MINISTRY BEGINS AT HOME

The hats of a ministry

by Dr. Ken Gaglardi B.Sc. Ph.D. AScT (hon)
EVERYTHING

BEGINS AT HOME

It is there we learn to
  talk
  walk
  relate
  smile
  love
  work
  play
  laugh
  think
  give
  have friends
  respect
  honor
  forgive
  ...

Home is the greatest schoolroom of life’s principles

Based on Colossians 3

Written by Dr. Ken Gaglardi  B.Sc. PhD
To Eunice,
my wife of more than 40 years
who has made ministries within our home
a joy and a privilege.

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INTRODUCTION

I easily remember the time the text on marriage was next on my preaching schedule. I was going through the book of Colossians. I knew this passage was there, but I didn’t worry about it until I saw it drawing closer and closer.

When it came time, and I saw the words, my reaction was to skip it. I just did not feel like dealing with “wives submit to your husbands as is fitting in the Lord.” I even tried to go on, but my loving Savior kept drawing me back. Then I began to sweat and pray. The result was this picture of ministry within the home. It recognizes that every task we do, at the instruction of our loving God, is ministry. We don’t work for him, we don’t manage for him, nor do we simply honor him, . . . we minister for him. And hopefully that ministry comes out of a heart that loves our God, who incidentally, loves us much more.

Each spouse is a minister to his or her spouse. Every husband is a minister to his wife and every wife is a minister to her husband. The children are ministers to the parents, and the father is a minister to the children. The passage does not speak to the ministry of the mother to the children, but that ministry certainly exists and is well understood.

The real challenge in building a wholesome home is to keep focused on the fact that the work (ministry) is to be done for God
Well, after being obedient to God and giving this message, I received so many compliments that I wondered why I was afraid of it. After all, it is God’s word, not mine! I saw again how our loving heavenly father rewards those who seek him.

I started with the role of the husband to the wife, in spite of the fact that the scripture puts them in the opposite order. As a man, I still felt the need to prepare the way so that the challenge of the scriptures to wives would be received.

As a side note, this passage also gives the ministry job description to employees, employers and church members. They are not dealt with directly although the principles are the same.
Perspective changes everything.

Some see the world through rose-colored glasses. Everything is wonderful, even when it is raining. They are the people that see the vibrant rainbow colors instead of the rain, and some of them might even look for the second or third rainbow! Others see the rain, and miss the promise that the rainbow declares.

Some see the world as a place to play and have fun. If it isn’t fun, then it is time to do something else. They love to hear the latest joke. It is as if they wear a clown hat all the time.

Others see life as a place where everything is work. Their focus seems to always be on the effort needed for everything. It is hard to enjoy life because it takes so much work, so much effort. It is as if they wear a work hat, or hard hat all the time.
In Physics this way of looking at life is called your frame of reference. It determines how you look at the rest of your world. If your frame of reference were from within a space ship, then gravity would not make sense. If your frame of reference were from deep within the earth, then understanding sunlight would be a challenge. If your reference point is characterized by wearing the clowns’ hat, then the difficult times of life might appear to be a signal that something is wrong, and you need to run. On the other hand, if a hard hat characterizes your perspective, then the fun times may be seen as foolish, or taken as signs that people are not being serious about life.

There are many different perspectives, many frames of reference, many points of view. Some are complicated, some are straightforward, and some are challenging. We all have a unique perspective that shapes our understanding, colors our world, and helps us to separate the good from the bad. Having a ministry perspective sets us up for the success that our loving God wants for each one.

God calls everyone to be a minister, and to look at your world through ministry eyes. It is as if you were perpetually wearing a clerical collar. A ministry collar. And when you are aware
that you are wearing it, the world looks very different from when you don’t have it on. It is the same as the difference between how you might respond when another driver cuts you off if you are conscious or not of the fish symbol on your car. A ministry collar is a very visible fish symbol that says I am an employee of our loving God, and I willingly choose to respond in every situation the way God instructs me to respond with the confidence that it leads to a fullness of life, and that every effort I make will enjoy his divine support.

If you take that collar of ministry off, you will see life differently, and you will lead an entirely different life. Your perspective will be totally changed. Instead of thinking of the needs of others, you will focus more and more of your needs and your desires. And God will seem to slip from being your loving backer, to one who picks and chooses when and how he will support you. It may not seem like being self centered, because your actions will seem reasonable, natural, and what everyone else is doing. But our loving heavenly father says you will win as you consistently heed the call to minister on his behalf.
As a minister, each “job” is undertaken for God. The “job” may look like a task given by your mother such as when you are told to set the table, but how you set the table will be entirely different, if you think of yourself as ministering for God. And your mother will feel honored in the process. Or, the “job” may be helping your wife so she can get to a meeting on time. But she will feel loved and appreciated when your willingness to help, and the effort you put into helping, reflects a perspective of doing it for Jesus, our Savior, who always loves and ministers to us, lavishly. Or, the “job” may be shopping for some items for your husband. Every job is an opportunity to minister to another member of your family. Do it wholeheartedly as unto Jesus. We are his ministers in every situation. Think of how different your actions would be when your wife’s mother comes to visit, if you saw it as another opportunity to minister to your wife and children. There are no exceptions. A minister is always on duty, even though the focus can change, and even when the “tasks” change very quickly. Everything is ministry. Any one particular challenge may be really hard work, or it may be a lot of fun, but it is a challenge given to you by your loving Savior so you can be assured that God will back you, and that God will reward you. God asks us to adopt a ministry perspective in every part of our lives and particularly in the family. It is the frame of reference that our loving God asks us to accept, and it starts in the home.
GOD LOVES US!

The fact that God loves us, is the foundation on which we accept the role of being a minister for him. We are not being coerced, we are drawn to accepting the role because of his love. Accepting the role is easier when we are fully persuaded that God loves us, and it becomes increasingly difficult if we forget, or don’t feel that God really cares. It is easier to be his minister when we have the confidence that “if God is for us, then who can successfully be against us?”

The apostle John wrote the most famous statement on God’s love in John 3:16 where it says “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” John wanted to show the commitment that this love includes.

After three years of being with Jesus, and several years of experiencing that commitment, John wrote that the life our loving God has for us can be described by words such as abundant, full and rewarding.
Hosea, an Old Testament prophet talked about how he understood God’s love. He recorded how God freely told how he had lavished his blessings on the Children of Israel, in spite of the fact that the nation had rejected him. God has the same feelings we have, yet our loving God declares that he simply couldn’t react to them in anger. His response was love. The Apostle John said he got to the point that he relied on that love as he responded to the challenges of life.

This heart of love is what our gracious father has for us - he will never react to us in anger. It is also the confidence we have as we accept his call to minister - he will never leave us nor forsake us. His love is so great that he can’t even think about leaving you to be on your own. Even though you may not love your wife the way God wants you to every time, or respect your husband like God wants, you can be assured that our loving God will not turn away from you. He loves you, and wants to lovingly redeem and restore all that is important to you. That is the love that makes every challenge of ministry one that you can accept with enthusiasm.

’How can I turn you loose...how can I leave you to be ruined?...I can't bear to even think such thoughts...so I'm not going to act on my anger.’ Hosea 11:8-9 The Message
Still, another picture of our heavenly father’s love is given by the fact that he thinks about you often. He thinks of ways that you will enjoy both prosperity and hope (Jeremiah 29:11). Take a moment to ponder the idea that our heavenly father meditates about you frequently, and enjoys those thoughts. He has been thinking of you from before the foundation of the world. That is a long time, and during that time, he has held onto elaborate plans to ensure that you are blessed and have hope. God loves you unconditionally. Keeping track of this idea will help you to willingly accept the role of being his minister and to stay at it when the going gets tough.

Our Savior also loves you with his whole heart. Every desire he has for you is good. Jesus expressed his love for you by saying how he often longed to gather you like a mother hen gathers her chicks. His love includes an overwhelming desire to be with you and to protect you. He loves you, and he loves to spend time with you. Reminding yourself that God loves you with his whole heart will strengthen your resolve to minister to the members of your family even when they don’t deserve it.

Jesus also loves you with all his soul. He enjoys you. He rejoices over you with singing. Imagine, our loving God writing a song just to celebrate you. When you repented, he made sure that all heaven
rejoiced. That is the heart of love our father has for you. He gets happy as he thinks of you.

