

CHAPTER 2

RESTORING COMMUNICATION IN PROBLEMATIC INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS IN THE FAMILY SYSTEM - A PASTORAL STUDY

A BASIS THEORETICAL STUDY

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In Zerfass' model for practical theological studies hermeneutical interaction between basis-theoretical, meta-theoretical, empirical elements and its implication for establishing a new praxis are focused upon. In the basis-theoretical study Scripture is studied and expounded to ascertain what the Biblical indicators are regarding the subject under research. In the present study the objective is to ascertain what the Bible teaches about the family and the relationships operative within it and how the communicational problems in those relationships might be addressed. This basis-theoretical perspective from the Bible serves to provide a comprehensive theoretical framework for looking at the research field of family relationships and the communicative dynamics in these relationships from a theological vantage point.

A study of family systems and problematic interpersonal relationship problems between family members, especially when considering probable therapeutic indicators for the treatment of communicational problems in these relationships, would be incomplete without a study of the Bible and its precepts on these matters.

A specific question would be, with due consideration of the fact that the Bible originated in a time and for a "world" very different from our modern societies where a prevalent Western mindset and individualism rule, as to how relevant the Biblical view and precepts of proper familial relationships is for and could/would be applicable to families in our world and the times we live in.

2.2. BACKGROUND

It is imperative to remember and to state from the outset that in the "world" of the Bible the pivotal values of *honour* and *shame* ruled supreme (Malina, 2001:27). This is true in the context of the central role that the covenant relationship between God and his people play and also in the commitment and integrity of inter-human relationships. As such society was demarcated by boundary markers that may be called *authority*, *gender status* and *respect* (Malina, 2001:28) and where these three converge, honour is constituted. God's order for the family as set out in 1 Co. 11:3 gives a clear illustration of this prominent fact: "...the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God." Children are urged to "...obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing to the Lord" (Col. 3:20).

Christenson (1970:17) calls God's order the *divine order*, an order of authority and responsibility. God structured the family and the principles along which it should operate according to the

principle of headship. The family is then a God created and divinely sanctioned institution. As regards the present dispensation and as far as the Christian family is concerned, the husband is under the authority of Christ, his head, and responsible to Him for the decisions he makes and the way he cares for the family (Christenson, 1970:18). The wife is under the headship of her husband and responsible to him for her decisions. The children are under the authority of both parents, but the authority of the wife is derived from that of her husband and she exerts that authority on behalf of her husband (Christenson, 1970:18), which means that authority in the home remains essentially that of the husband / father.

2.3 THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY

Schoeman (2004:70) states that in Biblical times, with regards to the family, men and women were known in terms of their family relations and that family centeredness is the dominant aspect of relations in the world of the Bible. Schoeman (2004:70) further states that family centeredness was the main pillar of the culture reflected in the Bible. Just so the Christian family today should be a symbol to the secular world, the centre in society where good communication, peace and love is practiced and reflected: 'Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do' (Colossians 3:12,13). Rainey and Rainey (2006b:1), though, state that in every relationship people hurt and disappoint one another. In his thorough discussion of sin Adams (1979:141, 142) notes that due to sin all parts and aspects of man's life is affected. Adams (1979:147) reiterates the fact that sin first and foremost affects man's relationship with God and does not only have to do with offences toward his fellow men.

De Wet (2007:1) also states that many problems that are experienced in a particular family are usually repeated in the following generation of the same family. This point can be related back to the Biblical view that sin can be carried over from one generation to the next, in Afrikaans 'erfsonde'. This concept is important to understand the fact that various problematic behaviours do spill over from one generation to the next.

2.3.1 Communication in the Family

According to Parrott and Parrott (2004:1) communication involves an exchange of information. Good communication in the family is vital for the adequate functioning of the family and for the avoidance of possible conflict situations. Adequate communication is also important for the resolution of conflict situations. Family members do not always share the same levels of communication proficiency, which increases the possibility for problematic communication between family members and conflict. Immink (2005:122) refers to the statement of van der Meiden who views communication as the most fundamental human fact, but also as one of the most fundamental religious facts. Communication is an essential part of human life without which human existence is unthinkable. It implies the human desire for communal life and a longing to join together that which is singular and apart. God's salvation is actualized in interpersonal communication: central aspects of practicing faith, for instance love, justice, mercy and so forth has everything to do with interpersonal relationships. Faith focuses on true community, the renewal of life and on the restoration of relationships. The restoration of the relationship with God in Jesus Christ is the only basis for true communication between people. It is also a fundamen-

tal fact of God; it is He who reveals to us in creation that He will bring us into communication with Him.

