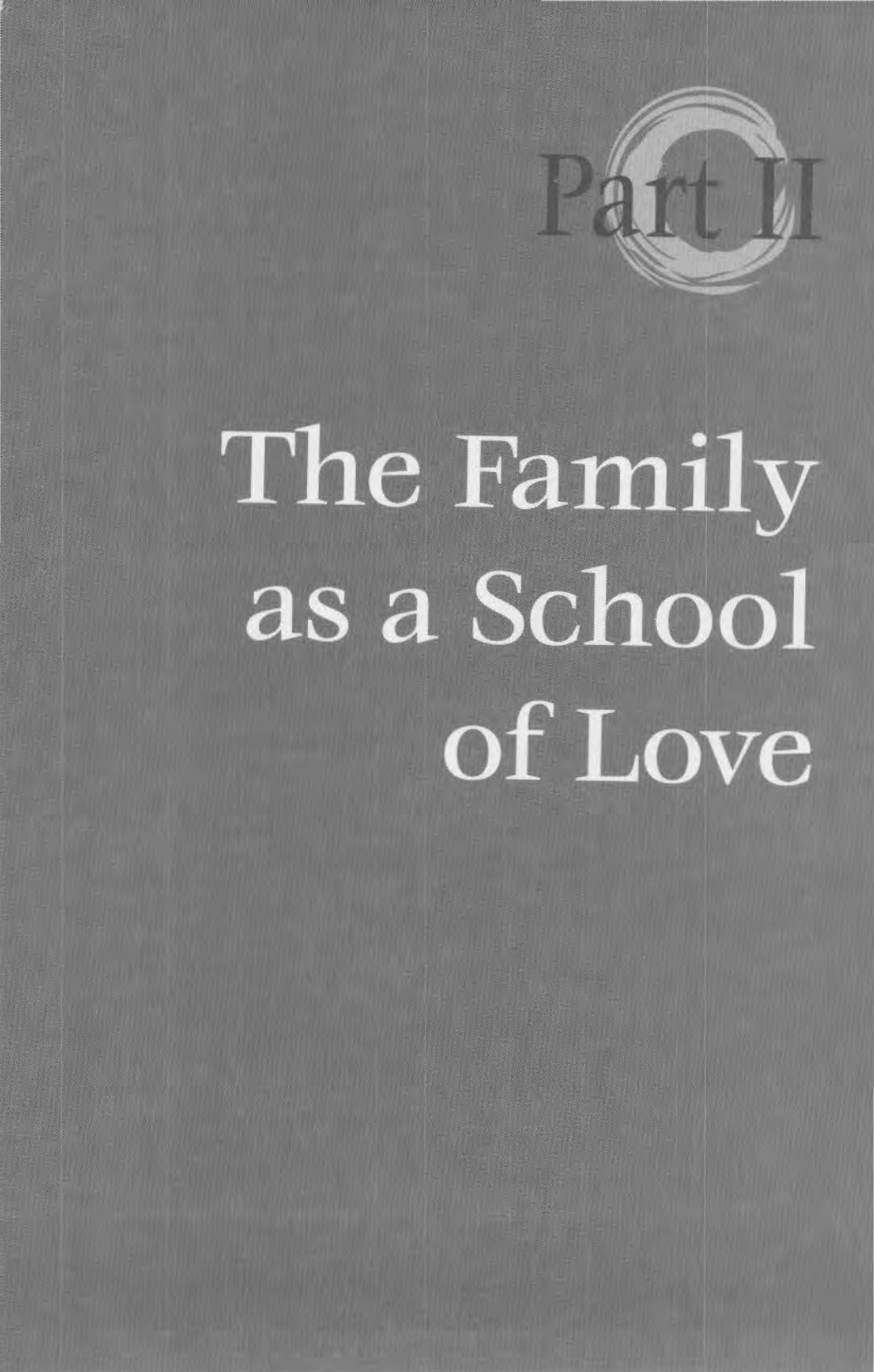
Part II
The Family as a School of Love

Section 4

The Four Spheres of Love

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THE FAMILY IS THE CRUCIBLE OF CHARACTER, IMPLICITLY "TEACHING" about virtues of honesty, loyalty, trust, self-sacrifice, personal responsibility, and respect for others. More fundamentally, it is the school of love and relationships, where the foundational capacity to invest love and the associated relational skills are optimally acquired. Embodied in the family is a natural moral and relational growth dynamic: the familial roles of child, sibling, spouse and parent. Each role may be conceived of as a "sphere of love," bringing its unique challenges and rewards, its distinctive norms and objectives. The early spheres of child and sibling's love present the first opportunities for the development of heart and conscience; these become foundational for adult moral functioning. The spouse and parent's spheres provide specific settings and challenges for character and relational growth to realize complete fulfillment. Yet, as an individual can be simultaneously a child, a sibling, a spouse and a parent, all the spheres remain important throughout life. Moreover, the Four Spheres of Love, as a family-based paradigm, is the basis for all successful social relationships.