Jesus also put great effort into loving you. He accepted cruel wounds, rejection, and death. He spared no effort to give you his full love. And even today, he is preparing a mansion for you.

Everything he asks you to do, including ministering within your home, comes out of his heart which is filled with an incredible, and faithful love for you. It comes with the assurance that he will go ahead of you and prepare the way, and reward you as you follow him. His eyes go throughout the earth to show himself strong on your behalf!

The ministry he asks you to do is part of his plan to bring blessings to others in your family, but in his wisdom, he ensures that it will also leads you to having a fulfilled and abundant life. Our compassion filled God loves you and so everything he asks you to do is an expression of his incredible love for you. It may be hard to see that a challenging setting is good for you, but God, who loves deeply, gives us that assurance. In fact he says that everything works together for your good. He wants you to know and be aware of his wonderful love just for you.
Another great benefit of this opportunity, one that may not seem obvious at the moment, is that you will have a greater appreciation for our loving God. As you minister for him and follow his leading you will be amazed at the wisdom of our God. He invites you to use that wisdom as you take on the challenge of creating a home and enjoying the wonder of seeing his wisdom in action.

When one loses track of the loving heart of God, ministry becomes a task that can be picked up or put down; a calling that can be accepted or modified as the situation suggests. The temptation to shout back, to get even, or to respond in anger will be stronger when we feel like we are on our own in the challenging adventure called family. Remembering that your loving God is looking out for your interests, will give you the freedom to respond well to the challenges of family.

When our awareness of God’s love for us begins to wane, then our expressions of love begin to lose their sincerity and become more performance or show. A little pretense, that often leads to self righteousness. But a minister for God reminds himself frequently of the wonderful love God has for him and renews his love for the father. That love gives the strength to carry on even through some very difficult situations and do it with sincerity and love.
MINISTERS ARE NOT PERFECT

Ministers are not perfect and active ministers are the ones most aware of this. They overlook opportunities, mistake their good ideas for the thoughts of God, get discouraged, sin, and sometimes lose hope. It is at these times that we come back to the fact that our heavenly father loves us, just as we are. So we repent, put the collar of ministry on again and drive on. Remember that Jesus, the one who died for us, is interceding for us even when we are being very imperfect. There is always hope, for God is working with you and for you! Here are three verses to remind us that God is working with us.

What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? Romans 8:31

You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world. 1 John 4:4

But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ and through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of him. 2 Corinthians 2:14
THE SCRIPTURE IS THERE TO SUPPORT YOU

Here are some of the statutes on faith. Read and reread them. Ponder and enjoy them. Then you can pick up the collar of ministry with renewed optimism and look forward to the impact your ministry will have.

“Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the LORD your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you.” Deuteronomy 31:6

Trust in the LORD and do well; dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture. Psalms 37:3

Cast your cares on the LORD and he will sustain you; he will never let the righteous fall. Psalms 55:22

Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; {6} in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight. Proverbs 3:5-6

Cast your bread upon the waters, for after many days you will find it again. Ecclesiastes 11:1
Say to those with fearful hearts, "Be strong, do not fear; your God will come, he will come with vengeance; with divine retribution he will come to save you." Isaiah 35:4

"Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes?“ Matthew 6:25

Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours. Mark 11:24

Flee the evil desires of youth, and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart. 2 Timothy 2:22

Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." Hebrew’s 13:5
Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. {19} Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them. {20} Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord. {21} Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged. {22} Slaves, (employees) obey your earthly masters in everything; and do it, not only when their eye is on you and to win their favor, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord. {23} Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, {24} since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.

Colossians 3:18-24
THE UNIFORM OF MINISTRY

However, before we get into the nature of ministry, we need to start with the background of this ministry defining text. The context is important because it deals with the manner in which the tasks are done. The manner, that makes them as powerful as God intends them to be.

One passage tells us what a minister does, but the preceding verses talk to us about our attitude as we are doing these things. Ministry involves both task and attitude. You can’t separate them. But attitude comes first. It is never satisfactory to do a task even if it done well, while feeling annoyed at the person you are helping, or while focusing on the inconvenience of the timing. The ministry loses some of its effectiveness.

Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. {13} Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. {14} And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

Colossians 3:12-14

There is a great difference between preparing your husband’s favorite meal while regretting that there has been very little attention
paid to your ‘to do’ list, as compared to fixing the same meal as you remind yourself of some of the things he has done for you.

Disciplining your child takes on an entirely different character if you do it while holding a grudge, rather than when the discipline is mingled with forgiveness.

The Colossians 3:12-14 passage describes the attitudes of compassion, kindness, gentleness, humility, forgiveness, patience and love, as the clothes you wear for effective ministry. It is your ministry uniform. Wearing it consistently may seem like an impossible challenge, with all the pressures and circumstances of life. But remind yourself that this is just what you receive from your loving heavenly father. Remember that you are part of his family! Remember also that God looks for faithful effort not perfection! And remember to, that you will get better at it the more you diligently apply yourself to the challenge.

These are the characteristics that God puts before every Christian to help you minister effectively in each setting, and particularly to the ones in your home. Our loving God asks that every minister model these characteristics; so that they become the signature of the way we work. When your husband, wife, or children, see you
coming, they want to see these garments. You are instantly on duty, and the uniform of ministry is compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, bearing with one another, forgiving and love. This uniform opens the door to making your ministry powerful and effective. If your uniform is soiled or missing important parts, your ministry will be impaired and you will not be as well received.

If you minister with all these garments except the garment of gentleness, you will come across as harsh, and your ministry will have very little effect. For example, a husband can invite his wife to go out for dinner, but the anticipation of the evening will be very different, if the invitation is given with gentleness rather than with harshness.

If you minister with all these garments except the garment of compassion, you come across as hypocritical or judgmental. It is easy to give the correct answer to your child, but when it is given with care, they will be encouraged to ask more questions. If it is given with a judgmental attitude, your child is probably going to think twice before asking again. When you omit the garment of kindness, you come across as one who really does not want to be ministering.

Omit any feature of the ministry uniform and the ministry losses some of its power. But as you minister with all these garments
on, you can anticipate wonderful results from a ministry that God loves to support and bless.

**THE REWARDS OF MINISTRY**

God gives us the opportunity to minister for him with the full expectation of victory. God always plans to lead you to victory. It would be wonderful if everyone (including you) responded immediately to a ministry both in the way and in the time that would please our loving God. We all carry some baggage, and some of that baggage may require consistent ministry, lovingly given over time in order to see the result that everyone wants to see. But we come back to the assurance that our loving God always leads us in triumphant procession in Christ.

*But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumphant procession in Christ and through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of him.*

*2 Corinthians 2:14*

We rest in the assurance that good overcomes evil. We also have the confidence that as we minister we will leave behind a pleasant feeling that speaks of the wisdom that comes only from our loving heavenly father.
The waiting side of ministry may not be easy when a spouse is preoccupied with a hobby, or when a family member drinks too much, or when the finances get stretched. But ministry done God’s way, leads to success and victory.

So, the call is to engage in the wonderful challenge called family. Do it wearing the garments of ministry, with the assurance that you minister on behalf of our savior who has an overwhelming love for you.

You can minister in the power of the Holy Spirit with the confidence that victory is assured. As a wonderful bonus, you can anticipate the reward that our God of love has been waiting to give just to you. He loves you deeply, has endless resources, and gives them freely.
CHAPTER THREE
THE MINISTRY OF A HUSBAND
TO HIS WIFE

Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them.  
Colossians 3:19

Let’s begin with the command to husbands. It is not first in the chapter, but I feel safer starting here.

Don’t ignore the fact that this is a command, but as you remind yourself of this, remind yourself also that it comes from the heart of our loving savior. That confidence will give you the assurance that you can do it and that doing it is good for you! He has equipped you and will support you so that you are able to fulfill it in every situation. He is also saying that your family deeply wants you to do this, your wife needs you to do it, and your children will watch in appreciation and respect as you do it. Be assured, as well, that you will be your best as you obey this command. Ministry comes with the
assurance that this is good for you. You reap a wonderful benefit as you minister in this way.

God, in his infinite wisdom created your wife with needs. It will come as no surprise that he didn’t make her perfect. And he calls you to minister knowing that your ministry is just what she needs. He called you to minister to these needs, knowing that in doing so, you will reap a wonderful reward. What an awesome God.

