

REACHING FAMILIES FOR JESUS

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# GROWING DISCIPLES

— WILLIE AND ELAINE OLIVER —

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# Preface

The message is clear, pointed, distinct, and unequivocal, as Moses shares God's commands with the children of Israel saying:

HEAR, O ISRAEL: THE LORD OUR GOD, THE LORD IS ONE. YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL AND WITH ALL YOUR MIGHT. AND THESE WORDS THAT I COMMAND YOU TODAY SHALL BE ON YOUR HEART. YOU SHALL TEACH THEM DILIGENTLY TO YOUR CHILDREN, AND SHALL TALK OF THEM WHEN YOU SIT IN YOUR HOUSE, AND WHEN YOU WALK BY THE WAY, AND WHEN YOU LIE DOWN, AND WHEN YOU RISE. YOU SHALL BIND THEM AS A SIGN ON YOUR HAND, AND THEY SHALL BE AS FRONTLETS BETWEEN YOUR EYES. YOU SHALL WRITE THEM ON THE DOORPOSTS OF YOUR HOUSE AND ON YOUR GATES. DEUTERONOMY 6:4-9 (ESV)

This passage of scripture—the *Shemá*—known as such since Old Testament times, was the prayer every observant Hebrew knew by memory and recited twice a day—evening and morning—as a part of their daily *family worship*. It was considered the essence of the Torah.

*Growing Disciples* is the Family Ministries theme for this year. This comprehensive notion must become one of the central activities promoted and advocated by our corporate church, and by every local congregation and family within our ranks. After all, Christian existence is dynamic,

and must be progressing every day to a closer and more meaningful relationship with Jesus. To be sure, this will not transpire unless those of us in leadership are also growing in the love and grace of Jesus every day. To speak about *Growing Disciples* without a compelling awareness of our daily personal need of Jesus is like walking through the desert without access to potable water to quench our inevitable thirst.

It is our hope that family worship will become the place where each family and single adult will make the time to connect with God in a profound and consequential way, by engaging in daily Bible study, prayer, meditation and becoming an active member of the family of God. After all, for the church to experience *Growing Disciples*, the membership must be intentional about seriously looking for God while He can still be found (Isaiah 55:6).

We hope this will be your practice during this year and for the remainder of your life, and by reaching up to God each day, experience the peace that only growing disciples have.

For stronger and healthier families,

Willie and Elaine Oliver, Directors  
Department of Family Ministries  
General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists  
World Headquarters  
Silver Spring, Maryland  
family.adventist.org

# 100 Years of Family Ministries Around the World

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On October 8, 1919 the General Conference Committee created the Home Commission, which became operative in 1922 with Arthur W. Spalding as director, who worked in this capacity with his wife Maud, until 1941. Spalding created literature for the education of the entire family. A series of leaflets were produced dealing with different phases of home life entitled, The Christian Home Series. Arthur W. Spalding wrote the lessons and Maud Spalding graded them.

Five books of the Christian Home Series came from the pens of Arthur Spalding and Dr. Belle Wood-Comstock, which provided instruction for family living.

Christian Home Day was set for the first Sabbath in February and is still preserved on the church calendar as Christian Home and Marriage Week, from the second Sabbath to the third Sabbath of February.

In June of 1941, a General Conference Convention on the home was held, perhaps the first Family Life International.

The Home Commission became part of the Department of Education in 1941. During the next three decades marriage and family life programs were promoted by Parent and Home Education Secretaries:

Florence Rebok (1941-1947), Arabella Moore Williams (1947-1954), Archa O. Dart (1954-1970) and W. John Cannon (1970-1975).

At the General Conference Session held in Vienna, Austria in 1975, to address the need for stronger, more stable Adventist homes, the Home and Family Service (HFS) was organized. A husband and wife team, Delmer and Betty Holbrook, were elected as directors. The Holbrooks organized and conducted training seminars for administrators, pastors and laity in every world division.

Karen and Ronald Flowers joined the HFS staff in 1980. D. W. Holbrook directed HFS from 1975 to 1982, and Betty Holbrook served as director from 1982 until 1985 when Home and Family Service became part of the Department of Church Ministries (CM).

Family Ministries continued as a strong section of the Department of Church Ministries through the efforts of Betty Holbrook, an Associate Director of CM until her retirement in 1988, and Karen and Ronald Flowers, Associate Directors of CM until 1995. D.W. Holbrook, Director of CM from 1985-1987 also assisted with Family Ministries.