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Family Roles and Moral Growth

As far back as our knowledge takes us, human beings have lived in families. We know of no period where this was not so. We know of no people who have succeeded for long in dissolving the family or displacing it.... Again and again, in spite of proposals for change and actual experiments, human societies have reaffirmed their dependence on the family as the basic unit of human living—the family of father, mother and children.

—Margaret Mead[1]

FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS ARE ESSENTIAL FOR REALIZING KEY moral aspirations. The family is "the institution which most effectively teaches the civic virtues of honesty, loyalty, trust, self-sacrifice, personal responsibility, and respect for others," concluded a diverse board of experts.[2] Sociologist Brigitte Berger says that the stable family is "the culture-creating institution par excellence."[3] This is why efforts to shore up and support the family are well worth society's investment—in fact, they are crucial to society's long-term well being.

Schools are an important part of that effort. Effective character educators respect the powerful influence of the family and are con-

cerned with issues relating to marriage and family. They encourage parental participation and model their schools and classrooms after good homes. They help students gain the skills necessary for developing healthy marriages and families. Such education counteracts and prevents a host of social problems, fostering productive citizens who have a greater chance for personal success and happiness.

The Family: Crucible of Character

By the time they come to school, children are already well on their way in their moral education. As Berger notes, family life has already exposed them directly or indirectly to the most elementary emotions of human nature—love, hate, longing, anger, sacrifice, selfishness, loneliness, honor, etc.[4] Their moral foundations have largely been formed. The family will continue to be a lasting and deeply felt influence throughout their lives. Effective educators and community leaders seek to facilitate the healthy aspects of this influence.

Family interaction invariably teaches moral lessons that have repercussions in growing children's futures. The seemingly minor incidents of family life accumulate over the years of growing up to affect the way family members relate to others for the rest of their lives. People's view of themselves and the way that they relate to their spouses and children, authority figures, subordinates and friends are all influenced by the moral and emotional subtexts coursing through everyday events in their families of origin. Indeed, the family is a veritable melting pot of emotional and moral learning—the crucible of character.

Universal Pattern

People find themselves in all sorts of families, and all families, like all individual human beings, deserve to be treated with respect. Yet single parents know that children need a mother and a father and often feel called upon to try to play both roles. They intuit that the family has a standard form, a structure that is grounded in nature. (See Chapter 8)

Dutch historian Jan Romein termed the family "the common human pattern."[5] Even when people reject or bypass the traditional configuration of father, mother and their children, people tend to follow its patterns anyway, as if the family were a groove from which human-

ity cannot escape. A young man at Woodstock in 1992 said that he was there, among strangers, because of his yearning for a family. Homeless youngsters often form bands in which they take care of each other as well as they can on the street, calling themselves little families.

Gang formation is another illustration of the natural, irrepressible yearning to be part of a family. Young people often join gangs because they get familial feelings of solidarity, strength and protection from the gang.[6] In fact, the emblems of gangs, their unique modes of dress and speech, their codes of behavior and initiation rites are all strongly binding forces similar to those of kinship tribes.[7] Gangs do not set out to build a familial identity. They follow their instincts, which direct them to bind themselves to one another with ties that resemble those of blood. Cody Scott, the convicted criminal leader of the notorious L.A. Crips, said in an interview on *60 Minutes* that if he had had a proper family he would never have turned to the streets.[8] A reformed juvenile delinquent told a counselor, "No one understood that all my rough stuff and drug stuff was because I needed a dad."[9]

The Four Spheres of Love

The roles people play in the family of origin as well as in the family they create—those of son or daughter, brother or sister, husband or wife, father or mother—are life's most fundamental ones. These reflect four distinct types of love: child's love, sibling's love, spouse's love and parent's love. Each type of love forms a world of experiences and responsibilities that is a matrix for the growth of heart and conscience. This world of dynamics, sentiments, perspectives and lessons characteristic of each type of love may be called a "sphere of love." The concept of spheres captures the potentially all-encompassing dimensions and infinite possibilities of these realms of concern and investment.