God says to husbands that his great role in your wedding is to entrust this special person, your wife, to your ministry. She is a person that he loves deeply, and he gives you the wonderful privilege and challenge of becoming a better person as you minister to your wife’s deepest needs. God accepts your marriage, as your commitment to love and care for this wonderful person. And he commands you to make her feel appreciated. That is your task and the method is to love her and not be harsh with her.

While you will need the full uniform to perform this ministry fully, the command includes a strong reminder not to be harsh with her so be sure to remember the garment of gentleness. It will be difficult for your wife to feel appreciated if the garment of gentleness isn’t fitting well.
ONLY YOU CAN MEET HER NEED

In giving this ministry role to you, God is saying that nobody can show your wife the level of appreciation that God wants for her, like you can. God built her with the need to be appreciated, and created you with an impressive capability of meeting it. It is one of the ways that God has come alongside your marriage to give it an abundance of fulfillment.

God has uniquely positioned and equipped you, as her husband, to meet her need for appreciation and, what is more, only you can do it. A wife may feel the appreciation of strangers as she helps in a service club, or the appreciation of her children as they smile their thank you. She may even enjoy the appreciation of her workmates as she makes their load lighter, but she will feel empty if she doesn’t sense the appreciation of you, her husband. God made women like that. He made wives with the deep-seated need to be appreciated. And he gave her a special one on one minister to meet that need. God graciously gives you the strength and freely gives you his wisdom which when coupled with an abundance of opportunities, ideally positions you to make her feel appreciated.

Our loving God gives you the privilege of ministering to your wife. He loves you (and her), and gives you opportunities upon
opportunities to pass that love onto her. Love her and don’t be harsh with her. Make her feel appreciated. She does so much for you, and in turn will do so much more as she feels appreciated. But remember that she has a God created need to be appreciated and remember that God positioned you as her minister to meet that need. Minister the grace of God to her so that she feels appreciated and in the process you will be blessed and your family will be strong.

IN THE POWER OF THE SPIRIT WITH YOUR WHOLE HEART

Some may be tempted to minister with their own personal skills, but ministry is different than just human effort. Doing something because God says to do it, is different from just trying harder. It is different from buying the latest book or going to a special weekend retreat. Ministry means taking that person to God in prayer, and seeking the wisdom of God so that your regular actions make your wife feel appreciated.

For example, the wisdom of God is that a gentle answer turns away anger (Proverbs 15:1) so, you can expect that a gentle response will be effective over the long run, rather than attempts to out shout her, or to manipulate the setting to your advantage. Notice the word “gentle” again; - the ministry description reminded you of its importance.
The wisdom of God also says that words of encouragement will make it difficult for your wife to settle into harmful patterns such as watching contorted love stories, or ... As you use these tools and see the result, you will have the added bonus of standing in awe at the wisdom of our God. God puts everything together for your good! God wants you to minister to her as well as be her companion and lover. The results will be vastly better.

True ministry is always done in the strength and wisdom that God provides. So it should come as no surprise that our loving God, is eager to give you wisdom and guidance. In fact he urges you to freely ask for that wisdom. Husbands who are ministers put on the hard hat of ministry, when your wife is the most challenging, call out to God for help, and step up to the challenge.

You are the one charged with ministering to your wife. You are called to minister in the power of the Holy Spirit, and as you do, God will come alongside and bless this special ministry so that she feels appreciated and you sense the wonderful love of God.
To add extra emphasis to this task, the Bible says do it with all your heart. Do it as unto God.

Some may be tempted to match the effort you put into this ministry with the attitude or behavior that your wife displays. Some might imagine that she is supposed to get what she deserves, as if ministry were to be earned. Remember, you never earned God’s ministry to you, and in addition he reaches out to you even when you are at your worst. The call of ministry is not a call to look at the person, but rather to look at the Lord. It is a call to minister for him even though it is directed to your wife. It may be a simple smile that you give her, but as you do it, remember that your greatest reward will come from God.

It would be wonderful if every act of love that you gave her was returned in like measure or greater. But God says, he is the one who will ensure that your efforts are paid back and paid back with good measure, pressed down and running over. Ministry carries with it a special call to go above and beyond what the other members of your family have a right to expect, knowing that God will reward you. As

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\text{Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, } \text{24} \text{ since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.} \\
\text{Colossians 3:23-24}
\]
you approach ministry this way, you will probably want to remind yourself that this opportunity comes from the loving heart and hands of our all knowing savior. Forgetting this will leave you tempted to give her what you feel she deserves.

**MINISTERING COSTS CAN BE VERY HIGH**

This command is also given in the book of Ephesians. That passage emphasizes the cost, even as it gives us another picture of some of the benefits. The calling to love your wife just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, tells us that there will be times when this ministry will be really hard. It is challenging to show her that she is appreciated all the time, for some wives do some very pretty awful things. And some wives do these awful things repeatedly. On top of this, they have a unique biological clock that can distort their perspectives incredibly. But the way she reacts, doesn’t change your calling, nor can it change your perspective. Nor does it give you

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**Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her** {26} to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, {27} and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. {28} In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.

*Ephesians 5:25-30*
the right to take off some of the uniform of your ministry. The aroma of your ministry must continue to be compassion, kindness, gentleness, humility, forgiveness, and patience and love. It is at times like this that you reach for the hard hat of ministry, which means taking extra time in prayer, be careful with how you say things, plan acts of kindness, be extra patient as you wait for her to respond to your love, forgive as Christ forgave, and persevere in doing these things. As a minister, there will be times when it feels like you are giving up your life, but our loving God says that ministering in this way is really loving your own life! The Bible says, “he who loves his wife loves himself.” And be assured that it is the pathway to a healthy family. Don’t imagine that ministry is always easy. Remember, even Jesus said, “if it is possible let this cup pass from me” as he faced a critical part of the ministry his loving father had assigned to him. There are lots of times that ministry for God is simply hard, hard work. There is no other way to describe it. But God comes with the assurance of his love as he declares “Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.” (Galatians 6:9)

The Bible also says “. . . do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness leads you toward repentance?” (Romans 2:4) Remember that
these tools may seem insignificant but they are powerful to the pulling down of strongholds.

Those who withdraw kindness in the hour of their wife’s greatest need have forgotten the power of kindness, or they haven’t understood the lavish love God has for each one, or perhaps they have been bowed down by the load. Kindness is the tool that God uses to bring people to repentance, and it is an important part of your uniform. Don’t minister without it. No wonder ministry is challenging.

And if that isn’t challenging and encouraging enough, God adds to this ministry imperative, saying, work at this ministry with your whole heart.

Of course ministry is directed to blessing your wife, but it is done for the Lord. And it is our loving Lord that will reward you. It is great when your wife

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Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, \{24\} since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving
Colossians 3:23-24
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responds well to you, but you are assured of the reward from the one who loves you even more than your wife does. The cost may be high, or it may be easy, but the calling is to do it with your whole heart because you are working (oops! - ministering) for the LORD ... and then rest in the confidence that our loving LORD keeps his divine promises to you.

THE TIMES WHEN MINISTRY IS NEEDED THE MOST.

In church, some members need/take extra care. In the same way, some wives need extra ministry. You signed up for it when you married her. You promised to love her for better or for worse, till death parts you. Some wives are wonderful and their husbands have a very easy ministry role. Other wives are really challenging, and their husbands need every bit of God’s grace to survive.

When your wife is relating well, you will find that the ministry will take little effort. She will feel the support and love of those around her. But she still needs the unique ministry of her husband, and our loving God says she deserves it. The uniform of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience, understanding, forgiveness and love, should be clear to her and everyone at all times – but this is easy, or easier, when she relates well.
When your wife is doing awful things, she needs extra special ministries. That is her hour of greatest need for personal one on one ministry. Some might be tempted to be compassionate and kind when she is, but the times your wife needs compassion and love the most, are the times when she is at her worst. Welcome to the ministry. In times like these, we need to remind ourselves that God loves us lavishly. At times like this, it may be important to take some personal time and review his blessings to you.