At the 1995 General Conference Session held in Utrecht, in the Netherlands, the

Department of Church Ministries was disbanded, with several separate departments being formed, including the current Department of Family Ministries, with Ronald Flowers as Director, and Karen Flowers as Associate Director, until their retirement in June 2010, at the General Conference Session held in Atlanta, Georgia. During this time, an infrastructure of Family Ministries Directors were elected at Division, Union and Conference/Mission levels; and the Family Ministries leadership training curriculum was put in place, as well as the publication of annual Family Ministries Planbooks.

At the General Conference Session held in Atlanta, Georgia, Willie and Elaine Oliver were elected on June 28, 2010 as Director and Associate Director, respectively, of the Department of Family Ministries. The Olivers came to the Department from a long career in Family Ministries, having directed the Department of Family Ministries of the North American Division (NAD) since its inception at the NAD Year-end Meeting in 1995; and Willie Oliver serving as Director of the Department

of Family Ministries for the Atlantic Union Conference (1994-1995), and the Greater New York Conference (1989-1993).

During their first quinquennium as Directors of Family Ministries, Willie and Elaine Oliver prioritized the training of all Division and Union Directors of Family Ministries in the PREPARE/ENRICH modality of premarital and marriage enrichment counseling; developed Real Family Talk with Willie and Elaine Oliver, a television program seen on the Hope Channel around the world; continued the annual publication of Family Ministries Planbooks; advanced the Family to Family evangelism process as a part of the Mission to the Families in the Cities—Mission to the Cities—initiative of the General Conference; and became authors of the Real Family Talk column on Adventist World online.

Willie and Elaine Oliver were elected to a second term as Directors of the Department of Family Ministries on July 6, 2015, at the 60th Session of the General Conference held in San Antonio, Texas.



# How to Use This Planbook

The Family Ministries Planbook is an annual resource organized by the General Conference Family Ministries department with input from the world field to supply local churches around the world with resources for the special family emphases weeks and Sabbaths.

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## **Christian Home and Marriage Week: February 11-18**

Christian Home and Marriage Week occurs in February embracing two Sabbaths: Christian Marriage Day that emphasizes Christian marriage and Christian Home Day that emphasizes parenting. Christian Home and Marriage Week begins on the second Sabbath and ends on the third Sabbath in February.

### **Christian Marriage Day: Sabbath, February 11, (Emphasizes Marriage)**

Use the Marriage Sermon for worship service and the Marriage Seminar during a Friday evening, Sabbath afternoon or Saturday night program.

### **Christian Home Day: Sabbath, February 18, (Emphasizes Parenting)**

Use the Parenting Sermon for worship service and the Parenting Seminar during a Friday evening, Sabbath afternoon or Saturday night program.

## **Family Togetherness Week: September 3-9**

Family Togetherness Week is scheduled in the first week in September, beginning with the first Sunday and ending on the following Sabbath with Family Togetherness Day. Family Togetherness Week and Family Togetherness Day highlight celebrating the church as a family.

### **Family Togetherness Day: Sabbath, September 9 (Emphasizes the Church Family)**

Use the Family Sermon for the worship service and the Family Seminar for a Friday evening, Sabbath afternoon and/or Saturday night program.

Within this planbook you will find sermons, seminars, children's stories as well as leadership resources, reprint articles and book reviews to help facilitate these special days and other programs you may want to implement during the year. In Appendix A you will find useful information that will assist you in implementing family ministries in your local church.

This resource also includes Microsoft PowerPoint® presentations of the seminars and handouts. Seminar facilitators are encouraged to personalize the Microsoft PowerPoint® presentations with their own personal stories and pictures that reflect the diversity of their various communities. To download them please visit: <http://family.adventist.org/planbook2017>



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# SERMONS

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# Rock or Sand Builders?

WILLIE AND ELAINE OLIVER

## The Texts

MATTHEW 7:24-27;

I CORINTHIANS 13:1-8;

EPHESIANS 5:25

## Introduction

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On a recent trip to Cotê d'Ivoire (Ivory Coast), for leadership meetings with the Family Ministries Directors of the West-Central Africa Division, our flight from Paris to Abidjan was delayed by a couple of hours. Already scheduled to arrive an hour before midnight, the delay meant the Division driver picking us up from the airport would be having a very long night and early morning, a matter completely out of our control.

