

**"BEFORE ALL ELSE FAILS, READ THE INSTRUCTIONS!" or
"BUT 'BETTER LATE THAN NEVER' "**

TEXT: Nehemiah 8:8

THESIS: To show that marriages, families and lives can be salvaged by following the principles and precepts of God's Word...even after disaster occurs.

INTRO.: A. My kids were small and two of them were getting new bikes for Christmas. I am not the most mechanically inclined individual – but it was Christmas eve & it was my job to put the bikes together. After all, how hard can it be? I have ridden bikes and seen bikes all my life. I started on the first one, but when I was 'finished' I had left over parts and the back wheel wouldn't turn. My wife came in and offered: **"Shouldn't you have read the instructions first?"** I asked her: "Don't you have some vacuuming to do, or something?" When she left I read the instructions & said "OH!" I reassembled the bike & things went better, till she came back. She didn't come in and say: "Nice job!" or "That's my man!" She said: **"Oh, I see you decided to read the instructions!"**

B. Many people try to "wing it" with their lives. They try to put their lives together without first reading the instructions in God's Word. They make a bigger mess with their lives than I did with the bikes. Instead of *"WHEN all else fails, read the instructions,"* our motto ought to be **"BEFORE ALL ELSE FAILS, READ THE INSTRUCTIONS!"**

I. BEFORE YOUR MARRIAGE FAILS, READ THE INSTRUCTIONS:

A. Learn Bible Principles Before Failure:

1. Find out what the Bible says before you decide on who, when & why to marry!
2. Find out something of your responsibilities before you say "I do" or you will wish you you said: "I won't!"
 - a. As a man you will be responsible to provide for, lead and protect your wife & family.
 - b. As a woman you will be responsible to teach, train and be a blessing to your husband and children.

ILLUS.: Know what the Bible teaches about your responsibilities **BEFORE** you date or mate! ("The purpose for dating is mating!") Dig out of the Bible every passage that deals with husbands, wives, mothers, fathers and children, **BEFORE** you decide to tie the knot! (Do YOU know how to resolve differences biblically? Do YOU know what God says you must know about sexual abstinence **AFTER** marriage?! Do YOU know what you should teach any children God may bless you with? Do YOU know how to keep the honey in your marriage, long after the honeymoon is over?)

B. But "Better Late Than Never":

1. You say: "It's too late...I am already married" or "I wasn't saved when I got married or "I am divorced & remarried, what can I do?!"
2. The good news is that it is "better late than never" – there are instructions in God's Manual to cover every situation.
3. The Bible is not a Book written with instructions for perfect people, but also a repair Manual for those who mess up Their marriages.

ILLUS.: Jesus didn't tell the woman at the well to divorce her 5 husbands and start over, he picked her up right where she was, and she was able to be a blessing to many people, once she accepted His directions for her life. He didn't tell the woman taken in adultery that she was trash, he simply told her **"Go and sin no more."** (Get out of your present lifestyle and begin fresh!) If a prostitute can be cleaned up and start over, there is hope for the rest of us!

II. BEFORE YOUR FAMILY FAILS, READ THE INSTRUCTIONS:

A. Study Bible Precepts Regarding Your Family Before Disaster:

1. People who have children often complain that they don't come with an instruction manual – BUT THEY DO!
2. The problem is that most parents don't take the time to read the instructions before all else fails.
 - a. Instruct your infant, train your toddler, chasten your child, teach your teen and be understanding of your young adult.

ILLUS.: INSTRUCT YOUR INFANT: (Teach them in infancy not to throw tantrums, etc.)

Psalms 58:3 The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies.

TRAIN YOUR TODDLER: (Smack their hands, don't hide the knick-knacks! Wail their tail when they tell you "NO!" instead of laughing at how cute they are!)

Proverbs 22:6 Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.

CHASTEN YOUR CHILD: (Break their will instead of letting them give you a nervous breakdown!)

Proverbs 19:18 Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying.

TEACH YOUR TEEN: (Help them through their tough teen years & don't be afraid to show your love.)

Psalms 38:1 O LORD, rebuke me not in thy wrath: neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure.

BE UNDERSTANDING OF YOUR YOUNG ADULT: (They may act as if they know it all & don't need your help, but give them the benefit of your years of experience and wisdom.)

Proverbs 1:1-5 The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel (to his son); To know wisdom and instruction; to perceive the words of understanding; To receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, and judgment, and equity; To give subtilty to the simple, to the young man knowledge and discretion. A wise man will hear, and will increase learning; and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels:

B. But, "Better Late Than Never":

1. You say, "My child is out in the world" – pray for him, love him, keep in touch with him, don't "divorce" him, ask God for help & wisdom
2. If you can't reach your child, help somebody else's child, reach them before they make the same mistakes your child did.

III. BEFORE YOUR LIFE FAILS, READ THE INSTRUCTIONS:

A. Check The Instruction Manual Before Your Wreck Your Life:

1. If you are unsaved, get saved!

ILLUS.: My wife (of 63 years) & I saw a woman reading a book on "8 Weeks To Better Health." I asked her why she was reading the book. She said, "I want to get my life together." I told her that was good but that having good health wasn't enough. She showed an interest in spiritual truth. While I went to the car for a tract, my wife spoke with her & when I got back she said, "*Kimberly wants to know if you can show her how to get to heaven.*" I did, and she did and now I want to bring her an **Instruction Manual – God's Word**, for the rest of her life.

2. If your soul is saved, "study to show yourself approved..." to save your life!

ILLUS.: Too many Christians wreck their lives, their testimonies, their reputation and their future because they fail to check to see what God has said about how they can avoid wreck, ruin & destruction. We need to realize that this life is only a testing ground for eternity. We had better get it right down here or we will miss out up there. "*Only one life, t'will soon be past – Only what's done for Christ will last.*" We need to get our priorities in line. We need to realize that wood, hay & stubble is no substitute for gold, silver & precious stones. What are you furnishing your mansion with?

B. But, "Better Late Than Never":

1. You say, "Preacher, I've blown it – I am a failure as a Christian.

Revelation 2:4-5 Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works...

2. Our Savior recycles saints!
3. As long as you live, it is not too late!

CONCL.: The *natural way* is "**WHEN ALL ELSE FAILS, READ THE INSTRUCTIONS.**" The *supernatural way* is "**BEFORE ALL ELSE FAILS, READ THE INSTRUCTIONS.**" Which will it be for you? Picking up the pieces or doing it right to begin with?