The four spheres of love form a global, inter-related dynamic of experience. Taken as a whole, they create an emotional reservoir from which the maturing person may draw to lead a life of integrity and value. The four spheres of love is a helpful model for understanding the dynamics of character growth and relational skills acquired in family life, and for describing how the capacity to love develops through family roles. As educator Gabriel Moran observes, the family "teaches by its form."[10]

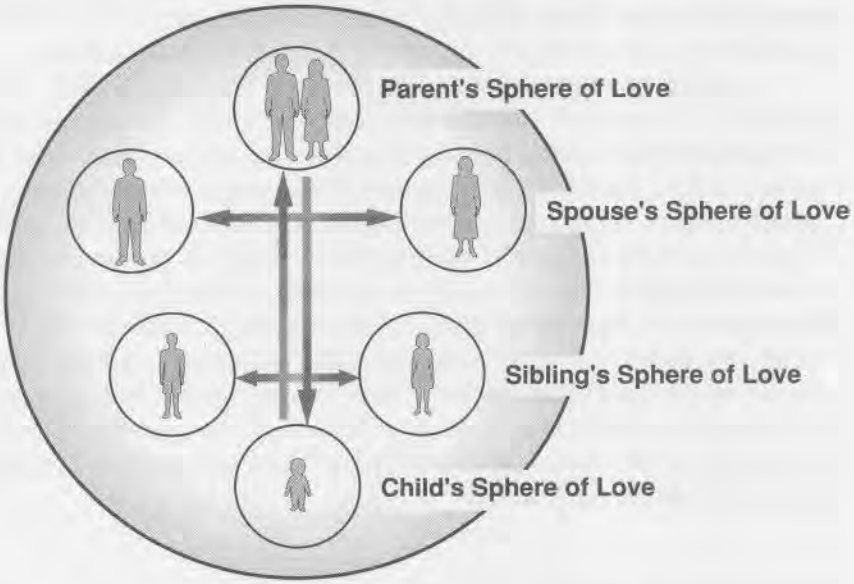

Figure 9: The Four Spheres of Love

Worlds of Experiences and Responsibilities

Each sphere of love is defined by a certain set of partnership relations—the interplay of complementary roles between particular significant others. The son or daughter interacts with the parents, the sister with the brother, the husband with the wife, the father or mother with the child.[11] Each sphere opens access to receiving care and wisdom from the complementary partner; thus the parent-child relationship has immense influence on the children's character and social development.[12] Each sphere also provides lessons in how to give to the other. One study suggests that young siblings through their cooperative play help each other grasp relational concepts that help them in later life to discern deception and make moral decisions.[13] Thus each sphere of love sets up a structure to foster an individual's maturity of heart and conscience.[14] As psychiatrist Frank Pittman quipped, "Never forget the end product of child raising is not the child...but the parent."[15]

The four spheres—the child's sphere of love, the sibling's sphere of love, the spouse's sphere of love and the parent's sphere of love—build one upon another, like expanding concentric circles, as the heart grows throughout life. The later ones call for more developed character and relational skills than the earlier ones. Each sphere includes the ones before, and facility in previous ones aids in mastery of those upcoming. Research that looks at the impact of family relations as "internal working models" reinforces the idea that the quality of early relationships with parents or caregivers has broad implications in character and social development across one's life,[16] impacting romantic relationships,[17] mental and emotional health,[18] and resiliency and hardiness,[19] thus underscoring the foundational nature of this earliest sphere.

Though some roles are entered into simultaneously—an infant can be born both a son and a brother; a young woman may become a wife and soon after an expectant mother—from a developmental standpoint, each sphere has its "season" that unfolds in a sequence. The season of a particular sphere is the time when it is the developmental focus in life. Prior to puberty, for example, the youngster is preoccupied with the child's sphere, and this sphere is central to his development. His primary complementary partners are his parents. The sibling's sphere comes into prominence on the heels of the child's, when siblings and then peers become the absorbing focal point of affection and moral influence.

In late adolescence or young adulthood, romantic attraction exerts its pull to move the individual towards the world of the spouse's sphere, which begins with marriage. The star attraction and impetus for character growth at that stage of life then becomes the husband or wife. The experience of parenting sons and daughters becomes the focus of moral growth through much of adulthood in the parent's sphere of love. Thus, the spheres of love can be seen as representing relational—and moral—milestones in the human life span.

