

## **Four Pillars of Unity** **Love, Trust**

Let's turn in our Bibles to Genesis chapter two and verse twenty-four. This verse shows us God's original design for marriage:

“For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.”

God's design for marriage is “oneness” or a “one-flesh” union between a man and a woman. The devil's plan for marriage is division and disunity. God wants a husband and a wife to walk together in an intimate and deep unity that is modeled by the unity of the Trinity. The Bible states in Psalm 133:1 “How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity!” How good and pleasant it is when husbands and wives get along with each other! How good and pleasant it is when parents and children are not arguing all the time!

The place of unity is where the Holy Spirit's anointing is released. The description of the oil being poured upon Aaron's head is a picture of God's anointing coming upon us at the place of unity. (Psalm 133:2). The Lord's blessing rests upon families that are walking in unity. He sends refreshment to them and they experience His life flowing in their midst. (Psalm 133:3)

When my wife and I are getting along with each other and there is harmony in our relationship, life is WONDERFUL! There is the sense of God's blessing, His presence and His anointing. However, when my wife and I are having arguments and are experiencing division, life is MISERABLE! It is hard to sense God's presence and anointing when there is ongoing strife and conflict in the home.

Several years ago my wife and I were leading a Christian community that met regularly on Tuesday evenings each week in the city where we lived. I was responsible for leading the weekly meeting and for teaching those who gathered to hear God's Word. Violet often stayed at home with our small son and did not attend the service, since we lived about a 30-minute ride from the meeting place. Occasionally, we had an argument just as I was preparing to leave for the meeting and we were unable to resolve our differences before I had to depart for the evening.

During the 30-minute ride, the Lord would be dealing with me about our argument and about my attitudes that contributed to the disagreement. By the time I arrived at the meeting place, I had repented and God had changed my heart. As soon as I walked into the building, I would head for the telephone to call my wife to apologize and restore our broken unity. I knew that unless my relationship with my wife was restored my ability to minister in the anointing of the Spirit would be hindered. Often when I arrived at the meeting place, the phone was already ringing and it was my wife seeking to reach me. She too, had been convicted by the Lord and was reaching out to restore our broken relationship. We both realized the importance of walking together in unity if we wished to experience God's full blessing and presence in our ministry.

There are few things in life more rewarding than to have Trinity Unity operating within our

homes and churches. Conversely, there are few things more painful than to have division and strife in our most intimate and closest relationships. Such division and conflict drains the spiritual vitality out of our lives. We lose our sense of God's blessing and the Holy Spirit's anointing seems far removed from us. The book of Proverbs describes in vivid detail the contrast between a home filled with unity and a home filled with strife. Here is what it says;

“Better a dry crust with peace and quiet than a house full of feasting, with strife.” (Proverbs 17:1)

Proverbs 15:16-17 tells us that it is better to have a meal of vegetables “where there is love than a fatted calf with hatred.” There is no greater joy than to be at peace with, and to experience harmony with, the most intimate people in our lives. Conversely, there is no greater pain in life than to have broken relationships between family members or intimate friends.

There are people who have all the material blessings they could ever desire and yet are miserable, because their homes are filled with strife and division. Their marriage is breaking down. Their children have rejected them and moved away from home. Such people would gladly give everything they have to experience peace and love in their families. You can't put a monetary value on oneness in the family. It is priceless.

This issue was so much on the heart of Jesus during his earthly ministry that he prayed, in John 17: 22-23 that the disciples would be one as He and the Father were one. At one point, He even asked the Father to give them “complete unity.” Wouldn't you love to experience such unity in your home? Imagine being united with your marriage partner in the same way that the Father and Jesus were united. What a powerful testimony that would be to your friends and neighbors! It would certainly be a foretaste of heavenly life here upon the earth.

### **The Foundation**

In this chapter we will look at how to build the house of oneness that God desires for each of our homes. **Please refer to the diagram entitled “The House of Oneness” for a visual overview of the key components in this process.** As with any building, the most important starting point is the foundation. Without the right foundation a building will be unstable and unsafe. The Apostle Paul in I Corinthians 3: 11 states, “...no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ.” We cannot hope to build a godly home or to have a house of oneness unless we give Jesus Christ his rightful place. He must be the Lord of our lives and we must be committed to live fully for Him. Psalm 127:1 says, “Unless the Lord builds the house, its builders labor in vain. Unless the Lord watches over the city the watchmen stand guard in vain.”