THE CHALLENGE CAN GO ON AND ON

Any minister can minister with all his energy for a short time. The ministry to your wife may seem very taxing, but when you know that this great need is just for a short time, then the ministry may be difficult but not overwhelming. If you can see the light at the end of the short tunnel, you can grit your teeth, pray a little more, and minister with the assurance that this phase will pass.

However, no one knows the future, and there are times when the call to minister will seem like the command of a monster, rather than the opportunity to enjoy the love of our savior. The husband who gets to minister to an unresponsive or rejecting wife year after year, needs the support of God’s people. He has our loving savior’s support but the support of others is vital and very encouraging as well. We are
reminded to bear one another’s burdens, and this resource should never be overlooked in the challenging world of ministry.

The Bible presents us with the example of Joseph who maintained his high standard as a minister for thirteen years and even while he was in prison. During that time, he suffered severe disappointments, without any assurance of it ever ending. But God was with him, and Joseph kept that ministry perspective. After several years in prison, he still ministered to the butcher and the baker with compassion.

So he (Joseph) asked Pharaoh’s officials who were in custody with him in his master's house, "Why are your faces so sad today?" {8} "We both had dreams," they answered, "but there is no one to interpret them." Then Joseph said to them, "Do not interpretations belong to God? Tell me your dreams."  
Genesis 40:7-8

The perspective that everything, including your best interests is in the hands of our loving God, is vital to a continuing and successful ministry. Ministry for God can be very demanding! Our God is not reluctant to call us to that kind of ministry.
RESULTS OF THIS MINISTRY

The passage in Ephesians says the impact of making your wife feel appreciated, will be to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing of the water of the word and present her to God without stain or wrinkle. What a lofty calling and assurance. God says you are the best and only minister that can truly lead her to that calling, and you will do it as you meet her deep need for appreciation.

The passage in Ephesians also shows what she will miss if that ministry is not given. Her life will neither be as complete, nor as wholesome nor as useful in the kingdom of God if she does not get your ministry. And you will have missed those special opportunities to enjoy the results of a ministry that God backs with his whole heart. And your family will not be all that God intends it to be.

That is the command of God to you as her husband. Love your wife and don’t be harsh with them. Don’t deny your wife the most vital ministry that God prepared for her. A ministry that you are equipped to provide, and a ministry that only you can fully satisfy. Then anticipate the wonderful reward of our faithful God, and the awesome results in her, as you carry out the role of being the minister God that wants you to be.
THE SCRIPTURE IS THERE TO SUPPORT YOU

Read and meditate upon these faith inspiring verses to remind you that victory is assured.

"Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. {25} The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock.  Matthew 7:24-25

But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ and through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of him.  2 Corinthians 2:14

Trust in the LORD and do good; dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture.  Psalms 37:3

Cast your cares on the LORD and he will sustain you; he will never let the righteous fall.  Psalms 55:22

Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; {6} in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.  Proverbs 3:5-6
"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. {29} Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. {30} For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

Matthew 11:28-30

... I tell you the truth, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you."

Matthew 17:20

But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. {18} Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness. James 3:17-18

And anticipate wearing the crown of victory
“Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.”
Colossians 3:18

The same ideas are there for the wife as she ministers to her husband.

This is a demanding, yet wonderfully rewarding ministry. And it is one that the rest of your family is wanting you to fulfill. They want to see you succeed in this ministry.

The description of your ministry that God had the writers in several books affirm is “Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.” (Colossians 3:18)

God says, make your husband feel respected. Submit to him as is fitting. He may feel respected at his work; he may feel respected in
his birth family, or with his children. But, if he is not respected in your eyes, he will feel hollow. God made him that way. And God calls you, his wife, to minister to him at this vital point of your husband’s need. You are the only minister that can fully meet this vital need, of course with the full reliance on our faithful God. God loves you and God loves him enough to provide him with a special personal minister, in the same way that he is a special minister to you.

**SUBMIT, “AS IS FITTING IN THE LORD”**

Please note that you do not make him feel important by submitting foolishly or to violence. The passages says, submit, “as is fitting in the Lord.”, not because it is fitting in the Lord, but in a manner that is fitting in the Lord. The task you have is not to be a doormat; your task is to make him feel important. A person, who beats his wife or abuses her in any other way, does not come away feeling important. Instead, he will feel defeated and awful. So submission to violence is not submission that is “fitting in the Lord.” After such an encounter, your husband will have many emotions but he will not have feelings of being important in your eyes. Those in abusive situations need to get help, because in addition to your ministry that demonstrates how important he is, he may need the ministry of others to help him overcome harmful behavior. Your husband cannot begin to feel good about himself until that destructive behavior is addressed and he is
redeemed and restored.

Some might be tempted to withhold honor for the slightest provocation. While others might want to excuse abusive behavior with the thought that, “he didn’t really mean it.” Both extremes exist in our society. From crying wolf at the slightest provocation, to refusing to acknowledge overwhelming abuse. Some might be prone to use this verse as the justification for their whims, while others might live under the guilt they read from it. But our loving savior has provided the Holy Spirit to interpret it for you, and he will do it for you in your unique situation. The wonderful provision that God has made is that the Holy Spirit will direct us as we prayerfully meditate upon this and other statutes of God. You may be reminded of your need to get help, when you didn’t want the issue to be known, or you may be directed to show him that you really do respect him. Our heavenly father, loves you, and wants you to succeed. We succeed as we rely on his wisdom and the direction of the Holy Spirit.

It may be tempting to apply the ‘letter of the law’ and try to figure it out by yourself, but the assurance we have is that

He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant—not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.  
2 Corinthians 3:6
the Holy Spirit breathes life-giving insight into every instruction of God.

The Spirit here is the Holy Spirit and he will direct you in a way that leads to life, life that is full, and abundant. That is the provision our faithful God has given to enable you to respond well to your husband, even in very difficult situations.

David expressed his confidence in the direction of the Holy Spirit when he wrote “Your commands make me wiser than my enemies, for they are ever with me. {99} I have more insight than all my teachers, for I meditate on your statutes.” Psalms 119:98-99

God has made a way for you to have great insight into every issue of life, and your marriage needs that insight. The Bible both encourages us to trust in the wisdom of God, and cautions us from relying on our own thinking.

GOD WILL BACK YOU

God says he will back you as you minister to the needs of
your husband. Our faithful God loves you. God reminds us that he is always with us, and that he will never leave us nor forsakes us. He placed these reminders in several parts of the Bible to make sure we don’t miss them. Ministry done for God brings the backing of God. Of course there are times when a minister feels like they are doing it all by themselves. Those feelings are natural. They are a signal that you need to take your husband to God in prayer as you meditate upon the calling of God and the fact that our savior loves you both deeply. The Holy Spirit will strengthen you and direct you, for the Bible reminds us that the ones who wait (including meditating) on the Lord will renew their strength. It is one more way our loving God has made life strengthening provisions for you.

How often have I seen wives who are in difficult situations come into church, beaten in their spirits. But I have watched as those same wives are gradually washed by the worship, and their hearts are plowed by the message and sometimes seen them rest in the presence of the prince of peace, and they leave with a renewed commitment to minister for God. Without that time of refreshing, many would give up. But God is committed to backing you, and he calls you to the place of waiting in his presence so your strength can be renewed, and your calling refreshed.
There is no place in scripture, which says ministry is all fun and games. There are times when it simply calls for every bit of effort and commitment you have. You see that nature of ministry, in the ministry that was assigned to Jesus. Isaiah described his ministry as he said “He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not.” (Isaiah 53:3). He didn’t even have the support of those around him in his most needy time. Every one of the disciples forsook him when he was crucified. Jesus even felt that God had forsaken him, but of course, he hadn’t.

Don’t imagine that ministry is simply fun and games. But recognize that our God has called us, and he is faithful and he will come alongside and work with us. His words to Joshua were “*Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go.*” (*Joshua 1:9*)

Ministry is like that. It has its periods of incredible challenge, and you need to keep going back to our loving God for strength. You may also have to go back to God to remind yourself of your special calling to minster to your husband.
The great need of any ministry is to do it in the strength of God. It is too easy to minimize this and try to accomplish something by our reasoning, or efforts, or even with the best intended advice of others.

The challenge is to come back to meditating on the word of God and understand the direction your ministry is to take. Go back to the word and remind yourself of God’s calling and his promises. You will leave that place with a renewed commitment to minister to your husband as a messenger of our God who loves us beyond measure.