There is also a difference between the levels at which a child communicates as opposed to that of an adult. This apparent difference could for instance place a child at a disadvantage when communicating his needs to a parent or in conflict situations.

2.3.2 Destructive practices in the family

Destructive patterns in communicative practices in the family, like gossip, neglect, physical abuse, emotional abuse, unrealistic expectations, marginalizing one member as the “black sheep” in the family and so forth, are fatal to any hopes of healthy family relationships. It is caustic and does the work of cancer in interpersonal relationships. It breaks down trust and puts suspicion in its place.

Families must attempt to counteract the destructive practices often present in their midst. Skynner (1993:1) states that healthy families are characterized by high levels of humour, fun and enjoyment. This is because they have a positive attitude and are warm, friendly, concerned, kind and supportive toward each other. Skynner (1993:1) goes further by stating that healthy families are committed, intimate and involved and are faithful over long periods of time, but they can also function successfully when they are separate from each other, independent and on their own. When Christian elements such as reconciliation, Biblical servant hood (feet washing) and loving care are included and also present in the family it could enable the family to counteract destructive practices.

2.3.3 Conflict in the family

In an interview with 1 358 men and women about their family situations, Felder (2006:1) found that over 70% of the respondents had a frustrating or difficult relative who causes conflict. Felder (2006:1) append to this statistic that it is normal to have stressful family relations.

Conflict in the family is not abnormal and will occur as in any other normal family, but in Christian families conflict should be handled differently. The goal of conflict should be to solve the problem and re-establish harmony (Dunlap, 2006:1). Harmony/peace should be present, most of the time, in the Christian family. Conflict can rob the Christian family of that peace. The Christian family in times of conflict should work hard at restoring that disharmony as soon a possible. God does not want broken families. God detests this and wants families to avoid a family break-up at all costs. It is true that keeping the family together may be difficult, but if families long to stay together parents will have to start loving and valuing each other and their children with renewed earnestness. The only way this is possible is through the reconciliatory work of Christ and the presence and work of the Holy Spirit who wants to remind us that those who will be left standing are the few and they will only remain standing by holding steadfast to the moral teachings of the Bible and a real relationship with the living God.

2.4 BIBLICAL ROLE FOR MEMBERS IN THE FAMILY

2.4.1 Husband / father

De Vaux (1997:20) states that in the normal marriage of the ancient Israelites the husband was the master of his wife. The married woman was under authority of her husband just as a daughter was under authority of her father (De Vaux, 1997:26). The authority of the father was supreme (Visagie, 2005:121) and from this it can be assumed the authority of a husband was supreme. According to Rainey (2002:101), though, the church has throughout history misunderstood Scripture's concept of a man as the head of his wife. A husband as head of his family does not imply dominating or oppressing his wife. Consequently many a man has faltered in his role as husband, often lacking in love and the ability to communicate adequately with his wife. Many marriages, families and society in general have suffered for it, to the extent that many families in modern times are loveless environments for its members and consequently they live in a fragmented fashion instead of being closely knit and loving, loyal units. This is not contrary to Biblical eschatology that asserts that in the end-times love between people, and by implication families, will cool and that society in general will deteriorate (Koen, 1982:10, compare Mat. 24:12).

It is worth reiterating that men are, according to God's order, the head of the wife and the family -this is one of the most basic premises of a Biblically centred way of viewing marriage, the family and communication in those relationships. The comparison is drawn between Jesus Christ and the way He loves and is devoted to the church and the way that husbands should love and be devoted to their wives (Collins, 1988:438) (comp. Eph. 5:21f). Jesus is faithful in providing for the needs of the church, just so a husband / father should be faithful in providing for the needs of his wife and family (Freeman, 2006:1). In fact, this faithful care and provision may be considered a husband's first and foremost responsibility and privilege of serving the family.

