**Mothers’ Encouragement Group**

**April 26, 2018**

**Plant Them and Let Them Grow #10**

**The Seventh Commandment**

Think of it carefully;

Study it prayerfully;

Deep in your heart let its oracles dwell.

Ponder its mystery;

Slight not its history;

For none ever loved it too fondly or well.

Let’s be very clear about *why* we need to know the Bible and teach our children to know it. This is the only place where we find out truth—who is God; what is He like; what is His character; who are we; where did we come from; why is the world so often such an unhappy place and why is it that we instinctively know it shouldn’t be? The Bible tells us answers to all these things and right smack-dab in the middle of it—the heart of all the knowledge the Bible gives us—is the Law, the Ten Commandments that God gave Moses on Mount Sinai. So what’s the big deal about that? We’ve been taught recently that the Law is God’s gift to us. We would not need the Law if we had not ruined ourselves and our world by refusing to obey and submit to God when it was easy to do, that is, when Adam and Eve had everything they wanted, were perfect and were perfectly happy. All they had to do was to choose not to do *one measly thing* God told them not to do. If they had only obeyed that one thing, there would be no need for God’s Law since human beings would always have wanted only the things that God wanted for them. Can you imagine? There would be *no sin!* Every one of our hearts would have been at peace with the world, with ourselves, with each other and with our Creator. Have you ever thought about what the world—our world—would have been like had Adam not sinned? I have: no hatred anywhere; no need to be angry against anything or anyone; only joy in taking care of our piece of land, in loving our husbands and children; no death! (I wonder how God would have taken care of the population of the world? Wouldn’t it be amazing if Adam and Eve, all the biblical heroes, all of our own family’s ancestors were still walking around and living here with us? What wisdom we would have immediately to hand to draw from!) Truly, *that* would be Heaven and I’ll bet that is close to what the Heaven we look forward to will be. However, Adam chose not to obey God and immediately that God-nature he had been made with began to fade and mankind began to be less and less like their Creator and life in our beautiful world became harder and sadder as sin got its foothold. Our relationship with God became much more difficult. Our understanding of His heart faded since choosing to live by the nature God planted in us became naturally impossible—we needed help. Therefore, if there was going to be any further fellowship between man and God it was going to be necessary for God to tell us what He is like and what He wants of us.

You all know how much of a process it is to become friends with a stranger; it requires spending time with each other, talking to one another, exchanging ideas, learning each other’s likes and dislikes, finding out what has happened in one another’s lives. All of that takes time, effort and desire—and isn’t this a picture of marriage as well as of friendship? The friendship God had had with Adam and Eve in the garden had been perfect and effortless but that was ruined and if it were to be recreated it would take time, effort, communication and the exercise of will. And, as in every relationship there is an initiator and a responder, God took it upon Himself to initiate communication with the now sinful, ashamed Adam. I’m sure God told him how he was first made perfect and then of the grave consequences of what he had done; we find much of that story recorded in the early chapters of Genesis. Adam needed to know that reality was now changed, that the consequences of his sin were far-reaching *and* that there would be the possibility of redemption from that sin as well as the restoration of fellowship with God. The Law is what God gave man out of the mercy of His own heart in order that man might know what He is like, and what man needs to do to be able to have fellowship with God once again.

The illustration Mrs. Schaeffer uses in her book Ten Things, describes the whole thing from our point of view. She says that sin has made life seem like we are looking through an old, cracked and sagging window pane that distorts everything that is seen through it. It is impossible to see what things outside really look like when all you can see are the cracks and waves in the glass. Sin has distorted our sight of the world and our perception of ourselves so much and so regularly that men and women without Bibles in their hands have no longer any memory of what things are supposed to look like! We absolutely *need* God’s Law in order to know what our world was meant to be, and what we ourselves in that world, were meant to be. She says: “God had created people, male and female, with a capacity for oneness with each other, a fruitful physical oneness that would bring forth another generation of people. God created people with a capacity for oneness in working together, communicating verbally, exchanging ideas, doing creative works, eating together, and ‘walking and talking with God in the cool of the evening.’ People were made in His image that they might have a three-way oneness, intellectually, spiritually, and physically on a horizontal level. People were made so that they could have a oneness with God spiritually, to love Him, worship Him, have communication with Him, and to be able to seek His counsel and advice and help day by day. These two onenesses have been set forth to us in His Word, the Bible, and have to do with our knowing who we are and what will fulfill us. It is not just a question of right and wrong; *it is a question of what is* [italics mine]. To act contrary to what is, is to constantly bump one’s head against a wall. We all do it in a variety of ways—and we all have bruises from the variety of walls we have hit!” Ten Things Parents Must Teach Their Children, p. 146.

