first?

.....

2. *Be faithful to each other.* When a man and woman are joined in marriage in the Lord, they promise to be faithful to each other. But God wants these promises to be honored in their married life. Both the husband and the wife should remember that their bodies belong first to the Lord and then to their partner.

The apostle Paul points out that if a believer joins his body to a prostitute he makes that part of the body of Christ become part of the body of that prostitute! For his body is part of the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 6:15-17). Likewise, if husbands or wives

join their bodies to another person, they are uniting the body of their partner to the body of that person! This is so because their bodies belong to their partners and each body is one with that of the partner.

Unfaithfulness is thus an abnormality; it is the union of one part of the body of the couple with the body of a stranger. It is no wonder that it would bring about so much distress in a marriage.

3. *Do not separate what God has joined together.* Jesus said that from the moment a man and a woman come together as husband and wife, they are no longer two. From then onward they are one only, because God has united them (Matthew 19:6). This makes divorce an abnormality also, a human interference in matters belonging to God. The partners should not be divorced because they have no right to separate what God has joined together.

Although divorce was permitted in Old Testament times, we shouldn't forget that Jesus taught that this permission was given because men were so hard to teach (Matthew 19:8). The norm set up by God from the beginning has never been canceled.

4. *Love each other.* The idea that a man and woman marry because of romantic love has been widely adopted in modern times. Love is considered to be the mutual attraction between a man and a woman. And when this attraction ceases, there seems to be reason to dissolve the marriage. But on the contrary, the Scripture *commands* the couple to love each other (Ephesians 5:25, Titus 2:4). So if a couple think that their marriage is over because they no longer love each other, *it is time that they begin to love each other*, that is, to obey what the Lord tells them.

What is the biblical idea of love? It certainly doesn't mean just a purely physical and emotional attraction. There is a lot of self-gratification in that kind of love. On the contrary, the love the Bible teaches is a self-giving love. Each partner thinks about what he or she can give to the other. This is the love that Paul teaches in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7. This is the love that will keep the ship of matrimony afloat in the stormy waters of life.

5. *Commit yourselves to each other.* Commitment is essential to Christian marriage. This commitment includes commitment to one another and commitment to make God a part of your lives together. It means commitment to *find a way* to solve the problems of understanding and relating to each other which trouble all of us at some point in our married lives. Only when the basis of marriage includes commitment can there be a foundation for marital harmony and stability. The commitment of Christ to His own gives us a beautiful example of the enduring quality of this kind of commitment (John 13:1).

6. *Respect each other.* The married couple should have mutual respect for each other, even when it seems to one that the other doesn't deserve it (Ephesians 5:33, 1 Peter 3:7). They should have a high regard for each other. Neither should be considered inferior to the other, since both are one. This would be like demeaning one's own self. The wife should respect her husband because he is the authority God has placed over her; and the husband should respect his wife because she is the suitable companion that God gave him and the one who will receive God's gift of life together with him (1 Peter 3:7).

4 Circle the letter in front of each statement that is TRUE according to what the Bible teaches about married couples.

- a** Couples who no longer love each other should not try to continue their marriage.
- b** A wife or a husband should not refuse to satisfy the physical needs of his or her partner.
- c** Divorce is wrong primarily because children are usually affected by it.

Wives

The Scripture points out two specific duties of Christian wives.

1. *Submit yourselves to your husbands.* In early times, the wife was the slave of her husband, but among the Israelites she occupied a much better position. However, it is in Christ that the woman has come to have a position of true dignity, because in Christ "there is no difference" between men and women

(Galatians 3:28). But in marriage God has given a specific pattern of relationship, responsibility, and authority.

In Ephesians 5:22-33 we see that while the husband has been given the responsibility of providing the leadership and guidance for the home, the wife has been given the duty of submitting herself to his leadership and authority just as the church submits to the leadership of Christ (Ephesians 5:22, 24; Colossians 3:18; Titus 2:5; 1 Peter 3:1, 5).

It is hard for some wives to understand what it means to be submissive. They think that there should be complete equality between the man and the woman in every area of life. But this is not realistic, since men and women are different in many ways. It is true that each has the same spiritual rights and responsibilities before God. But it is also true that people who have the same rights freely choose leaders to whom they submit themselves. And so in marrying, the wife freely chooses to become part of a home and thus to submit to the authority which is included in the pattern God designed for the home. God did not intend for men and women to compete with each other, but to complement and complete one another (1 Corinthians 11:11-12). Happiness and harmony can exist only when this is true.