The Scriptural authority of the husband has, sadly, diminished greatly in the post-modern world due to ultra liberal attitudes towards marriage, the easy ways available to obtain a divorce and adaptations in the role functions of both men and women in a post-patriarchal approach to marriage (cf. Visagie, 2005: 47-49). Husbands lack the God given authority to be effective as husbands (and fathers). This has left many husbands with feelings of impotence to exert their authority properly and often with feelings of confusion about what to do to regain their lost authority. In the praxis theory (chapter 5) of this study, methods will be looked at to regain a sense of God's proper order for the husband in the family and the husband's authority adjunct to that.

In ancient Biblical periods the father, or patriarch of the family, had absolute rule and authority over his family, in the very early periods even as regards life and death (de Vaux, 1997:20). Christian fathers today, however, are under pressure to conform to worldly standards for raising their children, which inter alia includes the dissolution of authority over children. This means that in the post-patriarchal climate of today fathers are expected to negotiate and so communicate without authority with their children and to compromise on the Biblical rules that should govern the home. Fathers are under pressure to refrain from instruction on moral standards for living based on the Bible and replace those standards with relativistic instruction based on the morals of a world that expects a "live and let live" way of living. This manner of raising children also excludes corporal discipline and Freeman (2006:2) comes out very strongly against this current way for fathers to raise and discipline their children. He states that a father who does not spank his children when they need such a form of discipline in effect *hates* them. This may sound like a

very extreme statement but should be understood as a hyperbole to express the severity of the situation. Contrarily, a father who loves his children will spank them when necessary and thereby keep them from going to hell (Freeman, 2006:2). Voegtlin (2006:1) states that spanking is an important part of disciplining a child and that this should be done early on in a child's life.

The modern or current way in which a father should communicate with (instruct) and raise his children actually represent a reversal of God's order and Freeman (2006:1) asserts that little or no spiritual good can come for children in a home where God's order is reversed and the father is irresolute and weak.

2.4.2 Wife / Mother

According to Christenson (1970:44) a woman has a specific role to fulfil and specific blessings that God wants to channel through her to the family. A woman is as a rule often more in tune with the needs of the family, for example what their physical, spiritual and emotional needs are (Christenson, 1970:42) and are usually better equipped to communicate them. God also gave women the ability to forge a steely resolve in trying times. The spiritual health of the family is, then, as dependant on the insight and concern of the wife as on the protection of the husband (Christenson, 1970:43).

The Bible and Christian scholars ascribe great importance to submission of wives to their husbands and likewise view a man as the head and authority over his wife. Submission is, though, not an attitude of servitude but is the natural order (God's order) for the family. Submission should not be viewed as a negative statement when considering communication between wives and husbands; Christian wives should simply view submission as an order in the marriage placed there by God for the good of women and the whole family.

The subordinate role of the wife is also necessary because it helps to maintain a balance within the family and in society (Christenson, 1970: 44). In today's society being weighed-down by absent husbands and fathers due to a variety of causes such as desertion, working circumstances and so forth, women succeed as single parents heading *single* (without a father) families; having to put in everything to provide a roof and put food on the table. Although God does not ordain this state of affairs, many children from such homes have grown up successfully to be healthy, strong and well-adjusted men and women. Women have performed a vital role in our society as the glue that often held society together during war, economic depression, and so on.

In the world of the Scriptures mothers were viewed as loving and compassionate, they also played an integral part in the lives of their children, even in adulthood (Schoeman 2004:72).

The bond between mother and child is extremely strong and is according to Jeavons (2002:1) a powerful component in a child's life. This means that when communication in the family is considered it is important to consider the source from which a lot of the ability of children to communicate emanate from and the potential communicational difficulties that this instruction may innately contain. The fact has been stated in many cases and studies, but what must be added to the previous statement, though, is the possibility that *mothers may care too much*. By this it is meant that it often happens that women stop being wives and companions to their husbands and exclusively become lifelong mothers to their children. What usually happens then is that when children leave the home husbands and wives discover that they have become strangers to each

other. They then either re-learn to successfully communicate again and live with each other or separate.

There must be a balance between providing care for a child (which is normal and what a parent should do) and sacrificing everything for the rearing of the children and neglecting the marriage.

