

# All In The Family

**Step Eight - We made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.**

*And now a word to you fathers. Don't make your children angry by the way you treat them. Rather, bring them up with the discipline and instruction approved by the Lord. (Excerpts from Ephesians 5,6. Proverbs 17, 19)*

All parents probably feel guilty at one time or another about how we have raised our kids. We may just throw up our hands, giving up completely on parenting our children. If our needs weren't met during childhood, we may be totally at a loss: we may not know how to meet the need of our little ones. We may be so overwhelmed by the responsibility of parenting that we stay in denial about how our lifestyles affect them. When we fail to provide for our children's needs, they are hurt. It may be hard to face because we feel so overwhelmed ourselves. We can make amends by letting them know that it's not their fault. We can reaffirm our love for them, and let them know that we're taking steps to change.

Our **parents** are deeply connected to our lives on some level. And whether our families are intact or not, whether our parents acknowledge their love for us or not, whether they've made a mess of their lives or are a picture of perfection, they are still our parents. They once held us in their arms and had hopes and dreams that our lives could be better than their own. Parents are deeply vulnerable to hurt from their children. When our lives are damaged by, the effects of addiction, our parents will be vulnerable to the pain. We have the capacity to cause grief, bitter sorrow, shame, and disgrace on our parents. Even if our parents have contributed to our problems, we can still take responsibility for our side of the relationship by doing what we can to make things right with them.

*Children, obey your parents because you belong to the Lord, for this is the right thing to do. Honor your father and mother. This is, the first of the Ten Commandments that ends with a promise. And this is the promise: If you honor your father and mother, "you will live a long life, full of blessing". A foolish child brings grief to a father and bitterness to a mother. Children who mistreat their father or chase away their mother are a public disgrace and an embarrassment.*

Those closest to us cannot escape being harmed by the consequences of our actions. If we are married, our addictions are harmful to our **partners**, even if we hate to admit it. God says that our lives are literally intertwined

with the lives of our mates. It may be a healthy union or a dysfunctional one. In either case, we're united. The behavior of one always affects the other. Any time we fail to love sacrificially, or fail to show respect for our spouse, we are hurting them and ourselves. Sure, they have hurt us, too, but for now, we're dealing with our own issues.

*Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. You wives will submit to your husbands as you do to the Lord. And you husbands must love your wives with the same love Christ showed the church. He gave up his life for her. In the same way, husbands ought to love their wives as they love their own bodies.*

We all know that we've been hurt. But some of us are so focused on how we've been victimized and how others have hurt us that we fail to see how we've been hurting **ourselves**. We may spend a lot of time and energy on trying to change how others treat us, but to no avail. Perhaps we need to begin by looking at ways we've been hurting ourselves and work on changing them. God understands the actions that cause us pain and wants to help us avoid them. We may be guaranteeing our continued pain by continuing to do things that are guaranteed to hurt us. Being willing to make amends to ourselves includes being willing to renounce and give up the behaviors that destroy our lives. As we are willing to give these things up, we'll begin to find good things coming back our way.

*You must be compassionate, just as your Father is compassionate. "Stop judging others, and you will not be judged. Stop criticizing others, or it will all come back on you. If you forgive others, you will be forgiven. If you give, you will receive. Your gift will return to you in full measure, pressed down, shaken together to make room for more, and running over. Whatever measure you use in giving—large or small—it will be used to measure what is given back to you". (From Luke 6)*

## Questions For Discussion and Reflection

1. How do I get myself ready to "embrace the pain" that leads me to healing?
2. How do we sort "our part" and "other's part"?
3. How am I "breaking the cycle" of pain and dysfunction in which I grew up?
4. How do I balance my own interest and the interest of others?
5. In what relationships currently in my life do I need to reexamine or take new action?
6. What is Jesus' model in all this and what help does he offer us?