Jesus must be the Alpha and the Omega of our family life. He must be the beginning and the end, as well as, everything in between. He is the solid rock upon which both our lives and our marriages must be built. We can have no other Lords, but rather we must love Him with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our strength. The beginning point for unity in the home is obedience to Jesus Christ.

Upon this foundation then, there are four pillars that hold up the house of oneness. These four pillars are critical to building unity in our homes. If any of these four pillars is missing or

damaged, it is impossible to achieve unity. Each pillar plays a vital role in our families and we need to give attention to each one. Let's take a look at these four pillars in order to understand them better. **If you look at the diagram entitled, "The House Of Oneness" you will notice that the four pillars are labeled A, B, C and D.**

### **Unconditional Love: Pillar A**

The first pillar for unity in the family is the unconditional love of God. Our hearts must be filled with the unconditional love of God if we wish to experience the "one flesh" union that the Bible talks about. This love is not based on our emotions or feelings. It is not based on how we should love God, but rather, it is based on how God loves us. The source of such love is the Lord, Himself. I John 3:16 states, "This is how we know what love is; Jesus Christ laid down his life for us." Later on in I John 4:19 we read, "We love because he first loved us." Our ability to love one another comes from first being loved by the unconditional love of God.

Love is the most enduring of the four pillars holding up the house of oneness. Even on a human level love is a very enduring quality. The love that a mother has for her child is legendary. A mother will continue to love her wayward child all the way to the grave, even though that child may reject her, cause her great pain, and deeply disappoint her. The love between a husband and wife is also a powerful example of enduring love. Many couples have endured disappointments, sicknesses, financial setbacks and unexpected heartaches. Yet, in spite of these challenges, their love for one another, instead of diminishing, has only deepened through the years.

God's unconditional love, as the Bible says in I Corinthians 13 "believes all things, hopes all things, and endures all things." There is no end to God's unfailing love. It is everlasting! We are told over and over in the scriptures, "The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases." Paul's prayer in Ephesians 3:17-19 expresses his longing that we would be anchored in this kind of love. "I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge..." Unconditional love is patient, it is kind and it does not keep a record of wrongs. It does not insist on its own way nor does it act in a disrespectful manner.

My wife and I have the privilege of preparing young couples for marriage. We meet with them four times in our home prior to their marriage. We enjoy working with these couples so much. They are so in love with each other! They arrive at our home arm in arm and their eyes are full of love for one another. They sit so close to each other that you can't get a piece of paper in between them! They hardly notice we are in the room with them. They are so focused on each other.

They do not want to do or say anything that will offend their partner or damage their relationship in any way. They don't like to talk about issues that might cause conflict or pain. Even when we ask them to bring up concerns about their partner or their relationship they always do it with the utmost care and sensitivity. They are patient with each other; they speak respectfully to one another and they voice their concerns gently and full of kindness. The focus of their lives is on being loving.

However, we work with other couples, as well. These couples have been married for many years

and they are going through a crisis in their marriage. They have a different focus. They are not focused on being loving. They don't come into our home arm in arm. In fact, they often arrive separately and sit at opposite ends of the room. Their eyes are not filled with love and affection. Instead, bitterness, resentment and anger pour out of their hearts. They seek to convince us that their marital distress and misery are the result of their partner's failings. These couples have shifted their focus away from loving each other unconditionally and have, instead, turned their attention to proving they are right and their partner is wrong.

Someone has said that the best way to destroy a marriage is to win every argument. You can win the argument and lose your marriage. Far too many couples shift their focus away from being loving, and, instead, focus on proving they are right and their spouse is wrong. These couples sacrifice their unity over non-essential differences of opinion. Instead of holding on to each other and letting go of their opinions, they hold on to their opinions and let go of each other.