 **Ezekiel 36:26-27** says, **“And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.”** God has promised to fix us!; to help us to know Him again. Without that fixing, without His help, we cannot make right choices; we are actually not able *not* to sin. But with His Spirit in our heart of flesh we see God very clearly as *holy* as well as loving, and as *loving*, as well as holy, both of which we learn from His Law. And with that same Spirit’s help we understand that we also need to be holy and loving, and loving and holy, like our Creator, and we have the best, in fact the only, way to make daily decisions for our own attitudes and behavior and for those of our children. It is called wisdom; **Proverbs** tells us that **“The LORD by wisdom founded the earth,”** that **“Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace,”** and that **“Long life is in her right hand; in her left are riches and honor.” Proverbs 3:19, 17 & 16**

Keeping these thoughts in our minds helps us to think truly and not sentimentally about our babies whom we love as much as we love ourselves. **“Get wisdom; get insight; do not forget, and do not turn away from the words of my mouth. Do not forsake her, and she will keep you; love her, and she will guard you….Hear, my son, and accept my words, that the years of your life may be many….Keep hold of instruction; do not let go; guard her, for she is your life. Do not enter the path of the wicked, and do not walk in the way of the evil. Avoid it; do not go on it; turn away from it and pass on….For they** [that is, the wicked] **eat the bread of wickedness and drink the wine of violence. But the path of the righteous is like the light of dawn, which shines brighter and brighter until full day. The way of the wicked is like deep darkness; they do not know over what they stumble.”** **Proverbs 4:5-6, 10, 13-15, 17-19**

**VII. You shall not commit adultery.**

 We come today to the commandment not to commit adultery; the Bible is anything but sentimental in its teaching on this subject. The book of **Proverbs** explains and expands: **“For the commandment is a lamp and the teaching a light, and the reproofs of discipline are the way of life, to preserve you from the evil woman, from the smooth tongue of the adulteress. Do not desire her beauty in your heart, and do not let her capture you with her eyelashes; for the price of a prostitute is only a loaf of bread, but a married woman hunts down a precious life. Can a man carry fire next to his chest and his clothes not be burned? Or can one walk on hot coals and his feet not be scorched? So is he who goes in to his neighbor’s wife; none who touches her will go unpunished….He who commits adultery lacks sense; he who does it destroys himself.” Proverbs 6:23-29, 32**

On its face this commandment would seem at first not to have much to do with our children and as women we can easily—pride fully—say that it really doesn’t have much to do with us either. We know that in it God is telling us not to have sex with *anyone* who is not our spouse—either with a prostitute or with someone else’s wife. In my own naivety, I believe that I have thought of this commandment as really only having to do with men. In the world I grew up in it was rare that we heard of women committing adultery but we heard of men doing it over and over. Generally, it is men who visit prostitutes while hoping to keep their marriages intact; men are more visually stimulated than women, though I’m told that women are these days looking at porn much more than they used to. When a woman leaves her marriage it is not typically for a prostitute but for another relationship and I would venture to say that every single one of us has at least imagined what it would be like to be married to someone else. “Thoughts are not actions,” we say but Jesus told us often that actions *originate* in thoughts first of all. I stand corrected: I can no longer dismiss this commandment, thinking that it doesn’t apply to me. Our world has fallen very far into sin in every area and this one is no exception; when we compare our society’s sexual behavior with the purity demanded in this commandment we can know without a doubt that not only does the seventh commandment apply to both men and women but to our children too. It ought not to be necessary to say—but it is—that parents must protect their children not only from having sex with one another but from others wanting to have sex with them.

I’m not sure if I am just more aware as the years go by or whether the problem of sexually abusing children is becoming more and more common in the world we live in. But this I know: that the effects of this sin are widespread, far-reaching and terribly damaging, not only to the children who are introduced to sex before they are ready but to the ones who have brought it into their lives. The physical protection of your children needs to be one of the foremost purposes in your life; you need to know where your children are and what they are doing *all the time,* and if you cannot be present in their lives and need to give them into the care of someone else be sure that you can completely trust that person to do and to be for them only what is right before the Lord. Children need to be protected in so complete a way that you either *absolutely know* what they are doing with friends, with siblings, with neighborhood acquaintances, even what they are doing by themselves *or* you know they are with adults that you absolutely trust to be on the same page. This is not as easy as one might think; the internet has made sexual exploration an insidious problem in a way that was not true when my generation was growing up. I believe that we as parents were slow to understand the possibilities of this technology, to realize that our children knew a lot more about it than we did and to suspect their vulnerability. Wanting to “believe the best” of someone is not a principle that should be applied to boys alone in their room with an unguarded computer. The images that can be seen bore holes into those minds, arousing feelings that are mysterious and powerful and, without help in knowing what to think about them, can be scary, attractive, repulsive and addictive all at once.