What an awesome God to recognize the deep needs of each of us, and then prepare and equip us as a minister to meet each of them. God loves you so much.

**DO IT WITH YOUR WHOLE HEART**

The description of the effort expected of ministry is equally challenging. Do it with your whole heart, whether the situation is great or easy.

As you make your

*Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, {24} since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.*

*Colossians 3:23-24*
husband feel important, just as he is to make you feel appreciated, do it with everything in you. Don’t be half hearted. Less than full effort produces a ministry that seems hollow, and God, whom you are ministering for, will be disappointed. Half-hearted ministry is ministry with some part of your uniform missing. You may be compassionate, kind, gentle, patient, forgiving and loving; but if the cloaks of humility and bearing with one another are not there, then the ministry will come across with an edge, half-hearted; it will be ministry with an attitude. The same is true if any other component of the uniform is missing. Ministry without the garment of gentleness will come across as bossy and he will not feel important. Ministry without the garment of forgiveness will come across as resentful, and again he will not feel important in spite of the great effort you may be making to bless him. Each of the garments of ministry is vital to being the wholehearted minister God wants you to be. That is what wholehearted means.

**YOU ARE THE BEST ONE TO MINISTER TO HIM**

When God called you to minister to your husband, he declared that you are the one who is best able to meet his needs as you function with the backing of Almighty God. No one else can meet his need for respect like you can. The pastor of the church will meet some of his needs, his friends will minister to him, and his extended family may minister to him. But he will still have a deep inner craving for the
respect that only you can give him. Husbands have this need. God created them this way. Yet, it is a need that God uniquely called and specially equipped you to fulfill.

God also built into the heart of your children a longing to see this ministry, and a resulting deep sense of contentment when they see you ministering to him as God directs. Our loving father has created the family in such a wonderfully interconnected fashion. It is one more way that he sets us up to be a family, a group of people with special bonds and relationships.

MINISTERING TO HIS NEEDS HELPS BUILDS A STRONG HOME

God in his incredible love and wisdom understands that meeting needs contributes to the building of a home. So he created each of us to have needs and for our spouse to be an active participant in meeting these needs. It brings us together just as it challenges us.

If each of us were independent of the other, then we would have no need of each other, but right from the beginning of time, God made us with needs. He said it was not good for man to live alone, that need was built in right from the beginning of time and it prepared the way for his wife to begin ministering to him. It was one of the great ways that God prepared the way for your home to tied together in love. Enjoy participating with God in building a strong home.
MINISTERING TO HIM, MINISTERS TO YOUR CHILDREN

Ministering to your husband by giving him honor sets him up to minister to your children.

Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged.
Colossians 3:21

It is a vital role, but he will have a much more difficult time fulfilling that mandate if you do not show him the respect that he needs. God says he is the one who carries the task of ensuring your children are optimistic, that hope comes naturally to them.

Faith in God will come much more easily if your children are schooled to anticipate that good will happen, and bitterness is avoided. God wants the best for your child. But your husband cannot fulfill that task to the degree God wants it to be without being affirmed by you, his wife, as you give him respect. As you minister to your husband by making him feel important, you are ministering to your children! As you choose to submit to him, you establish his position in the eyes of the children, and free him to minister to the children.

And the tool that God puts at your disposal is to submit to him as is fitting in the Lord. Affirm his importance.
THE SCRIPTURE IS THERE TO SUPPORT YOU

As the primary minister to your husband, you have the wonderful assurance that God will be with you. Read and meditate on these faith-inspiring verses to remind you that victory is assured.

"Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the LORD your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you." Deuteronomy 31:6

What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? Romans 8:31

You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world. 1 John 4:4

But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ and through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of him. 2 Corinthians 2:14

But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. {18} Peacemakers who sow in peace
raise a harvest of righteousness. James 3:17-18

And the assurance of reward is given again in “Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, {24} since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.” (Colossians 3:23-24)

And anticipate wearing the crown of victory!
Children have the awesome privilege and responsibility, under God, to make parents feel honored. Children are the best equipped to do that. If parents feel honored at church, honored at work, honored by their spouse, but you embarrass them, they will sense they are failures and feel ashamed. But, if you honor them, they will feel good even when others criticize them. God made parents that way, and God has given you the ministry of meeting their deepest need for honor. It is your primary ministry. It is the first ministry task assigned to you and it is one that never stops, regardless of your age or the age of your parents.

The Bible also tells you how to give them honor. The tool
God has given you children that gives them honor is to obey them. Obey them in everything, for this pleases the LORD.

**THE CHALLENGE WHEN OBEYING IS DIFFICULT**

There are times when honoring your parents will come easy. If your parents ask you to do something, and everyone else is doing a similar thing, then obedience is easy. For example, if they give you a curfew, and all your friends have a similar curfew. It will be easy to obey. So put on the joyful garments of ministry and enjoy.

There are other times when it is a real challenge. Some parents are stricter than others, and if your parents are stricter, then it can be difficult to obey when ‘every other’ parent is giving greater freedom to their children. But ministry is not about obeying because your parents deserve obedience, it is all about obeying because God says, this is your ministry, a ministry that brings the honor to your parents that they need.

Similar difficulties come when the media encourages an immoral lifestyle,
inappropriate clothes, or habits that your parents disapprove of. Again, these are times when you may need to put on the hard hat of ministry and obey your parents. Ministry is not easy at times. But your parents need to be honored. Our loving God equipped you to meet their needs and calls you to minister to them out of the strength that he wants to give you.

As you learn this lesson, you will also be learning the lesson that you are never too young to minister for God. This passage doesn’t say it, but the opposite is also true. You are never too old, or too sick, or too ___ (fill in the blanks) to minister. We don’t minister out of our abilities; we minister out of the backing that our loving savior lavishly and freely gives.

**CHILDREN CAN BE GIVEN VERY DIFFICULT TASKS**

Perhaps the greatest challenge to obeying parents occurs if the parents order you to do something that is contrary to God’s laws. For example, if a parent tells you to lie for him or her, when God has told us that lying is a sin.

This is similar to the ministry of wives to husbands. You need to remember that you are ministering to your parents. If you were to lie for them, they would go away defeated in their inner being. They
may sense a temporary victory, but inwardly, God will be reminding them that they have done wrong. You would be contributing to their bad behavior rather than ministering to them. There are times when obeying God becomes more important than obeying your parents, as difficult as those times are. No child should ever be put in the position where they have to make such a choice. Making that kind of choice demands a maturity that goes beyond what children should be expected to have. But the only option for you is to put on the hard hat of ministry, and do what God would have you to do. I imagine that this hard hat is the one that squeezes the most. Ministry has its challenging times and God begins teaching that lesson to children.

**MINISTRY NEEDS TO BE DONE WITH THE WHOLE HEART**

Just as you come to grips with the real difficulties in doing this ministry, you come to the challenge to do it with your whole heart.

Imagine the challenge of having parents who are dysfunctional at best, so you come at life with a self-image that is really poor. And you know you are to obey your parents, and to give them
honor. And now you are told to do it with your whole heart. Isn’t that asking too much of a child?

It is here again, that it is vital to understand that this is ministry. Honoring them has little to do with your parents at this point; and everything to do with the recognition that as a minister, you are serving the Lord Jesus Christ. Perhaps children have the most challenging task; honoring parents who put them in situations that are deeply embarrassing and full of conflict. The hard hat of ministry for children must be the hardest hat of all to put on. They have relatively few experiences where they have seen the fulfillment of the Biblical promise that all things work together for good. They may have great difficulty accepting the commitment of God to always leads us in triumphal procession. These promises can seem like distant hopes for a child.

Colossians 3:23-24

Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, {24} since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.

Colossians 3:23-24
THIS MINISTRY IS A COMMANDMENT WITH PROMISE

Is it any wonder that God would incorporate the most awesome promise into the ministry description of a child? Certainly, there is the assurance that they will be rewarded for this ministry. But the promise goes well beyond that.

God is so intent that this ministry takes place and so understanding of the challenges of this ministry that he backs it with an incredible promise. Life will go well for you, and you will enjoy life. This is the assurance of our loving Lord, the one who is control of everything makes without reservation. God holds a fulfilling life in store for those who honor their parents.

This ministry to parents and the training that you experience

"Honor your father and mother"--which is the first commandment with a promise---{3} "that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth."