Let's say, for example, you and your spouse are planning to take a trip to visit your parents. You inform your spouse that it will take 6 hours to get there. Your spouse responds by saying it will take 7 hours to make the journey. Your voice rises and you emphatically declare it will only take 6 hours! Unmoved, your spouse says that there is no way you can make the trip in less than 7 hours. There are couples that will travel the entire distance in icy silence not talking to each other, waiting to see who was right and who was wrong. One of them will then declare with great satisfaction, "See I told you so!" "I was right." Their partner's response is often, "So what! You were wrong the last three times!" Such exchanges destroy oneness in marriage and should be avoided by couples, as much as possible.

For such couples, their relationship has shifted from one of complimenting each another, to one of competing against each other. It is as though they are keeping score in this ongoing "game." Their focus has shifted from being loving to being right and in the end, what suffers the most is their relationship. It is possible to focus so much on being "right" that you end up being "wrong." Many of the daily issues of life are not a matter of life and death and they are not worth destroying our relationships by fighting over them.

Let's say that you and your spouse are locked into this kind of tension and that you come to an intersection as you are traveling down the road. You know that, in order to reach your destination, you must make a left turn, but your partner insists that you take a right turn instead. How do you handle such a situation? Normally, you would take the left turn and arrive at your destination in a timely manner.

However, in some situations the best thing to do is to take the right turn, even though you know that is the wrong direction. Seriously, there are several benefits in taking the direction your partner insists on even though it is the wrong way to go. The greatest benefit is that, at the point, your partner will discover that he or she insisted on going in a direction that proved to be wrong.

When that realization comes, don't yield to the temptation to say to your partner, "See I told you so!" Instead, use this opportunity to respond with the unconditional love of God. When your partner realizes that they were wrong, it gives you one of the greatest opportunities in life. You have the opportunity to love someone at their point of failure. If, at that moment of failure, you

respond with forgiveness, patience, understanding and kindness, it will bring healing to your partner. It will also deepen your unity as a couple. That kind of love is the love that changes people's lives. That kind of love is redemptive love. It is healing love. It is God's unconditional love.

This is the love that every wife wants to receive from her husband. This is the love that every husband wants to receive from his wife. This is the love that every child wants to receive from his or her parent. This is the everlasting, unending, unconditional love of God.

One day, Violet was struggling with her attitudes toward me. Our son Jon was quite small and he had been keeping her up during the nights, so she was not sleeping well. Her emotions were raw and she was tired. Throughout the day Violet responded to me in some very disrespectful and hurtful ways. She knew she was wrong but this condition continued throughout the day. I decided to do something special for Violet. So, I went to the store and purchased a couple of items that I knew my wife enjoyed. Later in the day I appeared at the door of our apartment holding these items behind my back to surprise her. She reacted in a negative way and rebuked me. She even accused me of hiding something from her.

She angrily said, "What are you hiding from me?" "What do you have in your hands?" I slowly brought both hands from behind my back and in my right hand was a small brown paper bag. With a slight smile on my face and with tenderness in my voice I said, "I was thinking of you today and I wanted to bless you with something." Violet took the bag and peered inside to discover two of her favorite food items, some cheese and a couple of pieces of fruit.

Upon seeing these items, tears began to stream down Violet's face and her hardened heart was softened. As she stood there looking at these inexpensive, but thoughtful gifts, she had a revelation of the unconditional love of God for her. She knew she did not deserve such kindness and thoughtfulness from me after the way she had been treating me all day. However, my response was not based upon her actions. Instead, it flowed out of the reservoir of God's unconditional love in my heart. That simple act of love left a life-long impact in Violet's life and brought reassurance to her heart that God loved her even when she was at her worst.

Many of us were loved conditionally as we grew up. If we met our parent's expectations we were loved and accepted. If we fell short and failed, our parents withdrew their love from us and we were rejected. The love and acceptance by others was conditional and dependent upon our performance. Thus, we developed a fear of failure and a fear of rejection because of the pain it brought into our lives. This fear of rejection leads to defensiveness and is often the motivation behind our drive to prove we are right. We hate to be wrong and will do almost anything to avoid failing, so as to avoid the pain associated with being rejected.