2. *Be good housewives.* Another one of the obligations God has laid on the wives is to take care of the house (Titus 2:5). Notice the wonderful praise which this kind of wife receives in Proverbs 31:10-31.

5 Suppose a young wife asks you this question: "Why should I submit to my husband when Galatians 3:28 says there is no difference between men and women?" In your notebook, write out an answer to her question including some Scriptures you could share.

Husbands

God lays on the husband one main obligation: to *love his wife* (Ephesians 5:25; Colossians 3:19). But what are the characteristics of this love? Let us examine them in the light of Scripture.

1. *The husband's love for his wife is a self-giving love.* He is ready even to give his life for his wife, just as Christ did for the church because His love for it was so great (Ephesians 5:25). This is certainly courageous love, love which has reached its fullest expression.

2. *The husband's love for his wife is a self-loving love.* This seems strange, doesn't it? Still more, it seems to contradict the previous statement; but it is what the Bible says: "A man who loves his wife loves himself" (Ephesians 5:28). He doesn't love someone *else*, as does the man who loves his neighbor, but he loves himself. He loves his wife the way he loves his body; he provides food for her and cares for her as he does for his own body, because, after all, the two are really one (Ephesians 5:29). He is considerate of his wife's needs and concerns, just as Christ is of the needs and concerns of the church. By doing this he is acting the way Christ treats the church, which is His body.

3. *The husband's love for his wife is a gentle love.* The husband doesn't treat his wife harshly (Colossians 3:19), but gently, being considerate of her weakness (1 Peter 3:7). He leads her through showing love and tenderness.

A husband who loves his wife with this kind of love should not find it difficult to get her submission. We could also put it another way: a wife who has a husband who loves her in this way should have no problem in submitting to him.

6 Beside each statement below, write the word TRUE if it is true and FALSE if it is false. Then list the reference of at least one Bible verse that supports each of your answers.

- a** When a husband loves his wife, he is actually loving himself since they are one.
- b** The main obligation God has given to husbands is to tell their wives what to do.
- c** Since a husband's love for his wife should be self-giving, it cannot be self-loving.

Notice that Scripture places before the wife the obligation to be submissive to her husband and before the husband the obligation to love his wife. It is very important for the husband to attend to *his own* and the wife to *her own* responsibilities and not try to force the other person to fulfill his or her responsibility. That is, the husband cannot, and should not, try to force his wife to be submissive to him. It can't be done! Neither can the wife force her husband to love her. Each must attend to his own responsibility and leave the other to do the same. Otherwise, a wife may refuse to submit to her husband until *he* shows love to her, or a husband may refuse to love his wife until *she* submits to him. This brings about a "you first" situation that prevents either partner from fulfilling God's pattern.

Children

According to the divine order, the duty of the children is to *obey their parents* (Ephesians 6:1-3; Colossians 3:20). The authority of the parents has as its basis the authority of God, whom they represent in the home. The Scriptures mentioned above give us four reasons why the children should be obedient:

1. Obedience is their Christian duty.
2. Obedience is the right thing to do.
3. Obedience pleases God.
4. There is a promise of success and long life for those who respect their parents.

Christ Himself is the most superb example of obedience. He obeyed His heavenly Father (Philippians 2:8) as well as His earthly parents (Luke 2:51).

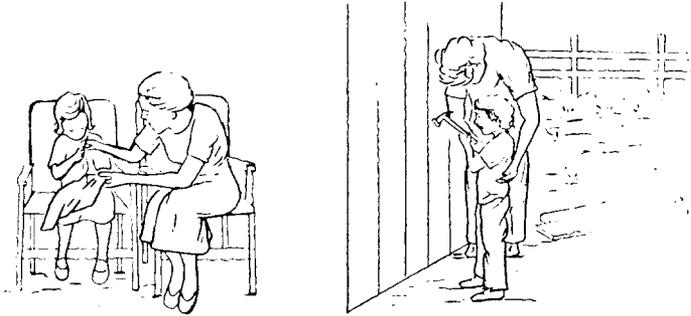
Parents

God has commanded the parents to teach, discipline, and love their children (Ephesians 6:4, Titus 2:4).

1. *Teach your children.* Parents must teach their children how they should live (Proverbs 22:6). Your teaching should include the following:

- a. The Word of God (Deuteronomy 6:7). This is the foundation of all your teaching.