Ephesians 6:2-3

Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you.

Hebrews 13:17
are of incredible importance to Jesus.

So Jesus would say, put on whichever hat is appropriate, but put it on with your whole heart and give honor to your parents.

**EVERY MINISTRY IS SERIOUS**

Jesus told us the seriousness of this ministry by telling us that anyone who curses his or her parents should be put to death.

The ministry God wants for your parents is your ministry of honor. Cursing them is the total opposite of that ministry, and God treats it very seriously. But no one should be quick to condemn themselves either. If every mistake met with the quick execution, then no one would be a successful minister. Even a serious mistake can be worked through when you have developed a reputation for giving honor. And with our loving God, there are always forgiveness and restoration.

So, put on the hat that suits the occasion and remember that God is intent on backing you. I suppose that knowing that God is a God.
of compassion is more important here than anywhere else.

A further statement of the importance of this ministry is in the job description itself, for it says “... for this pleases the Lord.” (Colossians 3:20)

You need to be reminded that your ministry to your parents brings pleasure to the heart of our Lord. See the heart of the one who loves you deeply, and see him smiling with joy as you take each step of faith. There is no higher calling than to bring pleasure to the Lord, and Jesus has set life up so that children accomplish it by every act of obedience.

**HONORING THEM TEACHES US TO HONOR AUTHORITY**

This particular ministry comes with another added benefit to the child. Through giving honor to your parents, you will learn how to submit properly to authority. Many adults have a difficult time submitting to authority. Some of the problems in a church stem from this difficulty. Some people have never learned the importance that God puts on submission. They never learned the importance of their ministry to their parents; for the home is the first place where submission to authority is to be learned. Children who learn to honor their parents
have a much easier time submitting to authority - in the workplace, church, sports and country.

Parents who foster an atmosphere where honor is easy, build an incredibly important character trait into their children.

God designed the world so that your training for successful adulthood begins in the home. He planned it so it would be natural for you to submit to authority. The passage in Hebrews gives the reason for that submission. It is all about making their job easier, and bringing advantage to you. Don’t lose out on the advantage God has in store for you. God loves your parents, and loves you enough to begin the lesson of submission when you are a child. Don’t miss the lesson; don’t miss the opportunity to minister to your parents.

THE SCRIPTURE IS THERE TO SUPPORT YOU

Here are some of the statutes on faith. You will be strengthened and encouraged as you read and meditate upon them.

Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you.

Hebrews 13:17
Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity. 1 Timothy 4:12

Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; {6} in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight. Proverbs 3:5-6

"Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me". John 14:1

Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. {14} Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, {15} and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. {16} In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. {17} Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. {18} And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all
The saints. Ephesians 6:13-18

But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. {18} Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness. James 3:17-18

And anticipate wearing the crown of victory!
Fathers, you have the awesome opportunity to lead your children so they will grow up having an optimistic heart. Hope is such a valuable characteristic, and God has lovingly asked you to carefully guard it. Make sure your children do not become discouraged. As much as is within you, make sure they have hope.

Hope is a very strong springboard that catapults one to
wholesome living. Kindness rises from hope, justice lifts its head from a heart that hopes, accepting other people is easier where there is hope. Accepting yourself with all your weaknesses, and unique characteristics is possible where there is hope. And faith comes more naturally to a heart that is filled with hope.

Our loving heavenly father wants your children to enjoy all these blessings, and he gives you the privilege of coming alongside him by ministering hope into the heart of your children. In giving you this ministry, our gracious God is saying that you are the one who is best equipped to ensure that they have hope. Others will encourage, but no one will be as effective as you in giving hope to your child, and no one can take hope from the heart of your child like you can.

Of course mothers have a very important ministry to the children, but God gave this unique and focused ministry to you, the father, and is saying that you are the most vital source of encouragement your child can have. They can be encouraged by their mother, by those at school, or by team mates, but if they are not encouraged by you, they will not be optimistic like God wants them to be. On the other hand, if their mother does things that discourage them, or if the setting at school is less than optimal, or if they are put down by many other people, but they feel the support of you, their father, then they will be encouraged.
God has equipped you to do it, and put into your hands the wonderful privilege of guarding your child’s heart from bitterness. Hope is a characteristic that is best and powerfully fostered by you, their father.

And how do you foster hope? The Bible leaves that question into your hands. But God has invited you to ask for wisdom, with the assurance that he will give it and give it freely. Remember, that God is not sending you into the battle alone. He goes with you. He is your shepherd, and he is anxious to give you divine wisdom.

Seeing you pray, especially when difficulties arise, tells your child that there is a power that is higher than the difficulties you face. It also tells your children that our loving God is for us, not against us. Joseph maintained a heart of hope even when he was abandoned by his brothers, betrayed by a trusted employer, and placed in a horrible jail. Thirteen years. Yet, he could remind himself of the stories of how his father relied on God when his wages were decreased ten times, and how he spent a full night praying when he didn’t know how his brother Esau would receive him. Putting that kind of example before your children is powerful. It builds hope into the heart of your children.

At the age of 92, my uncle Wallace drew his extended family around him and told of how his father faced the certain destruction of
his crop of oats when locusts were spreading through the land. He tells of seeing his father out in the middle of the field, on his knees, hands raised to God, praying. The locusts stopped three feet from the edge of the property, and their crop was saved. Seeing that kind of faith builds hope and optimism into your child. It is a memory that strengthened Uncle Wallace for over 80 years and one he wanted to pass on.

Optimism does not require a constant stream of affirmation, although that may help, but it does require the absence of bitterness.

Bitterness leads to tragic results. Children never reach their full potential if their heart is bitter. A bitter feeling will prevent them from freely accepting the kindness of others, from accepting friendships and from anticipating that everything does work together for good. Bitterness leads to resentment and unforgiveness, both of which are incredibly crippling.

Bitterness often leads to chemical dependancies as people use chemicals to mask of the emotional pain from hurts they carry. In fact, most inappropriate dependancies can be traced to this origin; somehow, the person was hurt and they were unable or unwilling to deal with it. The hurt turned into bitterness, and emotional pain is the result. Sometimes that pain can be ignored for a long time, but it will surface
again, even much later. The pain of bitterness is very strong. An all too common reaction is to find relief from the pain in some addictive behavior. But God has blessed you, the father, with the wonderful privilege of guarding their heart, of building hope into their heart.

For some fathers, this may come easy, and you can relish the hat of joy as you minister to your child. But for most, there will be periods where this will involve the hard hat of ministry. Our children occupy such a vital role in our lives and in our self worth; so it is easy to look back at your efforts and focus upon the missed opportunities. But our God is not telling you that everything is your responsibility, but rather he is saying that he wants you to come alongside him as the two of you minister to your child. Remember that God has said he will never leave you nor forsake you.

**CAUSES OF BITTERNESS**

There are many ways that bitterness can enter a child’s heart. Treating children unequally is one way that may plant the seed of bitterness. Esau experienced this source of bitterness.

*When Esau heard his father's words, he burst out with a loud and bitter cry and said to his father, "Bless me--me too, my father!"

*Genesis 27:34*
The Bible goes to lengths to tell us that bitterness was part of his response to the unfair treatment.

When one child is gifted and another is not, it is easy to favor one or the other of your children. Children pick up on this quickly and it can lead to resentment. The father’s job is to be on guard against bitterness that may take hold. It may take the hard hat of ministry to overcome the unfairness of our society. We live in a world where talents are given unfairly, and abilities are given unequally, particularly in the eyes of your children.

Seeing opportunities that are gone and can never be recovered may also become a source of bitterness. This happened to the children of Israel as they came out to bury their father, Jacob. The children had seen their father “Israel” as he lived the life of promise and as he sought God for the solution to some very difficult situations, but they buried their father “Jacob”, who lived most of his life below the promises he had been given by God. Children have a deep desire to see their father walk by faith.

*When they reached the threshing floor of Atad, near the Jordan, they lamented loudly and bitterly; and there Joseph observed a seven day period of mourning for his father.*

*Genesis 50:10*
Absentee fatherhood can also be a major cause of bitterness. In our fast paced society where the pressures on fathers can be intense, it may seem that leaving the role of parenting to the mother is the practical solution. But children strive for the attention of their father. Often they will work especially hard to get his approval. When that encouragement is not given, a child may become discouraged. Extended discouragement leads to bitterness.