2.4.3 Children

Malina (2001:72) states succinctly that in the near Eastern cultures, which includes Israel, the concept of *children* in a family did not exist – only gender differentiated *boys* and *girls*. This also goes for the concept of *parents*: the only roles were those of a father or a mother. This indicates the very specialized male and female roles, spaces and relationships that existed in the ancient family and is important when considering parent / child communication in the context of the Bible.

Our day and age bear virtually no resemblance to what was in place, say, five decades ago. Children are exposed to such a diversity of technology and information that in many instances it almost prevents them from being *children*. However, what has not changed is the child. The child of today is essentially the same as the child of yesterday and that of tomorrow. Children are no different than adults in this regard; human nature stays the same. Having said this, God's command (and wish for children) expressed in the Bible remains valid for today: "Children obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing to the Lord" (Colossians 3:20). When parent / child communication is analyzed Colossians 3:20 appears to indicate a distinct pattern of communication, where the child is instructed by the parent(s) and obeys. The problem lies in restoring this pattern of communication in problematic parent / child relationships without repressing children or negating the authority of the parent(s).

2.4.3.1 Son / Boy

According to Schoeman (2004:72) boys in Biblical times were given special attention during childhood, whilst girls were hastened to womanhood to be married off as soon as possible. The son, in Biblical times, was the most important sibling and the birth of a girl was at times viewed as a catastrophe of some kind in Middle Eastern society (Pilch, 1993:130), but this view on female children is never espoused in the Scriptures. Present day boys seem to be unable to become men, shirking responsibility towards their families and communities, in fact, it may be said that they do not act, sound nor communicate like the men they are supposed to be.

2.4.3.2 Daughter / Girl

Pilch (1993:129) quotes Sirach (25:24) as saying that since sin had its beginning with a woman it's because of a woman that we all die. Consequently in Biblical times, Middle Eastern Society viewed woman as of little value. Girls were socialized to adopt the life long role of being subordinate to men (Pilch, 1993:129). This holds vital clues as to how to understand communicative norms as it is found in near Eastern families and consequently the Bible, which liberated women from an inferior position in Middle Eastern culture by restoring the value of women in Christ (Galatians 3:28). It can be inferred that the daughter / girl did not unreservedly communicate with her parents and that this instilled mode of being was carried over to her later marriage in a societal continuum, not only inherent in herself, but also in the societal milieu from which her husband came.

Jesus Christ, however, radically changed the social norms prevalent at the time by acting totally different towards and respecting women, even prostitutes, adulteresses and heathens. Women had a significant place in the Gospels and played prominent roles in the early and subsequent history of the church. In modern times, then, the overall purpose in the lives of Christian women and also in the lives of Christian daughters should be to live life to the glory of God and that this fact should determine every decision they make in order to reflect the Christian status quo (Rainey, 2002:150). This also pertains to communication, where parent / daughter communication in a Christian family should reflect their Christian values. Rainey (2002:150) asserts the fact that daughters must witness their parents living their lives according to this mandate – also in the sphere of communicative relations and especially when conflict occurs in those relationships.

It is certain that the world and its standards for moral living will attempt to force it onto and into the lives of young women, tempting them with everything from giving themselves over to sexual promiscuity to living materialistic and self-centred lives. Even if these vices are not evident, Rainey (2002:150) claims that women are prone to performance-based existences, achieving acceptance by God and those around them by works and not by grace; we must therefore remind our daughters that they are justified and sanctified by the grace of God, accepted by God just the way they are.

2.5 MARRIAGE AS BIBLICALLY ORDAINED INSTITUTION

Marriage is an institution of God and an institution that God planned and ordained from the beginning (Barnard, 1982:8, Nortjé, 2006:27). According to Nortjé (2006:2) God planted a deep need in Adam, the initial man, to have a mate, a desire for a companion. This companion was a woman, Eve, from his own flesh, not an animal. Adam therefore immediately recognised her as part of himself (Nortjé, 2006:3; Genesis 2:21-23).

The concept of a nuptial union had to do with a couple consisting of man and woman. This simply means that the couple can physically see the continuation of the family ancestral line when children are born into the marriage. Marriage in the Bible (Genesis 2:24) is an institution of unity between two persons, a union between a man and a woman. It therefore breaks the unity of a marriage when one partner is unfaithful and brings into the marriage a third person either through physical or emotional unfaithfulness.