When our partner realizes that they were wrong, they anticipate criticism, rejection and pain. If, however, we respond with gentleness, forgiveness and kindness, it will melt their heart and break down the walls of rejection. They will experience the redemptive and healing love of God. It is this love that has the power to change people's lives. In fact, the next time you face a right turn/left turn decision, your partner will probably not be so insistent that they are right. There will be more humility and openness on their part because they know that they no longer have to

be right to be loved. They will be loved even when they are wrong. How liberating to be given the freedom to fail without the fear of losing someone's love and acceptance!

**David** was a soldier fighting for his country in the jungles of South East Asia. Just as he was poised to throw a hand grenade into an enemy position, a bullet hit the grenade and it exploded next to his head. His injuries to his face and hand were severe and he was rushed by helicopter to a medical hospital for treatment. Once he was stabilized, he was transferred to larger facility and went through months of plastic surgery and rehabilitation. He lost his right ear, his eye was damaged and his face was terribly disfigured. Lying on the bed of the hospital unit, his greatest fear was the response of his wife when she saw him for the first time after the incident.

The day he dreaded finally came and she walked into his room with a radiant smile and a spring in her step. His first words to her were, "I look like a monster, don't I?" Ignoring his comments, she walked up to his bed and began kissing him all over his face. Her love for him was unshaken in the midst of this tragedy and it became an anchor for him. It gave him hope and strength for the long road to recovery he faced. Without her unconditional love and commitment he acknowledged that he probably would not have recovered from this tragic event. He eventually did recover and went into Christian ministry. He became an evangelist, leading many people to Christ.

Next to **David** in the hospital ward was another soldier whose injuries were less serious than his. This man's hands were permanently frozen in a claw-like position due to the burns he had experienced, but beyond that, his body was unharmed. However, when his wife saw his hands, she immediately took off her wedding ring, placed it on her husband's chest, walked out of the room, and walked out of his life forever. This man died within three weeks of his wife's first and final visit. There was no medical reason for him to die. His injuries were not life-threatening. Rather, he died of a broken heart! The quality of our love is tested in times of suffering and adversity. God's love endures all things. It never fails.

This first pillar of unconditional love knows no limits. Human love, however, has limitations. I treat my wife in a loving way, **most of the time**. I am patient with her, **most of the time**. I am very kind to my wife, **most of the time**. But what has the deepest impact on her life? **NOT MOST OF THE TIME!** She remembers those times when I was angry and got impatient with her. She experiences a deep wound when I react with unkind statements.

Every husband, as well as, every wife needs to be filled with the unconditional love of God. In Romans 5:5 Paul states that God's love has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit. This kind of love does not originate in the human heart, but rather comes from God himself. Colossians 3:14 encourages us to, "Put on love which binds them (these virtues) all together in perfect unity." We need to come to the Lord and to be filled with His love in order for this first pillar of unity to be strong in our families.

As we mentioned previously, every wife wants to be loved by her husband with this kind of love. It is a woman's deepest longing. She wants him to be kind to her and to respond patiently to her faults and failings. She wants him to be gentle and to not react in anger. However, this pillar is a husband's greatest weakness. He is vulnerable to react to his wife in anger and to become

impatient with her faults and weaknesses. When a husband reacts to his wife in anger she feels as though he doesn't love her. When a husband and wife have a conflict, a wife will feel unloved. For this reason, the Scriptures encourage husbands to love their wives and to live with them in an understanding way.

Ephesians 5:25 "Husbands love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her..."

Ephesians 5:33 "However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself..."

I Peter 3:7 "Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with our wives, and treat them with respect..."

### **Trust: Pillar B**

The second pillar that holds up the house of oneness is the pillar of trust. In **Asian** cultures, trust is very important. As a family and as a society, people cannot function without trust. Therefore it is serving our best interest if we persevere in our relationships and grow in trust. It is not just a short-term relationship. We are in it for the long term.

Nothing happens in many **Asian** countries without a relationship of trust that includes patience, humility and the returning of good favor. A typical business deal in the West involves a meeting with the two parties and their lawyers and hammering out a contract quickly. You sign it, and leave. Any problems? See you in court! I have a plane to catch. Quick, efficient, to the point, let's get on with the show. Next!