To add insult to injury, instead of making up time—which often happens with many delayed flights—our layover in Ougadougou, the capital city of Burkina Faso, became a disaster. A passenger that boarded in Paris, headed to Abidjan, could not be found, causing anxiety among the crew, and further postponing our arrival in Abidjan. This new reality made us somewhat apprehensive, wondering if our

driver, who we had never met, would still be at the airport when we arrived in the wee hours of the morning.

Our story has a happy ending. We are convinced it had to do with something that happened many years before. Someone obviously poured great values into Charles, our driver. Integrity, honor, and an amazing work ethic, were all on display that day.

Charles was at the airport to meet us, as though it was the middle of the afternoon. A man with a very kind and pleasant disposition, he drove us safely to our lodging place at three o'clock in the morning. There is no doubt in our minds Charles' character was built on the solid Rock.

Our sermon today is titled *Rock or Sand Builders?* Let us pray.

## Obedience vs. Disobedience In Everyday Life

In Matthew 7:24-27 we find the following notable words of Jesus uttered as part of what is known in Biblical literature as the Sermon on the Mount:

THESE WORDS I SPEAK TO YOU ARE NOT  
INCIDENTAL ADDITIONS TO YOUR  
LIFE, HOMEOWNER IMPROVEMENTS TO YOUR

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Willie Oliver, PhD, CFLE and Elaine Oliver, MA, CFLE are Directors of the Department of Family Ministries at the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists World Headquarters in Silver Spring, Maryland, USA.

STANDARD OF LIVING. THEY ARE FOUNDATIONAL WORDS, WORDS TO BUILD A LIFE ON. IF YOU WORK THESE WORDS INTO YOUR LIFE, YOU ARE LIKE A SMART CARPENTER WHO BUILT HIS HOUSE ON SOLID ROCK. RAIN POURED DOWN, THE RIVER FLOODED, A TORNADO HIT—BUT NOTHING MOVED THAT HOUSE. IT WAS FIXED TO THE ROCK. BUT IF YOU USE MY WORDS IN BIBLE STUDIES AND DON'T WORK THEM INTO YOUR LIFE, YOU ARE LIKE A STUPID CARPENTER WHO BUILT HIS HOUSE ON THE SANDY BEACH. WHEN A STORM ROLLED IN AND THE WAVES CAME UP, IT COLLAPSED LIKE A HOUSE OF CARDS. MATTHEW 7:24-27 (MSG)

On the banks of the Sea of Galilee, probably very close to Capernaum, the village where Jesus lived (Matthew 4:13) during His years of ministry; also the place where Peter, Andrew, Matthew, James, and John made their home; Jesus was ending what was perhaps the most prolific discourse He had given about the ethics of the Kingdom of God and the expectations for those who would be followers of His.

The Sermon on the Mount is the frequently used title given to the teachings of Jesus recorded in Matthew chapters 5–7. Whether the name can be accurately employed for the fairly comparable portion in Luke 6:20–49 depends upon one's understanding of the literary relationship between the two. Luke's version is habitually called the Sermon on the Plain because it is believed to have been delivered on 'a level place' (Luke 6:17) rather than 'on the mountain' (Matthew 5:1). Nevertheless, both expressions probably represent the same place considered from two different perspectives.

In the past it was commonly believed that the Sermon on the Mount was a single homily delivered by Jesus at a particular time. This unquestionably appears to be the case as it is recounted in Matthew. Jesus and His disciples sat down (v. 1), Jesus opened his mouth and taught them (v. 2), and at the conclusion of it all the crowds were astonished at his teaching (7:28). However, many scholars are of the opinion that the Sermon is really a compilation

of sayings of the Lord—'a kind of epitome of all the sermons that Jesus ever preached' (W. Barclay, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1, p. 79). They argue there is too much intense material here for one sermon. That the comprehensive array of issues is too much for a single presentation. They also believe certain segments of the sermon appear unexpectedly. That Luke's narrative seems more coherent and better contextualized as responses to questions raised by the disciples and others. Some scholars suggest that this makes it more likely that Matthew transferred sayings of Jesus into the single Sermon, than the fact that Luke found them there and distributed them throughout his Gospel. Others propose it is distinctive of Matthew to bring together teachings under certain captions and place them into the narrative of Jesus' life (cf. B. W. Bacon, *Studies in Matthew*, 1930, pp. 269–325), suggesting that the Sermon on the Mount is consequently merely the first of these informative sections.

