



worldoutreach

SCHOOL OF LEADERSHIP

SERIES SEVEN

MODULE TWO: 10 TIPS FOR MARRIAGE AND RAISING KIDS IN A MINISTRY LEADERSHIP CONTEXT



Outline Session 1 - 3

1. 10 Tips for a happy and healthy marriage in ministry leadership
2. 10 Tips for raising kids in ministry leadership (Part 1)
3. 10 Tips for raising kids in ministry leadership (Part 2)

SESSION ONE: 10 TIPS FOR A HAPPY AND HEALTHY MARRIAGE IN MINISTRY LEADERSHIP

One of the qualities Paul singles out for those in Christian leadership is to have their marriage and family life in appropriate order.

An elder, according to 1 Timothy 3:2, must be the *'husband of one wife'*. Being the 'husband of one wife' has been interpreted in many ways but generally speaks of being committed and faithful to one's spouse in a loving, monogamous and lifelong marriage.

A healthy, happy marriage generally means a healthy, happy ministry. Marriage and family are our primary ministry. You lead yourself, then your family, then the church / ministry.

How then, in practical terms, can you develop a healthy, growing marriage in ministry leadership?

1. Put God at the centre of your marriage

- For a marriage to be lifelong, loving and healthy, there must be *THREE* people in the marriage – husband, wife and God.
- A great picture of this is a triangle - the closer you get to God (as apex), the closer you'll become to each other.
- One of the practical ways to make him the centre of your marriage is to build spiritual practices.

2. Give your best to your marriage

- Make a decision to be totally in love with your spouse.
- Be unshakably committed to each other.
- Make sacrifices for each other.
- Charles Shedd (1915-2004) once wrote, 'Marriage is not finding the right person; it is being the right person.'
- Aim for the best marriage possible.

3. Be affectionate toward each other

- Hold hands, hug, kiss, but be spontaneous and natural.
- Enjoy each other's company and say so.
- Buy unexpected gifts or cards.
- Learn each other's 'love language'.
- Maintain your joint sense of humour.
- Laugh at each other's idiosyncrasies.
- Fun and laughter are like oil which lubricate the marriage.

4. Prioritise time to connect on a meaningful level

- Coordinate your diaries to schedule date nights, day trips, romantic weekends and chats over coffees.

- The purpose of planning time like this is to connect on a deeper level than the routine of daily living.

5. Communicate openly and honestly

- Make time every day to communicate.
- Part of communication is active listening.
- Listen until you have 'heard' and 'understood' what your spouse is saying.
- If you drift apart *verbally*, you'll drift apart *emotionally*, then you'll inevitably drift apart *physically*.

6. Resolve arguments quickly

- Accept the fact that growing relationships will have conflict.
- Try and understand each other's points and feelings.
- Be willing to forgive quickly.
- Don't go to bed with unresolved anger.
- Avoid allowing things to foment or simmer.
- Rather than be proud or stubborn, be willing to say, 'I am sorry'.
- Talk things through instead of withdrawing or sulking.
- Learn from past mistakes and conflicts.
- Approach confrontation with an attitude of reconciliation – 'let's sort this out'.
- Have a lot of fun making up.
- If your problems seem irreconcilable, then please seek help quickly from an experienced counsellor.

7. Say 'thank you', express gratitude and be appreciative for the little things and the big things

8. Don't allow the pressures of leadership to encroach on your marriage and family

- Your home needs to be a place of safety and refuge from the rigours and weight of leadership.
- In times of pressure, don't take leadership problems into your bedroom.

9. Celebrate the milestones

- Make any special occasions, like anniversaries, 'big' birthdays or achievements, as memorable as possible.
- Seek to cultivate and capture a 'sense of occasion'.

10. Keep romance blossoming

- Write thoughtful notes or cards.
- Buy an unexpected gift at an unexpected time.
- Spontaneously text with a short loving message.
- Say 'I love you' or 'you're handsome' or 'you're beautiful' often.
- Enjoy a meal out together in an environment that is conducive for conversation and has a great view.
- Look into each other's eyes.
- Consciously think of proactive ways to foster romance.