- b. Obedience (Genesis 18:19). The children will learn the principle of authority and will grow up to be citizens who respect the law.
- c. Work. You will keep them from being idle and ending up as delinquents.
- d. Stewardship. This will make your children responsible people before God and men.



In order for the teaching to be effective it must be put into practice. One way of doing this is to make rules for the children to obey. But be careful! Don't make rules that you yourselves aren't able to keep (Romans 2:21-22). Your teaching should be backed by your example. If you don't do this you will only confuse and exasperate your children (Colossians 3:21).

2. *Discipline your children.* If the children don't obey the rules made by their parents, they should be disciplined (Proverbs 19:18; 29:17). Correction is a demonstration of love for the children (Proverbs 13:24). On the other hand, the lack of it is evidence that the parents don't love their children.

The Bible permits the use of physical or corporal punishment (Proverbs 23:13-14). But parents must be careful not to use physical punishment excessively or exclusively. This can cause bitterness, anger, and resentment toward the parents (Ephesians 6:4). Discipline involves loving guidance which resorts to physical punishment only when other methods have failed. But don't ignore the repeated times your children disobey and then discipline them only when your patience has come to an end. Then you will be disciplining them just to give vent to your

anger, not to correct their faults. Discipline them *when* they have disobeyed. This way their disobedience won't become an established pattern.

7 Why do you think that a parent who disciplines and corrects his child is showing love?

.....

In disciplining your children, it is also important that you as parents be seen by your children as one single authority. As a parent, don't make the mistake of defending the children when your partner corrects them. If you do, you will be undermining the authority in the home and the children won't know whom they should obey. Also, the one who observes the disobedience should be the one to give the discipline. Don't threaten the child by saying "when your father (or mother) gets home we'll spank you." If the act requires discipline, do it immediately.

When discipline is necessary it is important to tell the child exactly why he is being disciplined and how he should behave in the future. After punishment the parent must show love, forgiveness, and acceptance of the child. The child should never feel that *he is* being rejected even when his behavior is corrected. After all, doesn't the Lord have an attitude of forgiveness towards us when we fall? (Nehemiah 9:17, Micah 7:18, Luke 7:36-50).

Be sure to communicate with your children. Be willing to listen to their expressions of need, ideas, and—yes—even complaints. An open ear will often help you to prevent problems before they require discipline. Be willing to listen to your children and give thoughtful and prayerful consideration to their points of view. Sometimes you will find that they see things as well or better than you do yourself!

3. *Love your children.* The apostle Paul teaches Christians to love their children (Titus 2:4). We have also studied the idea that discipline is one form of loving the children. But this isn't the only one. Children shouldn't grow up in an atmosphere of somber severity. The same hand that you lift to correct them can also be used to treat them lovingly.

Sometimes children act disobediently just to get attention. The parents should become aware of this and listen to their children. They should set aside a time to be with them. If the parents are so busy with their own activities that they have no time for their children, they may one day find that they no longer have any influence over them. And the children may be found on the road to delinquency.

Workers for the Lord are not exempt from making the mistake mentioned above. Some love the Lord fervently and work hard for the salvation of sinners, but they are losing their own children. They have been more interested in the salvation of others than in the salvation of those in their own house! How much truth there was in what one believer said about a young man who was living a sinful life: "He is as bad as a preacher's son." If you are a worker for the Lord, don't let such a thing happen in your family.

8 If you have a family, perhaps you would like to examine yourself on how well you are doing as a parent. Beside each statement below, mark an **X** in the square under the phrase on the right that describes how you are doing.

	I am doing this well	I could do this better	I need to start doing this
MY DUTIES AS A PARENT			
I teach my children the Word of God.			
I teach my children to obey.			
I teach my children to work.			
I teach my children stewardship.			
I discipline and correct my children.			
I show my children that both of us as parents are one single authority.			
I am an example to my children of what they should be.			
I treat my children lovingly and spend time with them.			



Its Steward's Role

Objective 4. *Choose examples of men who are fulfilling their responsibilities as stewards of their families.*

God is especially interested in the salvation of families (Acts 11:14; 16:31-33). Once the members of a family are saved, it is the steward who should take the leadership so that all continue to serve the Lord.