**Asian** people look at a business deal as a win-win, mutual benefit, and a long-term relationship without anyone losing face. This is possible only with trust, which takes time to build and establish. Trust is a feeling you have about someone. You don't put a time or date on trust. For example, "I will trust you in four days, four weeks, four months."

Trust is essential for a working relationship and is for the mutual benefit of everyone. We know there will be problems, but if we trust each other and we are looking at the long term, we will work it out. No need for lawyers. No need to "see you in court."

Trust is having confidence in the other person. It is having confidence in their character, in their word and in their motivation. Trust requires honesty in order to develop. Nothing destroys trust more quickly than to find out someone you trusted has been living a secret life of sin and that they have been lying to you. If a husband tells his wife he is staying late at the office in order to catch upon his work and she later finds out that he was out drinking or gambling, it destroys trust. It is impossible to build an intimate relationship with someone without a deep sense of trust.

Whereas love is the most enduring of the four pillars, trust is the most fragile. Trust can be easily damaged and once it is broken, it is not easily restored. People who have been betrayed by a close friend or family member do not easily trust again. They are fearful of opening their hearts and getting close to someone after such a painful experience. They build walls around their

hearts and emotions and keep people at a distance. These walls protect them from future hurt, but they also imprison them and keep them isolated from close and intimate relationships.

Trust takes time to establish and when it has been broken it can only be restored through forgiveness and a process of patient rebuilding. Trust is both given and earned. To rebuild trust we must be willing to take a risk and extend trust again. It is not possible, however, to extend complete trust immediately after we have been betrayed. Instead, we must begin the rebuilding process with small steps. We can move toward greater degrees of trust as the other person demonstrates trustworthiness over time. Trust must not only be given, as we mentioned, it must also be earned. We are foolish to extend complete trust to someone who is not trustworthy. They will continually disappoint us and take advantage of us, unless they have a change of heart.

Repentance and forgiveness do not automatically restore trust. Many people do not understand that there is a difference between forgiving someone and being able to have confidence in them again. A husband, for example, might repent of his adultery and ask his wife's forgiveness. She may find God's grace to fully forgive him for his offense and to overcome her pain and sense of betrayal. However, that does not mean she can automatically trust him again. Old wounds can surface when he stays late at the office or visits with the new neighbor's wife. He must demonstrate faithfulness and trustworthiness over a period of time before she can be fully confident in him. This is especially true if his affair went on over a period of time and involved a double life with a pattern of lying and deception.

Let's say that I have \$10,000 dollars and I give this money to you for safekeeping. A few days later you come to me and inform me that you misplaced the money and that you can no longer find it. You come to me in genuine repentance and ask me to forgive you. You acknowledge that you have had a problem with carelessness in the past and that the Lord has been dealing with you about this for some time. This incident, however, finally brought you to the point of dealing with this issue and you are confident you have now changed. You assure me that it will never happen again. I sense the sincerity of your repentance and, as difficult as the loss of the money is, I fully and freely forgive you.

If, at this point, you ask me to entrust you with another \$10,000, I will be unable to do so. Even though I love you and I fully forgive you, I do not trust you yet. You have violated my trust and you need to demonstrate to me that you are worthy of my trust again. So, instead of giving you \$10,000 dollars, I will start with something smaller, such as \$10 dollars!

I want to see what you do with a small amount first. I am willing to give you another chance but it will take time. You will need to demonstrate faithfulness with a small amount before I can give you a larger amount. If you prove to be trustworthy with the \$10, then I will give you \$100. In this way, we can move toward reestablishing the trust that was broken between the two of us. Trust is both given and earned.

Jesus said in Luke 16:10, "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." Don't overlook the small and seemingly insignificant issues in life, since it is in the little things that our character is revealed.



Trust, as we mentioned previously, thrives on honesty. It requires openness and vulnerability to function. We don't have to be perfect in order to be trusted, but we do have to be humble and truthful. Trust requires that we keep our promises. Our yes needs to mean yes and our no needs to mean no. People need to know that they can rely upon what we say and that we mean what we say. Paul states in I Corinthians 4: 2 that we need to be faithful.

“Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful.”