In the Biblical context the term “marriage” as description for a conjugal union of two people of the same sex is an abnormality of extreme proportions. One can state the obvious simply because the basis for the creation of a new family is thereby demolished. The continuation of life, in that the married couple would in time bring forth children, is thwarted.

De Vaux (1997:25) asserts that in ancient Israel monogamy was the most common form of marriage. Marriages were entered into at an early age (compared to our times) – for instance a girl was marriageable from her first menstruation (12-13 years), wherefore the parents made the decisions in arranging the marriage. Girls were never consulted as regards marriage and boys only rarely (De Vaux, 1997:29).

2.5.1 Communication in the Marriage

Parrott and Parrott (1999:1) calls communication the lifeblood of marriage and that more than any other skill *communication* is the key to building lasting relationships. Peterson and Green (1999:1) affirm this statement when they say that research pin-points communication as an essential building block of a strong marital relationship. Gschwend-Bosch (2000:115) states it even more succinctly when she says lack of communication is the root cause of most marriage and family problems. Collins (1988:410) states in this regard that communication is something that has to be *learned*. Without adequate communication the ability to be understood and to understand is lost. Every couple needs to adjust to their lives together on a continuous basis and good communication is required to adequately convey each member's needs at this point, so that the necessary adjustments can be made (George, 2004:1).

The following are common elements involved in marital communication:

- Verbal Communication (Talking): In the Bible verbal communication is depicted as something which carries great responsibility for, ‘... let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we (the teachers) shall receive a stricter judgement.’ (James 3:1) and cautions about the tongue and the destruction its words can bring for it cannot be tamed: ‘But no man can tame the tongue. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. With it we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men...’ (James 3: 8, 9). From these verses we can take to heart the necessity of Holy Spirit controlled restraint when verbally communicating within the marriage. Taking care not to hurt our spouses with words that, when they have been spoken (and though true), cannot be unsaid and taken back. Dobson (2000:311) states that it is a common complaint of wives that husbands do not reveal their inner thoughts and feelings whereas women, typically, express their feelings and thoughts far clearer and is often irritated by his reticence. “Silence” poses a definite potential for conflict in the marriage.
- Voice-related behaviour – The tone of voice, pitch, volume, intensity, inflection, spacing of words, emphasis, pauses, silences and fluency a person uses when communicating.

Non-verbal elements involved in communication:

- Listening: A common complaint with couples is that one or both members “do not hear what I’m saying”. Whether it is about complaints they have, sharing the events of the day or whatever the communication is that a member of the couple wants to convey – partners want (and need) to be listened to. It makes them feel accepted and invited to more openness. Poole (2006:1) states that listening attentively and sincerely makes an impact on the speaker and makes him feel understood. Poole (2006:1) further states that attentive listening provides the foundation of trust necessary for strong interpersonal relationships, not only in a marriage, but also in all interpersonal relationships as it communicates unselfish love and concern (see also Philippians 2:3). The bible exhorts, also, to be quick to hear, but slow to speak (James 1:19) and also addresses the element of wrath, James: 19b, 20: ‘...slow to wrath; for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God’. What these verses are conveying is the idea that if a spouse can learn to listen intently and speak when necessary and unhastily then severe conflict might not occur in the first instance.

- Silence: Fallon (2005:1) states that communication is a must and that even in remaining quiet is in itself a message. When someone stays quiet, but with a frown, does not make eye contact, or folds the arms there is a very distinct message of either anger, frustration, fear, avoidance behaviour or whatever the case may be.
- Body Language: When we communicate we also convey messages with our bodies, that is to say, our facial expressions, our body posture and so forth. Egan (2002:67) mentions the following non-verbal body language factors involved in communication:
 - Bodily Behaviour – posture, body movements, and gestures
 - Eye Behaviour – eye contact or the lack of it, staring and eye movement
 - Facial expression – smiles, frowns, raised eyebrows, and twisted lips
 - (Observable) automatic physiological responses – quickened breathing, blushing, paleness and pupil dilation
 - Space – how far or close a person chooses to be during a conversation.