These reflections, to be sure, do not oblige one to consider the complete Sermon as an illogical masterpiece. The historical context of Matthew 4:23–5:1 directs us to anticipate a notable dissertation presented at a specific time. In the Sermon are several structures that seem to be sermonettes of Jesus and not simply interesting anthologies of isolated maxims. When compared with Luke's Sermon, there are many parallel details. They both begin with blessings, close with the parable of the wise and foolish builders, and the interposing Lucan content about loving one's enemies in 6:27–36, and judging 6:37–42, develops in the same progression in Matthew, proposing that in the wake of both versions there was a shared informant. Prior to the writings of either Matthew or Luke, it is fair to believe that there was an original structure which matched an actual sermon presented at a specific time. The truth is, uncertainties as to whether the Sermon as it appears in Matthew is closer to the original than the account given by Luke, or if Matthew stuck to a structure provided by an earlier source, are still issues of intellectual debate. To be sure, it is sufficient to presume that Matthew took an original sermon source and enlarged it in order to introduce important information for the followers of Jesus.<sup>1</sup>

Referencing the portion of Scripture we just read from the Sermon on the Mount, Ellen White shares:

THE SAME DANGER STILL EXISTS. MANY TAKE IT FOR GRANTED THAT THEY ARE CHRISTIANS, SIMPLY BECAUSE THEY SUBSCRIBE TO CERTAIN THEOLOGICAL TENETS. BUT THEY HAVE NOT BROUGHT THE TRUTH INTO PRACTICAL LIFE. THEY HAVE NOT BELIEVED AND LOVED IT, THEREFORE THEY HAVE NOT RECEIVED THE POWER AND GRACE THAT COME THROUGH SANCTIFICATION OF THE TRUTH. MEN MAY PROFESS FAITH IN THE TRUTH; BUT IF IT DOES NOT MAKE THEM SINCERE, KIND, PATIENT, FOREBEARING, HEAVENLY-MINDED, IT IS A CURSE TO ITS POSSESSORS, AND THROUGH THEIR INFLUENCE IT IS A CURSE TO THE WORLD” (WHITE, *THE DESIRE OF AGES*, P. 309)<sup>2</sup>

Matthew Henry, a noted Biblical commentator, suggests that the gospel writer “shows, by a parable, that hearing these sayings of Christ will not make us happy, if we do not make conscience of doing them; but that if we hear them and do them, *we are blessed in our deed.*”<sup>3</sup>

### Obedience vs. Disobedience In Marriage

The Christian life and married life are not much different when observed from a similar vantage point. Knowing what God expects and doing what God requires are two entirely different realities.

It is difficult to miss that in the heart of the Sermon on the Mount the sacredness of marriage looms large. Matthew 5:27,28 declares:

“YOU HAVE HEARD THAT IT WAS SAID TO THOSE OF OLD, ‘YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY.’ BUT I SAY TO YOU THAT WHOEVER LOOKS AT A WOMAN TO LUST FOR HER HAS ALREADY COMMITTED ADULTERY WITH HER IN HIS HEART.” THE

BIBLE WRITER FURTHER EXPLICATES THE INTENTION OF THE PASSAGE IN VERSE 32 BY AFFIRMING: “BUT I SAY TO YOU THAT WHOEVER DIVORCES HIS WIFE FOR ANY REASON EXCEPT SEXUAL IMMORALITY CAUSES HER TO COMMIT ADULTERY; AND WHOEVER MARRIES A WOMAN WHO IS DIVORCED COMMITS ADULTERY.”