An addiction happens when something one desires becomes something absolutely needed, something that consumes the mind and enslaves the will, until the one who is enslaved both loves the thing he is enslaved to and hates himself for being enslaved. A “besetting sin” is an old term for something like an addiction. It is a sin that one knows about, sees in his life, confesses to God and asks His forgiveness for, over and over again but the next day, the next week and the next month as years go by it is still there in one’s life; there seems to have been no real progress in putting it to death. One of mine—at least one of my public besetting sins—is being late. I think everyone in my life knows this about me *and I hate that!!* I hate the reputation it gives me; I hate that I cannot seem to surmount it; I hate the inconvenience it causes others (though, truth be told, probably not as much as I should!). But at the same time I love the things that conspire together to make me late: I love a leisurely cup of coffee; taking time in the morning to put together my toilette and to think about my day; listening to my Bible reading for the day; tidying up the kitchen, the bedroom and all the rest. When I was younger—like you all—there was always so much to do that, hurry as I might, everything I wanted to do before having to leave *in order to be on time* simply was not going to happen. I did not want to leave things undone. I loved these things done more than I hated being late and, I’m afraid, after years of thinking about it, being convicted and working on it, making decisions that would help me stop sinning, I am still almost always late no matter what the meeting. I am in the grip of this sin and feel that it controls me, not the other way around. But of course I do have control; I just don’t want that control.

Sexual addiction is a little bit like this but is much more insidious, more controlling and very much more damaging to the person whose addiction it is and to those in that person’s life; it is like a drug that when taken regularly creates a bodily need for it so that the small dose that one begins with is no longer enough to satisfy; *and* it is the kind of sin that is easy to get into and hard to be rid of nowadays since the opportunities for sexual temptation are everywhere down to the billboards we pass on the highway. It is a sin that can be overcome but requires painful searching, constant vigilance and careful accountability; it is a sin that is much better never to have gotten into. This is why we as parents need to be as vigilant and canny as we possibly can. We need to be like that **Proverbs** father who took his son right down into the red-light district to show him what goes on there, how and why it is such a powerful temptation, what the terrible consequences are and just how to avoid those temptations and consequences. The father arms his son *before* he has to go into battle. Mothers need to do similar things with their daughters, also teaching them how not to be a part of the temptation of men. The education of your children in regard to sex needs to be the unashamed, little by little, teaching them the truth in the context of your love for them in front of the backdrop of a happy, holy and loving marriage.

 As in the case of **“You shall not murder”** we know that the implications of the seventh commandment are more far-reaching than just having sex outside of marriage. Our Westminster Shorter Catechism says: “The seventh commandment requires the preservation of our own and our neighbor’s chastity in heart, speech and behavior.” And, “The seventh commandment forbids all unchaste thoughts, words and actions.” The dictionary definition of “chaste” is: “pure in thought and act; free from lewdness and obscenity, or indecency; modest.” These things we can and ought to be teaching our children from their earliest possible moments of understanding. We take our cue from the father in **Proverbs 5** who tells his son that **“the lips of a forbidden woman drip honey, and her speech is smoother than oil, but in the end she is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword.” Vss. 3-4** This father openly admits the attraction of sexual sin, talks about it in a straightforward and honest way, and then tells his son what to think about it and how to deal with it. Then, as with the sixth commandment, the obeying of the seventh means cultivating its opposite virtue; that is, those who are married need to cling to one another, making that marriage as intimate, as fun, as emotionally and physically satisfying as may possibly be. The eroticism of the prostitute ought not to be any greater than that found in the bedroom between a man and his wife. **“Let your fountain be blessed, and rejoice in the wife of your youth, a lovely deer, a graceful doe. Let her breasts fill you at all times with delight; be intoxicated always in her love.” Proverbs 5:18, 19**