2.5.2 Communicational Conflict in the Marriage

Smalley (2006:1) states that at different times during marital conflict most couples will experience emotions such as anger, fear, sadness, mistrust and hostility. Conflict is common to a marriage and according to Rainey and Rainey (2006a:1) the crux about conflict is not to avoid it, as most couples tend to do (Dunlap, 2006:1), but how to deal with it. Resolving conflict is decidedly difficult (Downs and Downs, 2003:1) and resolving it adequately takes some skill in accomplishing successfully. Gschwend-Bosch (2000:126) states that if a couple has been taught how to handle conflict situations in a caring, constructive manner, conflict can become a powerful tool for strengthening a marriage.

Dunlap (2006:1) accurately states that because we are all sinners we also have the tendency to want to defend our sinful actions, justify our motives and to defend, even promote our selfish actions. Rainey and Rainey (2006a:1) pinpoints the biggest source of conflict as being in our selfish nature. This statement indeed begs acceptance since any action to the detriment of another has the *self* as priority and not the wellbeing of the partner. This dire state of affairs is confirmed by the Apostle James' poignant question: "Where do wars and fights come among you? Do they not come from your [selfish] desires for pleasure that war in your members? You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask" (James, 4:1, 2). This innate tendency to attack each other *rather than the problem* is a big stumbling block towards achieving Biblical solutions to problems. Conflict in the marriage breaks the relationship down and the longer it continues unresolved or inadequately resolved, the bigger the toll on the relationship.

There seems to be a link between good communication skills, especially listening properly and conflict resolution. Downs and Downs (2003:1) postulate, in agreement with the Apostle James (James, 1:19), that we should be slow to speak and swift to hear, in view of the fact that it is necessary to be focused on *listening* in order to resolve conflict.

2.5.3 The reconciliatory work of Christ

This study aims to focus on Christ and the reconciliatory work that He can do in the family, marital relationship and Christian parenting. Christ has prominent effect on the inner workings of the family in terms of communicational and conflict resolution.

The basis theory for this study is the important place of Christ's reconciliatory work as depicted in 2 Corinthians 5:14-21: 'For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again. Therefore, from now on, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him thus no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God. For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.'

These verses hold important keys to help the family in its struggle to become whole and deal with matters such as communicational difficulties. These include Christian principles, such as, those who live should no longer live for themselves, but for Christ, and that if anyone is in Christ he is a new creation. DeMuth (2006:86) states that God requires hearts, affection, allegiance and devotion.

Matthew Henry in his commentary on these passages in the Bible, remarks on 2 Corinthians 5:15 and state that: "We should not make ourselves, but Christ, the end of our living and actions: and it was one end of Christ's death to cure us of this self-love, and to excite us always to act under the commanding influence of his love. A Christian's life should be consecrated to Christ; and then do we live as we ought to live when we live to Christ, who died for us." He goes further when commenting on 2 Corinthians 5:16, 17, and states that all who profess faith in Jesus Christ are new creatures; they have a new heart and new nature, that with the change made by the grace of God (importantly for the family) the old things have passed away, notably, old thoughts, old principles, old practices, and so forth and that all these things must become new. The renewed man (or the renewed family) acts from new principles, by new rules, with new ends, and in new company. Furthermore these passages bring home the 'ministry of reconciliation' as ambassadors of Jesus Christ - as Henry states about verse 18: God has appointed the Mediator of reconciliation. He has reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ.

Thus, the basis theory of this study is the reconciliatory work of Jesus Christ in the family. That by the inspiration of God the Scriptures were written, which contain in it the word of the reconciliation of Jesus Christ, showing us that peace was made by the blood of the cross. And, as Henry comments, Christ has appointed, and it may be said also in the family, the office of the ministry of reconciliation: family members may proclaim to their family members who may be sinners the terms of mercy and reconciliation of Jesus Christ and persuade them to comply with it.

The implication of Christology for familial relationships, that is to say the reconciliatory work of Christ, will be expounded more fully in the praxis- theoretical part of this study.

2.6. CHRISTIAN PARENTING

2.6.1 Communication between parents and children

According to Scripture God's tenets for parents include: that parents must love, discipline, and teach their children, as explained by the Apostle Paul when he wrote: "And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath: but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord (Eph 6:4). Paul further states that our example of what a father should be is derived from God who is the ultimate, perfect example of what a father should be. God deals with us in the same manner that an earthly father might deal with his children, loving us and disciplining (Heb. 12) and teaching us according to His perfect will for our lives.