Sin is another cause that breeds bitterness. There are many statements that show this, such as “For the lips of an adulteress drip honey, and her speech is smoother than oil; {4} but in the end she is bitter as gall, sharp as a double-edged sword. {5} Her feet go down to death; her steps lead straight to the grave.” (Proverbs 5:3-5). The wages of sin is death, so a level of bitterness will be present when one begins to understand the consequences of not following the pathway of love.

This ministry description shows that leading a child away from sin needs to be a focus of the father. God has specially positioned him to powerfully warn a child about the folly of sin. This does not deny the role of the mother, but it puts emphasis to the impact a father can have for good.

This ministry role is not easy, especially during the teen
years, as the child gradually becomes an adult and the influence of friends becomes increasingly important. But the Bible calls on the father to put on the clerical collar of ministry and lead the way. Exercise a great amount of wisdom, wisdom that our loving heavenly father is anxious to give, and give freely. In some cases you may need to put on the hard hat of ministry as well. Keep ministering even when every indication says it is not working.

The garment of patience can be a difficult one to wear, but it is especially important during the teen years as your child makes the transition to adulthood. The full wardrobe of compassion, kindness gentleness, patience, bearing with your child, forgiving them, and over all loving them is essential. Wholehearted ministry involves wearing all these clothes. Missing pieces will be easily noticed.

In the same vein, the father plays a vital role in imparting a proper sense of right and wrong. Making sure the child has the perspective of God on issues of right and wrong. Getting right and wrong confused leads to bitterness. Children pick up on the most subtle inconsistencies. They are particularly sensitive to actions that are different than the words you say.
Consistently and accurately discerning good from evil and teaching it to your child, will stop bitterness from developing in their hearts. In a world of gray, instead of black and white, God assigns this ministry to the father. He has the wonderful responsibility of putting black and white back into a gray world. God says no one can express this better than a father.

The Bible also tells us that giving encouragement has a powerful impact on reducing the attractiveness of sin.

Encouragement has the wonderful power that can soften the grip of sin, even after it seems to have hardened around them. This assurance says that it is never too late, for there is always hope as we minister alongside our loving savior. This assurance gives us the confidence that even when the situation may look like it has gone too far, it hasn’t. God is stronger than every influence, and he is committed to working with you.

*Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter.*

*Isaiah 5:20*

*But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness*

*Hebrews 3:13*
Many have said, never give up on your children. Keep praying, and encouraging, and helping them to have a hopeful heart. There are wonderful promises to encourage you, and heart warming testimonies of the heart of the child being turned again to the parents.

**THE MINISTRY OF THE FATHER ENABLES THE CHILD TO EXPERIENCE THE GRACE OF GOD**

Bitterness towards someone makes it very difficult to appreciate acts of kindness. Someone whose heart has been allowed to grow bitter will misinterpret or even overlook completely, an act of pure kindness. What a tragedy. Jonah did that. He held onto a bitter feeling toward the people of Ninevah, and he missed the joy that God had in store for him. Instead of feeling jubilant at the privilege of participating in the overwhelming revival of Ninevah, Jonah lamented how grossly unfair it was. What an incredible tragedy. What a different feeling than what his loving God had prepared for Jonah to enjoy. All because bitterness filled his heart.

Nowhere is an absence of bitterness more important than in

*See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many. Hebrews 12:15*
giving the child the freedom to accept the grace of God as a genuine, free and vital gift. Is it any wonder that God would assign this essential ministry to a parent, and in the wisdom of God, he gives it to the father. God doesn’t say that the mother does not have an important role, but the responsibility lies with the father. It is a statement that putting on the collar of ministry and protecting your child from bitterness is vitally important. You will do this as you treat them fairly despite their great differences, as you make opportunities for them regardless of your resources or connections, as you direct them away from the pathways of sin, and above all, by giving them your attention. It is a ministry that is vitally important, and wonderfully rewarding.

Giving your child the best opportunity to accept the grace of God is one of the most important parenting activities, and God has given the father a wonderful advantage to encourage this step.

THE PROMISE THAT IT IS NEVER TOO LATE

The roots of bitterness

Your righteousness reaches to the skies, O God, you who have done great things. Who, O God, is like you? {20} Though you have made me see troubles, many and bitter, you will restore my life again; from the depths of the earth you will again bring me up. {21} You will increase my honor and comfort me once again.

Psalms 71:19-21
may already be growing strongly in your child, and it may be tempting
to look back at missed opportunities, mistaken values, or unkind words,
and imagine that the damage has been done. Some parents are their own
worst critics. But God never gives a ministry challenge without the
confidence that victory is possible, regardless of the history. You
minister in his strength, and in his strength there is redemption, the
ability to redeem the mistakes of the past. See the pattern of our loving
God in Psalms 71.

Even though bitterness may grow, redemption is always
possible. The ministry collar is a collar that reminds us that we are
working, both for and with, our redeeming God, the one who paid an
incredible price to bring that redemption to earth as a resource for each
of us. So, we have confidence because our God never gives up, he never
stops calling, and his loving arms never close. Our children are really
his children, and He is not willing that any would perish. So it is never
too late to try again - to put on the mantle of ministry and go to battle for
your child. God holds the heart of a king in his hand, and he holds the
heart of your child in his hand. Ministry never gives up. It looks at past
opportunities that were missed, and at challenges that may not have been
handled wisely, and goes to God for forgiveness, and rests in the
redeeming grace of our loving savior.
It is in times like these that the hard hat of ministry is put on again, and you go to prayer, you extend love and kindness on behalf of God. Blaming yourself doesn’t help, but rather as a minister of our loving Jesus, we count on the restoring love of Jesus and carry on. Peter experienced this. He made several mistakes, and God had them recorded! But God also made sure that the story of the redeemed Peter was told, a story of confidence, triumph and a future.

The call to ministry never ceases. A setback is simply the platform for one more miracle that our loving savior has for you.

**GOD BACKS THE FATHER IN THIS CHALLENGE**

Seeing the determined will of the child set in a direction that does not recognize the grace of God, perhaps even in a spirit of bitterness, calls for the hard hat of ministry. It is hard work and there is no easy way to know when you will see results. It calls for time at the altar, time in prayer beseeching God on behalf of your child and time when the complete uniform of ministry is put on with renewed emphasis. And then with every bit of strength and determination, we reach out and accept the peace of God; reminding ourselves that God loves us deeply.

And to assist in that process God has called your wife into the
ministry of making you, her husband, feel important. She has the privilege of affirming the importance that a priest of the home needs. The wisdom of God is amazing! With the backing of God, and the ministry of your wife, you as their father can do it.

THE SCRIPTURE IS THERE TO SUPPORT YOU

Meditate on these faith building verses and anticipate the jubilant feeling that God wants you to enjoy.

Now what I am commanding you today is not too difficult for you or beyond your reach. {12} It is not up in heaven, so that you have to ask, "Who will ascend into heaven to get it and proclaim it to us so we may obey it?" {13} Nor is it beyond the sea, so that you have to ask, "Who will cross the sea to get it and proclaim it to us so we may obey it?" {14} No, the word is very near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart so you may obey it. {15} See, I set before you today life and prosperity, death and destruction. {16} For I command you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commands, decrees and laws; then you will live and increase, and the LORD your God will bless you in the land you are entering to possess. Deuteronomy 30:11-16
This day I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live {20} and that you may love the LORD your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him. For the LORD is your life, and he will give you many years in the land he swore to give to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Deuteronomy 30:19-20

Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours. Mark 11:24

Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Hebrews 12:2

Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." {6} So we say with confidence, "The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?" {7} Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their
way of life and imitate their faith.

Hebrews 13:5-7

But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. {18} Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness. James 3:17-18

We are reminded that God’s word is sharp and powerful, both in our heart and in the hearts of your children.

As you step into this challenge, do it with the anticipation of wearing the crown of victory.
CHAPTER SEVEN

CLOSING

Some who read this may feel that you have been wearing the hat of great effort ... forever. And some may even feel like you have been a great failure. To you, I pray that the church and other Christians will come alongside and that you will feel the everlasting arms or our loving God to restore.

Our loving God has given every one of us the additional ministry of bearing one another's burdens. It is one more way that God has prepared to support you, to encourage you and to give you hope.