As you have already seen, the steward of the Christian home fulfills a double role: he is both the husband of his wife and the father of his children. The responsibility of the steward, especially the Christian worker, is to manage his family (1 Timothy 3:4, 12). Let us consider three aspects of this responsibility.

1. *He steward is responsible before God for the integrity of his home.* In most cases where a home has been destroyed, it has been because of bad management.

2. *The steward is also responsible for the behavior of his children.* Like Hannah, he should recognize that his children are given to him by God. Therefore, he should dedicate them to God and see that they come to belong to Him (1 Samuel 1:27-28). God certainly wants his children to be believers and well-behaved (1 Timothy 3:4, Titus 1:6). He denounced Eli because he didn't correct his sons even though he knew of their evil behavior (1 Samuel 2:22-36; 3:11-14). David's case was still more dramatic. He knew how to manage a kingdom with justice, but he didn't know how to manage his family.

3. *And last, the steward is responsible to provide for his family.* God, as a just Father, watches over the welfare of His children. There is even more reason, then, for the steward of His family to do so (Matthew 24:45); because not to do so is like denying the faith and acting worse than an unbeliever (1 Timothy 5:8).

9 Circle the letter in front of each example of a man who is fulfilling his role as steward of his home.

- a) Jim spends most of his time away from home, letting his wife be responsible for the behavior of their children.
- b) Tom is a good worker and earns enough money so that his wife and family have enough food and clothes.
- c) Edward's wife, Nancy, seems unhappy in their marriage. Edward becomes concerned about her feelings and takes steps to solve the problem.

10 In question 9 above, *Edward* is an example of a man who is fulfilling an aspect of his responsibility as a steward of his home. Circle the letter in front of the phrase that names that aspect.

- a) Integrity of the home
- b) Behavior of the children
- c) Provision for the home

THE CHRISTIAN'S HOUSE

Objective. 5. *Following the suggestions given in the lesson, list some specific ways you can use your house for God's glory.*

A Place for the Lord's Presence

In some homes there is a plaque that reads: "Christ is the Head of this house, the unseen Guest at every meal, the silent Listener to every conversation." This motto is good in that it reminds us that Christ is present in our homes. Let us see to it, then, that everything is clean and in order, that the children behave well, and that the conversation is wholesome and edifying.

How great must have been Zacchaeus' joy and haste to welcome Jesus into his house, the one who wanted to visit him (Luke 19:5-6). The feelings we have in our home should even be stronger, because Christ is always with us. Our house should be an oasis of joy and peace. Sad to say, some believers don't seem to believe this. They believe, rather, that Jesus lives only in the church, the place where their conduct is very saintly. But their children are very confused by not being able to understand why their parents aren't as saintly at home as in the church.

A good way to make Christ’s presence real in the home is to have family devotions. At a time agreed upon, the parents and the children gather to study God’s Word and worship Him together. Family devotions will help the married couple to stay united and the children to obey their parents in the Lord.

11 When a family has *devotions*, what do they do?

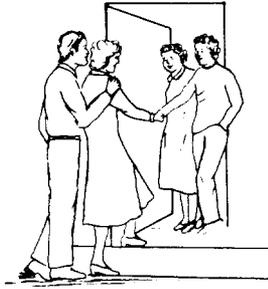
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A Harbor for Guests

The Bible teaches us that it is a blessing for us to welcome strangers into our homes, because at times there were some who did this and so welcomed angels without knowing it (Hebrews 13:2).

After he was converted, Matthew gave a banquet and invited his friends along with Jesus and His disciples. No doubt he wanted his friends to come to know Jesus. We can do the same kind of thing. We can invite a friend to talk to him about Christ, a new believer to encourage him in the faith, the young people to share with them our experiences, and the brothers and sisters in general to strengthen our Christian love and fellowship. A widow who was a Christian felt very alone and distressed at having lost her only daughter. A certain Sunday she invited a young lady, who was far away from home and feeling very homesick, to her house for dinner. Both enjoyed their time together so much that they made it a habit to spend Sundays together. This led to a sincere friendship between them and in time the young lady accepted Jesus as her Savior.

As God’s stewards, we have the duty and privilege of being hospitable to pastors, evangelists, and other servants of the Lord (1 Peter 4:9, Romans 12:13). Above all, the worker for the Lord should be characterized by his hospitality (1 Timothy 3:2, Titus 1:8). The woman of Shunem who prepared a room for the prophet Elisha gives us a beautiful example of this (2 Kings 4:8-11). And in the New Testament, Lydia is another notable example of a hospitable woman (Acts 16:14-15). She showed her concern by offering her home to the apostle Paul and those who traveled with him.