Yet passing into the next sphere of love does not mean the prior one no longer develops. The spheres impact each other in a dynamic way. Significant developments in one sphere—a sibling's wedding or a parent's funeral, for example—can deepen and refresh the other spheres. Thus, after a year of marriage, 23-year-old Francine finds herself with a broader perspective on life that helps her to empathize with both her mother and her married sister in a new way. Experience in the spouse's sphere has enriched her participation in the child and sib-

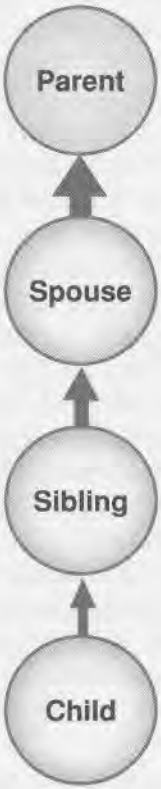

Figure 10: Each Sphere Builds on the Previous One

ling's spheres. Indeed, the scope of growth of heart and wisdom in all of the spheres is endless.

Ethical Implications of the Spheres

A sphere of love includes both a role and a norm. These norms consist of the implicit responsibilities and rewards—attitudes, etiquette, competencies and virtues—associated with the role at the center of each sphere. When the individual commits to a given role and embraces the ethical norm implicit in it, then he or she can be said to be fulfilling the moral challenges of the sphere. Culture specifies the ideal norm for these roles: the perfect wife, the model son, and the exemplary father. Details may differ among cultures, yet beneath this diversity lies a common denominator of caring. For example, in Asia an adult child is expected to move his aging parents into his home, while in the West he may choose to live nearby to help his parents fulfill their wish to live independently as long as possible. In either case, however, the son who is devoted to helping his parents is prized.

On the other hand, the man who renounces his parents or the woman who cuts off her brother and only sibling has effectively put participation in the child's and sibling's sphere—and the enjoyment of its bounty—on hold. In the same vein, the mere fact of giving birth or fathering a child does not denote growth in the parent's sphere. Growth only occurs when the father or mother—biological or adoptive—is actually nurturing the child through taking responsibility and making the investment of love. Similarly, the rewards of the spouse's sphere are available only when the couple commits to each other as husband and wife. This sets up the conditions that bring about the growth and enrichment characteristic of that sphere. As psychotherapist Harville Hendrix asserts in regard to

the conjugal sphere, "All the ingredients necessary for full growth and healing... are possible only in marriage... [not] open-ended, precarious relationships."[20] (See Chapter 19)

It still must be acknowledged that the act of conceiving a child or giving birth, even if the child miscarries or the baby is put up for adoption, certainly leaves an indelible imprint on the mother and often on the father. Even without becoming parents they register some of the feelings and sense some of the responsibilities, even unconsciously, comprising the parental sphere. Likewise, the intense emotional bonding of an insecure sexual relationship can bring some of the psychological impact associated with the spouse's sphere. Still, without making a lifelong commitment to each other, the couple ends up with many of the expectations of the conjugal sphere—consciously or not—yet without all of its advantages. This is similar to eating a fruit that is not yet ripe.

Ecology of Love

In their hearts, people desire the fullness of the four spheres experience, either in actuality or by proxy. This is why the only child latches onto her cousin as her "older sister," the widower joins a dance club, the infertile couple adopts a son, and the "empty nest" seniors find themselves welcoming neighborhood children into their home and acting as substitute grandparents.

The ideal conditions for inner growth require participation in all four spheres throughout one's lifetime. Researcher Willard Hartup classifies sibling and peer relationships as "symmetrically or horizontally structured" in contrast to adult-child relationships, which are "asymmetrically or vertically structured."[21] These vertical and horizontal relationships taken together create a greater ecological system that encompasses all four spheres. They surround the individual with the support and stimulation he or she needs to internally grow. When this ecology has an imbalance—when one or more relational direction is empty—individuals are left vulnerable and often try to fill the need in a way that is ultimately false and unhealthy.