 Some time ago I had the opportunity to read through the memoirs of my grandparents which is something I hope you all may have a chance to do; it is so helpful in understanding at least some of the DNA that you came from. My ancestors were all either Dutch or German and for the most part were staunch, godly, or at least god-fearing, people. My Roskamp grandparents were children of children who came from “the old country” and became farmers that moved from Illinois to Nebraska to South Dakota and finally to Wright County, Iowa. When my grandmother was little she remembers travelling on the train with her mother and her new baby brother from South Dakota, her birthplace, to Iowa where they planned to settle. They only spoke “low-dutch”—Plaudeutch they called it—in their home and when a lady on the train gave her an apple her mother told her to say, “thank you,” which she did, but when the lady said “you’re welcome,” Grandma didn’t understand what she had said. What I want to tell you particularly is that in their culture and in that time sex was never explained or talked about in an open kind of way. (My own mother—the other side of my family, also of a godly, Dutch descent—was so ignorant that she had no idea how her first baby would be born!) This is what my grandmother remembered after they had been living in Iowa for some time: “When my mother had a baby they told us that Grandma, who lived in another house in those same woods, had brought the baby. ‘Well, where did she find it?’ I wanted to know. ‘Oh, she found it in the woods.’ So I grabbed a little basket and started searching through the woods to see if I could find one…. How different it is now,” she said, “and how much better!” (I really don’t know ‘how much better’ things are now!) These “godly” people were not in the habit of talking about sex at all and especially not to their children! But it is not true that they did not have passion for one another: these same grandparents, who were first cousins, *had* to get married because my grandmother got pregnant; none of us ever knew exactly when their anniversary was—they were ashamed to tell us. They had eight children together and were married for 70 years. Their world was small and very controlled so the ignorance with which they entered their adulthood, though it caused them shame because of getting pregnant too soon, did not damage them as people or as Christians or as a man and a woman committed to each other for the balance of their lives. (Unfortunately, this was not universally true; my mother’s ignorance contributed to much pain in my parents’ marriage, even though they stayed married for all their lives.)

 Sex is wonderful and holy and a powerful force for good when enjoyed as the Lord intended, within the committed marriage of a man and a woman. We needn’t be embarrassed about it as my ancestors were. Children need to learn about sex from their parents, both from the example set by them of mutual love and delight in one another and from the words spoken to them by the parent that understands them best. Both sexes need to be guided through their physical development; if left to themselves you can bet it will be learned but from a source not necessarily to be trusted. (Or, like my grandmother, you may discover your daughter taking a basket and going out into the woods to see if she can find a baby!) Changes that happen in one’s body can be scary and they are certainly mysterious and hard to understand if the child is not given guidance and assurance that all is well. Without that guidance a child may begin to think of himself or herself as a freak and then something holy and wonderful can turn into something lonely and terrible. The purpose of sex, instead of becoming that wonderful cement that binds two hearts together, can be twisted into self-gratification and indulgence.

 Boys need to be taught respect for girls, treating them with kindness and mystery. They need to know that what goes on inside them when they look at girls is both normal and wonderful and is absolutely not to be indulged but to be saved for that one woman the Lord will bring with whom he can share his life. Girls need to be taught high standards in looking for a man; they need to know that the bodies they have been given are beautiful and hold much attraction for boys. Girls need to be praised out loud, to be given self-respect and to be made to understand the power of their behavior. How many times have I seen a high school girl get herself into a relationship she didn’t want because she thought she was just being friendly—how many times have I done such a thing myself?! This is innocence that need not be if a parent is wise, observant and courageous enough to explain how her behavior encourages behavior in others. Boys need to be praised out loud too so they can find out who they are, what they are good at, what they can be passionate about in life and what directions they have ability for. Sex education must be both positive and negative and we must not shy away from this so important of tasks.

 Let me pause here to say that in our, Christian, world it may be more often than not the man that leaves his marriage to commit adultery, though it is by no means *always* the husband. Men and women leave their marriages for many reasons and not all of them are physical. We are a group of women here so we are not going to talk about why men commit this sin *except insofar as* we women might be partially responsible for it.My mother used to say, “It takes two to tango!” by which she meant, I suppose, that when things go wrong it’s not just one person’s fault. I would add that in order for things to go well it also takes the both of you. There is an initiator in every relationship and a responder; if the responder doesn’t respond, well, all the initiating in the world goes nowhere.