A Testimony for the Community

Believers' homes should be an example in their neighborhood. They should be a testimony of what Christ can do in a home. They should demonstrate Christian virtues in front of their community (Matthew 5:16).

In the times of the apostles the believers' homes played an important part in the ongoing of the church. Groups of believers would gather in homes to eat together (Acts 2:46), to pray (Acts 12:12), or to have services (Romans 16:5, 23; 1 Corinthians 16:19; Colossians 4:15). It can be said that the church began in the homes of the believers. In the same way Christian homes today can be like a lamp in the darkness, sending out the light of the gospel in their neighborhood (Philippians 2:15-16). As in earlier times, many churches today have begun in a believer's house. You can open your house for prayer meetings, evangelistic services, or Sunday school gatherings. Some of your neighbors who have never gone to a church may be agreeable to hearing the gospel in your house.

12 In your notebook, write down each of the three phrases that describe a Christian home: 1) A place for the Lord's presence; 2) A harbor for guests; and 3) A testimony for the community. Leave four or five empty lines for each one. Then below each phrase, list some specific things you could do to make your house that kind of place. For example, under 2) *A harbor for guests* you could list the names of some people towards whom you could show hospitality.

self-test

1 Circle the letter in front of each TRUE statement.

- a** The Bible does not describe what the wife’s role is in the home.
- b** In order for the husband to follow the pattern God gave for the home, he must fulfill his responsibility as its leader.
- c** Because the husband is the leader in the home, the wife should not be concerned about seeking God’s will for it.
- d** The pattern the Christian marriage should follow is that of the relationship between Christ and the church.

2 Match each Bible reference or statement (left side) to the family relationship or member to whom it most directly applies (right side).

- | | |
|---|-------------------|
| a Love as Christ loved the church | 1) Married couple |
| b Ephesians 6:1-3 | 2) Husband |
| c Do not divide what God has joined | 3) Wife |
| d Take care of the house | 4) Children |
| e Teach the Word of God | 5) Parents |
| f 1 Corinthians 7:3-5 | |
| g Ephesians 5:25 | |

3 The “double role” of the steward of a Christian home means his responsibility as both

- a) worker and manager.
- b) teacher and leader.
- c) husband and father.

4 Suppose you are teaching a class that Christian stewards are to be hospitable. Match each Bible reference (left side) to the phrase that describes how you could use it in your teaching (right side).

- | | |
|------------------------------|---|
| a 2 Kings 4:8-11 | 1) To give an example of hospitality |
| b Acts 16:14-15 | 2) To show that hospitality is listed as a characteristic of a Christian worker |
| c Romans 12:13 | |
| d 1 Timothy 3:2 | 3) To show that Christians are asked to be hospitable |
| e Titus 1:8 | |

answers to study questions

- 7** Your answer may say something like this: The parent who disciplines and corrects the child shows that he is concerned about the child's future and wants to help him become a mature and responsible person.
- 1** b) created it.
- 8** Your answer. Do you see some areas where you could improve? Ask the Lord to show you how you can be a better parent.
- 2** Your answer should include these ideas: The relationships in a Christian home are described in 1 Corinthians 11:3 and Ephesians 5:22–6:4. These verses show us that God has provided for authority in the family, with Christ as the supreme authority and the husband as head of the wife. Those who exercise authority in the family are to follow Christ's example.
- 9** b) Tom.
c) Edward.
- 3** **a** To spend time in prayer.
b They must agree beforehand.
- 10** a) Integrity of the home.
- 4** a) False.
b) True.
c) False. (Though children are affected by divorce, divorce is wrong primarily because it is a human interference in a relationship set up by God according to Matthew 19:6.)
- 11** They gather to study God's Word and worship Him together.
- 5** You might answer that the principle of equality given in Galatians 3:28 does not do away with the pattern for the married couple, which is given in Ephesians 5:22-24. In addition, you could include the other Bible verses and reasons given in the section on wives.

12 Your answer. I hope that what you have studied has given you ideas on ways you can use your home to glorify the Lord!

6 a True, Ephesians 5:28.

b False, Ephesians 5:25, Colossians 3:19.

c False, Ephesians 5:28-29. (Because the two are one, a husband who loves his wife in a self-giving way is also loving himself.)