Keeping a promise to children is especially important. Children can be deeply wounded if a parent breaks a promise. A broken promise can cause a breach between the parent and the child for years to come. **Todd** promised his son **Michael** that he would take him fishing in three weeks on a Saturday when he did not have to go to work. His son was so excited about going fishing with his dad and looked forward to this day with great anticipation. **Michael** organized his fishing tackle and even purchased a couple of new lures in preparation for the big day.

However, as the days went on, the demands on **Todd's** life increased and he soon forgot about the promise he had made to his son. On the Friday night, before the planned outing, **Michael** got everything ready and he could hardly sleep because of the excitement he was feeling. The next morning, **Michael's** dad was awakened early by a phone call from a mission he volunteered at regularly. There was an urgent need that day for his assistance and they asked if he could please come down and help them. Forgetting that he had promised to take his son fishing on this particular day, **Todd** agreed to come to the mission immediately.

When **Michael** woke up later in the morning, he discovered that his dad had gone to the mission and that he would be there for the entire day. Deeply disappointed, he sadly put away his fishing box and never said anything to his father about the broken promise. A breach developed between **Michael** and his father from that day on. Over time they gradually drifted apart from one other. Years later, the issue of the broken promise came out in a counseling session with a Christian counselor. **Todd** was finally able face the pain and disappointment he experienced as a young boy and he voiced it to his father. This step of openness and confession began a process of restoration between the two of them.

Children learn quickly whether or not their parent/s word can be trusted. They know if their parent really means what he/she is saying, or if their parent is just making an empty threat. Thus, it is very important that parents do not make empty threats to their children. Some parents think that threatening their children is a way to get them to obey. They think their children will be scared into obedience if they say something like, “If you do that one more time I will throw you out the window!” Instead of being frightened, however, children will often “do it one more time” to see if their parent really means what they said. So always be prepared to back up your words with actions. Be careful what you threaten, because you will be challenged to follow through on your threats.

Children will test parent's boundaries to make sure they are secure and that they don't move. Once a child knows the boundary is secure, he/she will freely function within that boundary. Too many children discover that when they test the boundary, it moves. They are, therefore, unable to

rely upon the boundary, which leads to insecurity and fear.

Several years ago a research team placed a group of small children in a large open field with no fences or boundaries in sight. The children were given complete freedom to play anywhere they wished. There were no restrictions. The children did not know where it was safe to play and where it was not, so they chose to play together in one small area of the field. They did not venture out into the rest of the area available to them. Although they had complete freedom to play anywhere, they could not enjoy that freedom because of the lack of clearly defined boundaries.

Then the research team placed another group of children into a large open area, but with this difference. There was a high, strong, fence surrounding this field. The first thing the children did was to run to the fence. They kicked the fence, they pushed on the fence, and they tried to climb over the fence. However, the fence was solid and unmovable. It provided safety and security. Once the children had tested the fence and found it was stable, they enjoyed the entire enclosed playing area. Children need to have clearly defined fences. It is a parent's responsibility to establish those fences. Children will always test the fence, but once they are convinced it is secure, they will accept its restraints.

A Christian community I worked with had a large parking lot where the children could ride their bicycles and tricycles. However, the parking lot was next to a very busy and dangerous street. So the parents had painted a wide yellow line parallel to the street about 2 meters away from the street. They told the children that they could not cross that line because of the dangers involved in getting too close to the street. It was safe to ride their tricycles in the parking lot, as long as they did not cross the yellow line.

One day the father of a young boy was looking out of the window and he saw his son riding his tricycle in the parking lot below. His son headed straight for the yellow line on his tricycle, peddling as fast as his little legs could take him. Just before he was about to cross the line, he sharply turned his tricycle and then rode right along the edge of the yellow line. He was careful not to cross the yellow line, but he was as close as he could get without violating the rule. As he did so, he looked up over his shoulder up toward the window where his dad was watching.

He then circled around the parking lot and headed directly for the yellow line again. Just before crossing the forbidden line, he turned sharply to the right to avoid going over the line. However, this time he allowed one wheel of his tricycle to go over the yellow line as he rode parallel to the road. Again, he looked up over his shoulder up toward the window where his dad was watching him. He was testing to see what his father would do. All children do this. They will test the boundary to see if it will move or if it is indeed secure. They need to know if our yes is yes and if our no is no.