We have said that the eroticism and attraction of a prostitute should not be any greater than what our husbands find in their own bedroom. I’m not going to tell you how to do this, Girls, but I think you might be able to figure it out! That bedroom needs to be a place of safety for both of you where emotional, physical and spiritual things between two human beings can be shared that will never be divulged by either of them to anyone else. Please don’t hear me say that when a man leaves his marriage for another woman or indulges in seeing prostitutes that it is necessarily the wife’s fault; I AM NOT SAYING THAT AT ALL!!! What I AM saying is that it is a right and holy thing for you to make yourself attractive—alluring—to your husband. Study his heart, study his mind, study his tastes and then keep your mouth shut about what you find there except to him, making yourself into his most delightful lover. You are to be that safe place for him even as he is for you. **“The heart of her husband trusts in her….” Proverbs 31:11** Surely this is a big part of how that whole-souled, wholehearted, I’m not going *anywhere* kind of commitment is built between a man and a woman. Mrs. Schaeffer calls it “oneness.”

She says: “Today’s people are not only denying God’s existence. They are denying their own existence by denying that there is any importance to the magnificent differences between the male and female, and by denying the wonderful possibility of oneness. Perfect? Not now. Not since the fall. There is no perfect male, no perfect female, no perfect oneness. Everything has been spoiled. There are no perfect relationships. But to try to deny and wipe out the differences between male and female, to try to live on the basis of something that does not exist, a neuter being, is to deny that there is any absolute answer to Who am I?

“The beauty of the human relationship, which has such rich possibilities, is spoiled by all the drive to put self, ego, one’s own fulfillment ahead of all else. This frantic search for happiness and fulfillment ensures brokenness and ugliness because it is the very opposite, in all its parts, of what people were created to be. Attempts to live on a false base of what it means to be human and to achieve total freedom end in a total freedom—from joy and from fulfillment! It doesn’t work. People can’t declare that it is fine to worship idols, to marry someone of the same sex, to live on the basis of drugs and disregard for any of the body’s need for sleep or food, and end up with happy glowing faces, full of certainty as to their purpose in life. The Ten Commandments give an unchanging series of jolts to human beings through the centuries to bring them back from whatever new form of lies are being perpetrated as to what being human is all about, as to what life is all about, as to what fulfillment is all about.” Ibid. p. 147-148

Let me conclude with a sobering message from **Ezekiel 33:1-6, “The word of the LORD came to me. ‘Son of man, speak to your people and say to them, If I bring the sword upon a land, and the people of the land take a man from among them, and make him their watchman, and if he sees the sword coming upon the land and blows the trumpet and warns the people, then if anyone who hears the sound of the trumpet does not take warning, and the sword comes and takes him away, his blood shall be upon his own head. He heard the sound of the trumpet and did not take warning; his blood shall be upon himself. But if he had taken warning, he would have saved his life. But if the watchman sees the sword coming and does not blow the trumpet, so that the people are not warned, and the sword comes and takes any one of them, that person is taken away in his iniquity, but his blood I will require at the watchman’s hand.”**

Girls, we need to be faithful with our children! We need to tell them everything they need to know to live godly and successfully; we need to give them all the tools they will need to think through the issues of their lives. If we do not we will be like the watchman who did not blow the trumpet and the sins of our children will not only ruin them but will be on our own heads. We cannot afford to be cowardly or sentimental in our dealing with them and in our teaching of them and in our praising them; let us open our mouths and speak the truth to them, kindly and winsomely, showing them at one and the same time holiness and love. And, let all that good, strong teaching of truth be done in the atmosphere, in front of the backdrop, of a happy, loving marriage, an erotic dance between their daddy and their mommy. **“You are altogether beautiful, my love; there is no flaw in you. Come with me from Lebanon, my bride…You have captivated my heart, my sister, my bride…with one glance of your eyes, with one jewel of your necklace. How beautiful is your love, my sister, my bride! How much better is your love than wine, and the fragrance of your oils than any spice!...Awake, O north wind, and come, O south wind! Blow upon my garden, let its spices flow. Let my beloved come to his garden, and eat its choice fruits.” Song of Songs 4:7-10, 16**

**HYMN**: this little hymn is wonderful for children to memorize and it has a bit of a catchy tune. I have heard some of my grandchildren sing it with great enthusiasm. It teaches them about the only source of truth.

**How Shall the Young Direct Their Way?**

**George Coles/from Psalm 119**

***Let Youth Praise Him,* #32**

How shall the young direct their way?

What light shall be their perfect guide?

Thy Word, O Lord, will safely lead,

If in its wisdom they confide.

Sincerely I have sought Thee, Lord,

O let me not from Thee depart;

To know thy will and keep from sin

Thy Word I cherish in my heart.

O blessed Lord, teach me Thy law,

Thy righteous judgments I declare;

Thy testimonies make me glad,

For they are wealth beyond compare.

Upon Thy precepts and Thy ways

My heart will meditate with awe;

Thy Word shall be my chief delight,

And I will not forget Thy law.