The wonderful feature of our God is that he is a God of hope. So as we minister for him, we remind ourselves that we are not doing it by ourselves, nor just by our own effort. Ministry always means that you and God are in partnership. He is committed to ensure that everyone's life is abundant and victorious. God never passed off that responsibility, nor does he ever step back from it. He is totally committed to you, and to the ones in your family. He still carries the burden, and the Bible reminds us that Jesus is always interceding for us.
It all means that there is every reason to continue in the ministry. There is every reason to be optimistic. To be a person of faith even in the most trying of circumstances. Remember that if God is for us, then who can be against us?

Some may feel that you’ve been wearing is the fun and games hat. Enjoy it, for the Bible says in this world we will have trouble. I have yet to encounter a person for whom life has gone smoothly from the cradle to the grave. And when the challenges come, we come back to the one who loves us deeply, and cast our cares on him, because he cares for us. The ministry habits you have developed will help to sustain you.

At the same time, I remind you that you have the privilege of caring the burdens of others. It is another ministry God blesses you with. And there certainly are people who desperately need loving support in the midst of their challenges. They don't need criticism, they need to hear wholesome words come from your lips, words that build up, and that have the added effect that those who hear are benefited as well.

You minister with the Bible's assurance that as you are faithful, you will wear the hat of great reward.
This is not an assurance that your spouse will change, nor a promise that the parent child relationship will be wonderful. Rather it is a commitment that our loving heavenly father makes to each one. You will be rewarded for every act of ministry. God has been and is watching; watching with a heart of incredible love. And from his heart that is for you, he looks for ways to encourage you.

**THE SUPPORT OF THE SCRIPTURES**

With God we can be assured that the rewards for ministry greatly outweigh the costs of ministry. Enjoy thinking of some of these ways God encourages those who are faithful.

*Love the LORD, all his saints! The LORD preserves the faithful, but the proud he pays back in full.  Psalm 31:23*

*Let love and faithfulness never leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart. {4} Then you will win favor and a good name in the sight of God and man. Proverbs 3:3-4*
A faithful man will be richly blessed, but one eager to get rich will not go unpunished. Proverbs 28:20

"Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom the master has put in charge of the servants in his household to give them their food at the proper time? {46} It will be good for that servant whose master finds him doing so when he returns. {47} I tell you the truth, he will put him in charge of all his possessions. Matthew 24:45-47

"His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!' Matthew 25:23

"Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much. Luke 16:10

Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days. Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life.
Revelations 2:10

We come alongside and weep with you as you wear the hat of great effort, and pray for you. We rejoice as you wear the hat of fun. And we look forward to the hat of great reward. We do this with the confidence that God has destined us for victory.

We minister alongside him and with him, as we recognize that his way is the best way. And we anticipate wearing the crown of victory!
## APPENDIX

### THE UNIFORM OF MINISTRY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality</th>
<th>Description</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Compassion</td>
<td>I will lead with my heart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kindness</td>
<td>I will be considerate of them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humility</td>
<td>I will encourage them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gentleness</td>
<td>I will not put them down</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patience</td>
<td>I will give time for the Holy Spirit to direct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bear with</td>
<td>I will be a faithful friend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forgive</td>
<td>I will not blame them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Love</td>
<td>I will be one with them</td>
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</tbody>
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Dear Jesus, please help me to approach people with my heart rather than just my head. Help me to be considerate and encouraging. Guide me so that I never put them down, and so that I give your Holy Spirit time to do the real work, both with them and with me. Speak to me when I lose track of the importance of being faithful, or if I give in to thoughts of blame. Dear Jesus, I want us to be united in love because it is there that you so freely bestow your blessings. Thank you for working in my life so that I will be equipped to meet every ministry challenge that will come my way. Amen.
LOVE

is patient       I will give them time to respond
is kind          I will plan acts of kindness for them.
does not envy    I will express my enjoyment of their success
does not boast   I will not talk a lot about my successes
is not proud     I will not draw a lot of attention to my skills
is not rude      I will respond with gentle words
is not self-seeking I will ensure that they are encouraged
is not easily angered I will do what leads to peace
keeps no record of wrongs I will not raise past wrongs to hurt them
does not delight in evil I will support them when bad things happen
rejoices in the truth  I will rejoice in the good said about them
always protects I will be supportive in every way
always trusts  I will believe in them
always hopes  I will expect their future to be good
always perseveres I will practice these regularly

FOR GOD SO LOVES ME!!
OTHER BOOKS BY Dr. Ken Gaglardi

THE MIRACLES OF LIVING WATERS  This booklet details the many miracles that occurred as Ken led in the construction of the new Living Waters Assembly in Fort Langley BC. The million dollar construction was undertaken by a vote of 14 to 1 and five years after the beginning of construction, the debt was less than $90,000.

LIVING IN OVERWHELMING VICTORY  This 145 page book picks up on the lavish promise of Psalm 1 that as we delight in the statutes of God we will become like a tree planted by rivers of water, whose leaf does not wither, bears fruit regularly, and prospers in whatever he does. The book gives the statutes or commands of God collected from throughout the Bible on 33 different topics. It also highlights the wonderful blessings God gives as we obey these commands, blessings to encourage us to trust more completely. This book is written to be used in small groups or for personal devotions.

MINISTRY BEGINS AT HOME  This book builds on the idea that everything God asks us to do is ministry. We don’t work for God, we minister for him, and this ministry begins at home. Our loving God tells us how to respond to a spouse, how to relate to a parent, and how the parents are to relate to the children. These instructions are the ministry
job descriptions, and in every case, they minister to a very significant need in the other members of our family. God created us with needs, and then he created special people to minister to those needs. No one else can meet those needs like the special family member God accepts and calls to minister on his behalf.

**KEY VERSES TO OPEN LIFE’S CLOSED DOORS** This book identifies over 30 verses that hold the key to opening doors that seem to be securely locked. Like the key of encouragement which opens the door that lets hope come in and displace the selfishness that was there. It also softens the stronghold that temptation can have on someone you know, and give you the confidence that freedom is on its way.

**TOPICAL STUDY OF THE BOOK OF PROVERBS** Proverbs is a very practical book that deals with the everyday issues of life (and dying). This book looks at fifteen topics and gives the passages in Proverbs that relate to each along with study questions making it suitable for a home group. A Biblical description of success is given as well, since success is one of the topics,

**OLD TESTAMENT PROPHECIES OF JESUS** Sixty prophecies of Jesus are identified. The book gives the Old Testament prophetic verses and the verses in the New Testament that shows their fulfillment. This is
THE BURDENS OF GOD, GIVEN TO TEACH US TO PRAY

This book identifies the five great burdens of God with the invitation to make them our burdens. We learn to pray as we accept these burdens. It is written in a home study format with a teachers edition as well as a student copy.

PASTORAL PRAYERS OF PAUL

This home study starts with a listing of the prayers of Paul and then looks at the features of God that Paul highlights, his prayers of thanksgiving, those he makes for the reader, those he makes for evangelization and finally those he makes for himself.

THIS IS LOVE

This 19 page booklet uses each of the fifteen characteristics of love given in 1 Corinthians 13 to show how God loves us, how we can love God and then how to love one another.

LOVE IS PATIENT

This is the first of a series on the fifteen attributes of love. It is written to be used for individual or group study.
CHECK BOOKS  Each of the nine booklets in this series consist of verses of scripture without commentary. The titles are: “The Prayers of Paul”; “Verses of Instruction”; “Verses to Give Assurance of God's Love”; “Verses to Inspire Faith”; “Verses to Inspire Faith to be Healed”; “Verses to Inspire Giving Thanks”; “Verses to Inspire Hope”; “Verses to Inspire Reverence for God”; and “Verses to Encourage Volunteers”

NOW THAT YOU BELIEVE  This discipleship study guide is based on 1 Peter 1:5-10. It takes you through these seven steps to a maturing faith with the confidence that “If you do these things, you will never fall 1 Peter 1:10”

MAKING SENSE OF THE BIBLE A short explanation of the layout, characters and message of the Bible.

SIGNIFICANCE AND YOUR SOMETHING BOX  The desire of everyone is to be significant. This short essay provides hope for that to occur.

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All these books can be read or freely downloaded from Dr. Ken
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