One day I was surprised to overhear my 5-year old son declare to one of his playmates, "This time I mean it!" I thought to myself, "Where did Jonathan hear this?" I realized that he heard this phrase from me! Whenever I wanted Jonathan to obey me I would raise my voice and forcefully proclaim, "This time I mean it!" Jonathan always obeyed me when I said this, but he didn't obey me at other times! Jonathan had discovered that I was only serious when I said, "This time I

mean it!” He knew that all the other times I DIDN’T mean it. Children quickly discover when a parent’s word is to be obeyed and when their word can be ignored.

A humorous story is told of another little boy who was asked what his name was. He said, “My name is **John, John, John!**” To which, the person who asked the question replied, “That’s a strange name! Are you sure that’s your name?” The boy replied, “O yes, that’s my name! Every time my mother wants me to come home she comes out the door and in a gentle tone of voice says, ‘**John** its time to come home.’” He doesn’t come home, but continues playing.

Ten minutes later she comes to the door a second time and calls, “**John!** You come home right now!” This time her voice is raised and the tone is more demanding. He still doesn’t come home, but continues playing. Ten minutes later she comes to the door a third time. This time she is obviously very agitated and upset. She yells at her son, “**JOHN YOU GET HOME THIS VERY INSTANT!**” He stops playing immediately and hurries home because, this time, he knows she means it! The first two “**Johns**” were just warnings to let him know it was getting close to the time to come home. It wasn’t until the third “**John**” that he encountered any consequences if he didn’t respond to his mother.

As was mentioned previously, trust creates the climate for intimacy. People can be controlled by fear and suspicion, but they can only build intimacy through trust. Marriage is the most intimate human relationship that can be experienced. In marriage, we are giving our hearts, our emotions, our fears, our dreams and our bodies to another person. Marriage requires the deepest level of honesty and vulnerability of any other relationship in life. If trust is violated, marital oneness will suffer. Even if broken trust is not immediately discovered, there will be unspoken consequences in a marriage relationship.

The heart of the marriage will be damaged as soon as trust is violated. It can only be repaired by repentance, forgiveness and humility. To ensure the stability of our families, we must emphasize those things that build trust: faithfulness, honesty, and openness. We must be quick to restore unity whenever there has been a breach of trust. Otherwise, breaches will develop and the intimacy God intended us to experience in our marriages and families will be lost.

In concluding this chapter, take some time to apply what you have learned. We have focused on three important components in building a house of oneness.

1. Jesus Christ as the foundation
2. Unconditional love
3. Trust

Please respond to the following questions.

1. What has the Lord spoken to your heart through this chapter?
2. What does it mean to have Jesus Christ as the foundation of your family?
3. Do you have any personal examples of someone loving you at your point of failure?
4. Do you have a testimony of loving someone else at his or her point of failure?
5. Do you agree with the statement, “Repentance and Forgiveness do not automatically

restore trust?”

6. Do you have any examples from your personal experience to illustrate the fact that trust can be easily broken and that it is not quickly restored?

#### Application Prayer

Father, thank you, for the reminder that Jesus Christ must be the foundation upon which I build my life and my family. I acknowledge my need of His power and presence in my life. I turn from my self-sufficiency and I surrender my life fully to Jesus Christ today. He must be the center of my life, if I hope to build a healthy family.

Forgive me Lord, where I have not demonstrated your unconditional love to my family. I open my heart and ask you pour out the love of God into my heart. Deliver me of my selfishness and from my lack of love. I ask you to strengthen the pillar of unconditional love in my family.

I also ask you to repair any damage to the pillar of trust. Show me what steps I need to take to restore the trust that has been broken. Where I have been unfaithful and not trustworthy, please forgive me. I repent of giving time and attention to others that should have been given to my family. I commit myself to take whatever steps are necessary to rebuild the trust that was damaged.

I also commit myself to extend trust toward those who have failed me in the past. I open my heart to trust them again. I am willing to take a risk and start the process of rebuilding again. Most of all Lord, I choose to trust you completely. You are faithful, in spite of the unfaithfulness of others. Help me take the necessary steps to rebuild the broken trust in my family. In Jesus Name. Amen