Referencing the currency of every healthy marriage, the Apostle Paul declares under divine inspiration in 1 Corinthians 13:1-8:

THOUGH I SPEAK WITH THE TONGUES OF MEN AND OF ANGELS, BUT HAVE NOT LOVE, I HAVE BECOME SOUNDING BRASS OR A CLANGING CYMBAL. AND THOUGH I HAVE THE GIFT OF PROPHECY, AND UNDERSTAND ALL MYSTERIES AND ALL KNOWLEDGE, AND THOUGH I HAVE ALL FAITH, SO THAT I COULD REMOVE MOUNTAINS, BUT HAVE NOT LOVE, I AM NOTHING. AND THOUGH I BESTOW ALL MY GOODS TO FEED THE POOR, AND THOUGH I GIVE MY BODY TO BE BURNED, BUT HAVE NOT LOVE, IT PROFITS ME NOTHING. LOVE SUFFERS LONG AND IS KIND; LOVE DOES NOT ENVY; LOVE DOES NOT PARADE ITSELF, IS NOT PUFFED UP; DOES NOT BEHAVE RUDELY, DOES NOT SEEK ITS OWN, IS NOT PROVOKED, THINKS NO EVIL; DOES NOT REJOICE IN INIQUITY, BUT REJOICES IN THE TRUTH; BEARS ALL THINGS, BELIEVES ALL THINGS, HOPES ALL THINGS, ENDURES ALL THINGS. LOVE NEVER FAILS.

So many married Christians today have totally forgotten that marriage was established by God at the very beginning of human history as a divine institution of foremost importance, when He declared in Genesis 2:18, “It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him.” A few verses later (vs. 24), God declared: “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.”

And lest anyone suggest that this is an Old Testament notion that no longer applies to us as New Testament Christians, we read a

reference of this Old Testament passage in the New Testament, with additional stipulations uttered by Jesus in Matthew 19:5-6: “and said, *For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh?* So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.”

These passages of Scripture are filled with indisputable imperatives, including the reality of husband and wife being in the singular, rather than the plural form. It is the normative Biblical injunction of marriage meant to take place between one man and one woman. Anything more or less than that is of human origin, and does not support the model established by God in Eden. And it is certainly difficult to overlook the detail that God’s intention was for marriage to be forever.

Going back to the message of 1 Corinthians 13, Warren Wiersby offers: Christians are ‘taught of God to love one another’(1 Thessalonians. 4:9). God the Father taught us to love by sending His Son (1 John 4:19), and God the Son taught us to love by giving His life and by commanding us to love each other (John 13:34–35). The Holy Spirit teaches us to love one another by pouring out God’s love in our hearts (Romans 5:5). The most important lesson in the school of faith is to love one another. Love enriches all that it touches. The purpose of spiritual gifts is the edification of the church (1 Corinthians 12:7; 14:3, 5, 12, 17, 26). This means we must not think of ourselves, but of others; and this demands love.”<sup>4</sup>

To be sure, as people of God, we have all been endowed with spiritual gifts for the edification of the church; every relationship in the church, including our respective marriages. We cannot speak about love without living the very essence of love, by practicing its virtues in our closest and most intimate relationship.

On the same question, Matthew Henry advances that: The apostle gives us in these verses some of the properties and effects of charity [love], both to describe and commend it, that we may know whether we have this grace and that if we have not we may fall in love with what is

so exceedingly amiable, and not rest till we have obtained it. It is an excellent grace, and has a world of good properties belonging to it.”<sup>5</sup>

Why then, are so many married Christians ignoring God’s intent for marriage? Why do they believe that staying in their marriage or relating to their spouse through the agency of the spiritual gift of love, an option they can afford to ignore?

When it comes to your marriage, are you a rock or sand builder? Are we simply speaking with the tongues of men and of angels to show off and appear to be spiritual or are we practicing patience and kindness in our marriage every day?

### Choices In Marriage And The Need To Reach Up

God who created human beings for fellowship and love declared in Genesis 2:18: “It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him.” And Paul proclaimed in 1 Corinthians 7:2: “Nevertheless, because of sexual immorality, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband.”

While Paul reflects about many wonderful realities in marriage between verses 2-9 of 1 Corinthians 7; in verses 10-11, he proffers: “Now to the married I command, yet not I but the Lord: A wife is not to depart from her husband. But even if she does depart, let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband. And a husband is not to divorce his wife”.

As we consider the evidence of Scripture, we must ask ourselves if we are rock or sand builders. If we only talk the talk, but don’t walk the walk, are we simply fooling ourselves and missing out on God’s power and blessings?

While we tend to forget God’s design is perfect and was created with our well being in mind, we need to go to Him to learn from Him and receive power from Him to live out His plans for our lives. Because, every crisis in marriage is a spiritual crisis that can only be

solved through the power of God, when we put into practice the teaching He has left for us to build our marriage relationships on the solid Rock.