SESSION TWO: 10 TIPS FOR RAISING KIDS IN MINISTRY LEADERSHIP (Part 1)

Parenthood is a brand new 'stage' of life which adds a fresh dimension to your ministry leadership. Finding the balance between ministry leadership and family can be difficult, but not impossible.

Biblical reflection: 1 Timothy 3:4-5; 3:12; Titus 1:6

In commenting on 1 Timothy 3:4-5, John Stott wrote how Paul "draws an analogy between the pastors' family and God's church. Indeed, he uses the word *oikos* ('household') of both (4, 5, 15)", adding that ministry leaders, especially married pastors, therefore, are called "to leadership in two families, his [or hers] and God's, and the former is to be the training-ground for the latter."¹

How, then, can you develop your skills as a parent while maintaining a busy life of ministry leadership?

1. Put God at the centre of the home

- Create a godly, loving, safe, home environment by centring your family-life around biblical principles.
- Teach your children God's word and his ways (see 2 Timothy 3:15 & Deuteronomy 6:7).
- Tell stories about what God has done in your lives, such as stories of God's provision, protection or blessing.
- Pray *with* and *for* your kids (see 2 Samuel 12:16; 1 Chronicles 29:19; Job 1:5; Matthew 17:15 & Mark 7:26).
- Pray as a family and read the Bible together as a devotion.

2. Set a godly example to your kids

- Remember that your children are watching and listening to everything.
- Set an example in *conversation, adversity, conflict resolution* and in *integrity and transparency*.

3. Encourage your kids to attend children's programmes and youth activities

4. Prioritise family and be available for your children

- Plan family holidays as a priority in your forward planning.
- When you're home, don't do work at night, but be available for the family.
- When planning time with the family, please remember that it is not necessarily *quantitative* time, but *qualitative* time.
- Be committed to the family by being there for significant birthdays, achievements, celebrations and events.
- Be available for your children *physically, emotionally, and relationally*.

¹ Stott, *The Message of 1 Timothy & Titus*, The Bible Speaks Today (Leicester, England: IVP, 1996), p. 98.

SESSION THREE: 10 TIPS FOR RAISING KIDS IN MINISTRY LEADERSHIP (Part 2)

Last time, we noted a first four tips:

1. Put God at the centre of your home
2. Set a godly example to your kids
3. Encourage your kids to attend children's programmes and youth activities
4. Prioritise family

5. Healthy communication

- Often in parent / child relationships, the parent is quick to speak, but not as quick to *listen*.
- Listening is one of the measures of any healthy relationship.
- Even if you're a busy person, take time to listen until you really *hear* what they're trying to say.
- Give undivided and undistracted attention.
- Learn to ask 'open' questions that elicit thoughtful answers, rather than 'closed' questions.
- Wherever possible, eat meals together as a family and *talk*.
- Invest time one-on-one with each of your children.

6. Express your love and affection with words and touch

7. Learn how to be a good (or better) parent

- There are many excellent resources, courses, books and seminars available that can help you to be a better parent.
- Observe other good and experienced parents – speak with them, learn from their mistakes and implement their successes.

8. Lovingly discipline your children

- Ephesians 6:4 instructs parents not to '*exasperate*' their children, but to instruct them in God's ways.
- This requires that we lovingly train them for their good.
- Training involves discipline.
- Discipline is helping a child to learn what is right and wrong in terms of their social behaviour, speech and attitudes.
- Often this means affirming what they do right, but reprimanding them when they do wrong.
- Hebrews 12:7-11 tells us that God, as our loving Father, disciplines us.
- The Proverbs teach parents to discipline and correct their children (13:24; 19:18; 22:15; 23:13).

9. Be a guiding presence as they mature into adulthood

- With each new stage of their development and maturity – from infancy through childhood and adolescence into adulthood – the nature and dynamic of your relationship with them will change.

- Recognise these biological and emotional changes.
- Adapt your relationship and communication style accordingly.
- Let them know that you are there for them and want to listen.
- When you do listen, seek to understand.
- Be patient and flexible with their moods.

10. Deal with the residue of any past, personal dysfunction

- Even if your experience or model of 'family' has been traumatic or dysfunctional, you do not have to repeat the mistakes your parents (or maybe even you) have made in the past.
- Instead, deal with the past and allow the Lord to bring change to your life.