God first teaches then disciplines if His word is rejected: "for whom the Lord chastens He loves" (Heb.12:6a). The Christian home as is a field of service for a priesthood ministry and Rainey ed. (2002: 102) asserts that the husband is a priest of the Lord who intercedes for his children before God. Just as the priests of old presented Israel to God and God to Israel, the parent should do the same. But before parents can minister to and on behalf of their children parents themselves must make sure their ministry is true and not without substance.

According to Lackey (2004:5) God holds parents responsible for the training of their children, but states that parents are wrong in expecting 100% success (or 100% failure) with training their children in the way of God (Lackey, 2004:3). DeMuth (2006:81) agrees with Lackey when she states that the goal of parenting is not to produce perfect children. In order to raise Christian children, parents should show their children their overarching goal to love and know Christ more deeply (DeMuth, 2006: 81), their total love for God and the Word of God and absolute belief in prayer (Freeman 2006:1). Sande (2006:1) states that parents must with God's help teach their children to respect others, to get along with siblings, friends and others and to love others. Children are raised by being loved and by parents spending time with them...if a child turns away from God it is because the parent placed his / her desires and ambitions before his / her family (Voegtlin, 2006:8). It is important that parents should strive to be consistent at all times, in all their interactions with their children (Winnett, 2005:2); this is especially true when considering parental communication with children.

Christenson (1970:55) states that God's desire or divine order for the lives of children is encompassed in the single command of Biblical obedience to parents in everything, 'that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth' (Eph. 6:3). Christenson (1970:55) views the obedience of a child to his parents as a key element and states that in direct relation to a child's Biblical obedience to his parents a child's relationship with Jesus Christ thrives. The authority of parents, though, is not their own, but is given to them by God and in the command of obedience (Eph. 6:1 and Col. 3:20) to parental authority there is no mention (in the Scriptural passages) of any exception (Christenson, 1970:59, 61). Christenson (1970:62) further states that Biblical obedience is a basic law in spiritual life and that in a child obeying his parents, without manipulation (of his parents), he is obeying God and that in doing so a child will know the presence and blessing of Jesus Christ in his life. Christian parents have the responsibility to live, in other words act-out, good communication skills when communicating with their children. **It is far better to**

show children how to communicate properly (emphasis added by Omar Fourie). What seems to be the case in praxis, however, is that most parents do not seem to possess the necessary communication skills, even in their relationship with their partner and other adults. Coomer (2000:2) states that inconsistency in a parent's life where communication (and discipline) is concerned affects a child in whether that child will live for God. This will be explored further in the praxis theory of this study (Chapter 5).

It is vital that children should learn to be good communicators, amongst themselves and their parents, but also between them and their social interactions at large. It is a matter of fact that children should in an ideal world be taught good communication skills by their parents at home and vitally, but to a lesser extent, by the family at large. In a fallen world this is not always possible and communication skills are either never taught to the child or, if the child is lucky, it is taught by a teacher or mentor. Unfortunately even the most cherished children are neglected when it comes to communication skills, even though they have a loving family.

2.6.2 Communicational conflict between parents and children

It is all too easy for parents to act inappropriately during instances of conflict with their children. Inappropriate communicative behaviour means that parents dominate an argument or misuse their authority to influence their children to act unethically. Parents should bear in mind that they are the adults and should act in an adult-like fashion; which means that they should take responsibility for the way they act during conflicts.

Rainey and Rainey (2006b:1) identifies three elements that will need attention if conflict is to be resolved successfully with a child:

- It must be communicated to the child that his/her attitude and/or behaviours are hurtful. The child may not be aware that what he/she has done was hurtful.
- There will be a need to forgive - the parent will have to forgive the child's behaviour, but the parent will also need forgiveness for what he/she has done, this is also according to DeMuth: (2006:119-121).
- There will have to be a movement towards reconciliation, to restore the relationship.