It is remarkable that social science is catching up with God's intention for intimate relationships in the human race. In a recent article, Dr. Sue Johnson, well known Psychologist and marriage and family expert shared:

NEW SCIENCE IS REVEALING HOW VITAL ROMANTIC LOVE IS—AS WELL AS HOW IT WORKS, WHY IT GOES WRONG AND WHAT WE CAN DO TO MAKE IT LAST. THESE FINDINGS ARE INCREDIBLY TIMELY. SOCIOLOGISTS AGREE THAT PEOPLE ARE BECOMING LONELIER AND MORE ISOLATED THAN THEY WERE IN EARLIER GENERATIONS. WITH THE STEEP RISE OF TECHNOLOGY, THE AVERAGE SIZE OF A PERSON'S REAL-LIFE SOCIAL NETWORK HAS PARADOXICALLY SHRUNK; PEOPLE TRUST EACH OTHER LESS THAN THEY USED TO, AND FEWER AMERICANS KNOW THEIR NEIGHBORS. SOCIOLOGISTS ARE ALSO FINDING THAT OUR LIFE PARTNER IS OFTEN OUR ONLY RELIABLE SOURCE OF SUPPORT AND COMFORT. WE NEED THESE RELATIONSHIPS MORE THAN EVER—AND INDEED, EVIDENCE SUGGESTS THAT IT'S WELL WITHIN REACH TO IMPROVE OUR ROMANTIC BONDS.<sup>6</sup>

To have a great marriage, it is important to have excellent communication in one's relationship. Of course, this often eludes us because of habits we have developed in our families of origin.

GOOD COMMUNICATION IS NOT A SKILL WE OFTEN BRING TO MARRIAGE. MOST OF US CAME UP IN FAMILIES IN WHICH VOICES WERE RAISED—SOMETIMES MORE THAN JUST A LITTLE—WHEN PEOPLE DISAGREED WITH EACH OTHER. THIS UNFORTUNATE LEGACY MUST BE DISCARDED TO SURVIVE THE RIGORS OF REAL LIFE IN MARRIAGE.<sup>7</sup>

To be rock builders means to construct our marriage relationship on the solid teachings of

Jesus Christ, rather than on the sands of our own opinions, or those offered by the secular media. To be rock builders means to stay close to Jesus and be sustained by His Spirit, by reaching up to Him daily through prayer and Bible study, to be able to live our lives in obedience to His will.

This kind of life is only possible when we keep in our minds messages like the following ones found in Ephesians 6:10, 11: "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil." And in Psalm 29:11: "The Lord will give strength to His people; The Lord will bless His people with peace." And also in Philippians 4:13: "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."

## Conclusion

As we consider the implications of this message, of late we have been at once intrigued and challenged by the message of Ephesians 5:25: "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her." While we are mindful of the context of this passage to include vs. 21: "submitting to one another in the fear of God." As well as the very often quoted vs. 22: "Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord." It is vs. 25 that has grabbed us, based on the message of vs. 23: "For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body."

If the husband is the head of the wife, as presented by Scripture, and husbands should love their wives as Christ loved the church and gave Himself for her; then husbands have a pretty awesome responsibility to be in their marriage what Christ is to the church.

When we carefully examine how Christ loves the church, we have to consider Biblical history from Genesis to Revelation, offering exhibit after exhibit of Christ's incredible love for the church to His very death in her behalf. To give you a little taste of our intentions we begin in the book of Genesis

with Adam and Eve—the church—who by the time we get to chapter 3:6 have sinned; and by the time we get to vs. 15 of the same chapter, Christ has already offered Himself—gave Himself for her—to ransom the church from death. “And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel.”

Throughout the Old and New Testaments, despite repeated disobedience of His people—the church—Christ continues to intercede in their behalf until His literal death on the cross, as dramatized in the Gospels, for her—the church. So, “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her.” What an incredible responsibility in marriage for husbands as head—leader—in their respective marriages, to be.

Although we believe in mutuality in marriage—found in the context of this text—we find greater responsibility for the husband, who is a type of Christ to his wife; and the level of love he is expected to give—like Christ loved for the church. This calls for true rock builders, in the context of the Sermon of the Mount. “Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock.” (Matthew 7:24)

May God help us to be rock builders today and for the remainder of our lives.

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