When conflict arises between children and their parents, whether the children are very young or already adult, it is important to remember that the levels of respect children have for their parents will determine the severity of the conflict experienced. In Biblical times respect for parents was rigorous, grave and paramount. The child's ability to rebel against his parent/s was curtailed to the extent that children in Biblical times could not speak their minds as easily as today, without the threat of harsh penalty. It should be noted that this rigorous, grave attitude could have materialized in the praxis theory of this study, but the Biblical attitude that fills the heart of people lead by the Holy Spirit is fear of God: The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge' (Prov.1:7; Eph. 5:21). This "fear" consists of a deep respect of God and a deep sense that His will for our lives is good and will bear good fruit.

The present day Christian child possesses a lot more freedom to express himself and not necessarily with negative effects. It is important for a child to grow up as mentally healthy as possible and the Christian parent with the Bible and its moral values at hand can indeed raise their children as healthy persons; to healthy adulthood.

According to Costella (2006:1) God specifically instructs young people to be leaders and to lead by example. The Bible in 1 Timothy 4:12 states it as follows: "Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity".

Costella (2006:1) further states that young Christians today often fail to understand that God desires to have a close, intimate relationship with them and that this is a relationship that can only be realized when they obey the Scriptures.

The main destructive act a child can perpetrate to his parents, is one in which he rebels and flaunt the directives and teaching of his parent/s. Lackey (2004:6) states that all children rebel against righteousness, some more severely than others and that the heart of every child has the seed of rebellion in it (Lackey, 2004:7). Lackey (2004:6) further states that some children rebel outwardly and brazenly, whilst others rebel inwardly and quietly.

The reasons for a child's rebelliousness are many, but can primarily be put down to a sinful nature, but at closer examination it may be also due to reasons of frustration, hurt and abuse (both physical and mental).

2.7. Basis theoretical perspectives from Chapter 2 that can be utilized in constructing a theoretical framework for understanding, explaining and changing the praxis of communication in the Christian family from a theological vantage point

The following elements should serve as base in a theoretical framework for restoring communication in problematic interpersonal relationships in the family system:

1) God given purpose of Marriage and communication in marriage:

- Marriage is an institution of God and an institution that God planned and ordained from the beginning.
- The husband is under the authority of Christ, his head, and responsible to Him for the decisions he make.
- A husband should love his wife the way Jesus Christ loves and is devoted to His children.
- Wives should submit to their husbands, as man is the head and authority over his wife through God's order for the family.
- Communication is the lifeblood of marriage.
- Due to sinful human nature communicational conflict is common to all marriages and cannot be avoided.

2) Family life and implications of distortions in communication patterns on family life

- The family is a God created and divinely sanctioned institution.

- The Christian family today should be a symbol of integrity, peace and love to the secular world caught up in community-destroying and disintegrating distortions.
- Good communication in the family is vital for the adequate functioning of the family and for the avoidance of possible conflict situations.
- Communicational conflict in the family is not abnormal.

3) Christian Parenting

- Christian fathers today in a post-patriarchal society are under pressure to conform to worldly standards for communicating with their children and need to re-orientate themselves with regards to the true meaning of biblical authority (in distinction from manipulative authoritarianism).
- The child of today is essentially the same as the child of yesterday and that of tomorrow.
- Present day boys seem to be exposed to conflicting role expectations of what it means to become a man and communicate like a man.
- The overall purpose of Christian women in life and also in the life of a daughter should be to live life to the glory of God and not be focused on proving themselves in a “man’s world”.
- Our example of what a father should be is derived from God who is the ultimate, perfect, example of what a father should be.
- Parents ought to be priests of the Lord for their children.
- Christian parents have the responsibility to live good communication skills when communicating with their children.
- Most parents do not seem to possess adequate communication skills to communicate with their children.
- It is vital that children should learn to be good communicators.

4) Biblical grounds for reconciliation in relationships and restoration in communication patterns that glorify God and uplift fellow human beings

- The biggest source of conflict is in the selfish, sinful nature of all people.
- Without adequate communication the ability to be understood and to understand and to thrive in community are is lost.

- Only through faith in Christ and ministry of the reconciliation brought about by Him, can relationships be restored with God and with each other.
- Gossip and other destructive forces are fatal to any hopes of healthy family relationships and it should be determined how the Christian family can overcome these forces by becoming knowledgeable regarding the ministry of reconciliation.