Family Ecology

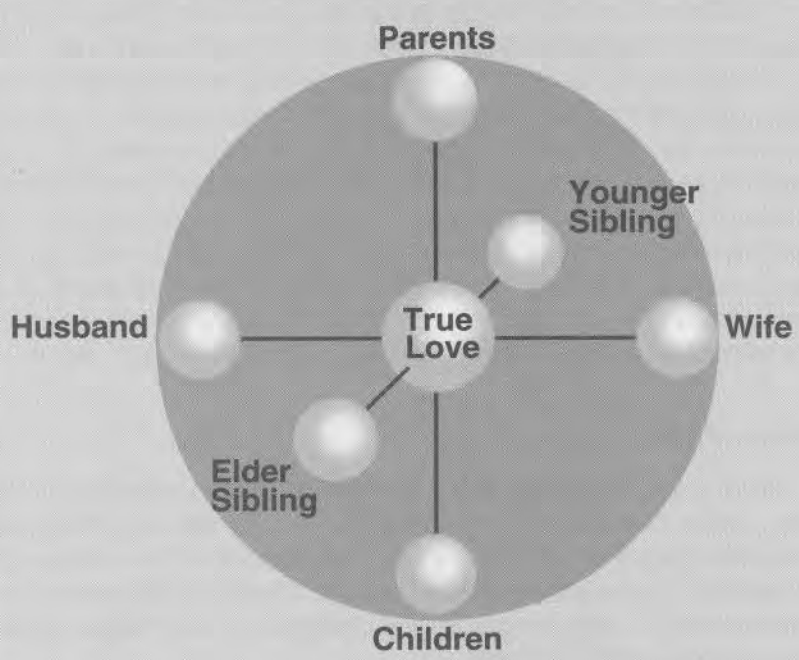

Figure 11: Six Directions of Family Relationships

When the vertical and horizontal relationships of the four spheres of love are depicted in three dimensions, the family system can be characterized as having six directions: up and down, right and left, and front and rear. Above are parents and grandparents; below are children and grandchildren. On the left and right are husband and wife respectively. In front are elder siblings and cousins; to the rear are younger siblings and cousins. Ideally, what flows through and binds the system together is a commitment to true love, to serve and care for one another.

Which spheres comprise this ecosystem depend upon the age of the individual and his or her stage of life. For example, 14-year-old Elena is in the child's and sibling's spheres. When she has a good number of complementary partners for these spheres—parents, grandparents and other elders on the one hand, and brothers, sisters and perhaps cousins on the other—she enjoys a wealth of possibilities in terms of receiving and giving love and developing her character. These are growth-enhancing relationships for Elena's stage of life. Jon, 27, is likely to have different relational needs. He may be more fulfilled and challenged to grow by being fully involved in the spouse and parent's spheres. He would thrive by having a good mate and a child or children as reciprocal partners. This would be in addition to the parents and siblings with whom he continues to have a relationship. Thus Jon's ecology of love includes all four spheres, and the absence of any of them—especially the conjugal sphere—may be felt as emptiness in his life.

Social Extensions of the Spheres

Since children and adolescents thrive when they have many seniors above them and juniors below them to interact with, as well as those on their same level, the family ecosystem is supplemented by the relationships outside the family that replicate the basic pattern. Seniors can include anyone from their grandparents to a student tutor from the next higher grade, and juniors can range from their infant siblings to the new co-worker at their after-school job.

These wider social relationships are simply extensions of these prototypical family loves.[22] Being in the subordinate, follower or student role has similarities to occupying the son and daughter sphere, just as acting in the role of the superior, leader or teacher corresponds to the parental sphere. The social extension of the sphere of siblings is the world of peer relationships—between friends, colleagues and co-workers. However, the spouse's sphere has no social counterpart. The intimacy between husband and wife is so encompassing and exclusive that it is unlike any other relationship.[23]

Skills and qualities of heart and conscience gained within these family spheres of love spell greater facility in their social extensions. This works the other way around as well. The young soccer coach is cul-

tivating traits that will prove useful when he becomes a father. The girl who lifeguards with a male colleague all summer may gain insights that translate into a better relationship with her brother.

Helping Character Growth Keep Up

If every sphere of love has its season of focus, each season also has its basic developmental tasks to master—ideally before moving on to the next one. A youngster does well to learn certain lessons, acquire certain virtues, and gain certain skills in her relationship with her parents and other elders that will enhance her ability to better relate to her older sister and friends when they come into center stage. Likewise, accomplishing a satisfactory degree of success with her siblings and peers would serve her well before moving on to an exclusive relationship with a future mate. Finally, it follows that she achieves a certain foundation of harmony in her relationship with her husband before going on to enter the absorbing world of parenting a child.

Real life, of course, is often far from ideal. The imperative of physical maturation brings many individuals into the fraternal and especially the conjugal and parental spheres while their inner maturity and the necessary competencies are still wanting. This causes many difficulties: the mother who prefers to be her daughter's best friend rather than her parent, the husband who feels more comfortable treating his wife like a kid sister instead of a spouse, the adult daughter who wants to be her aging dad's little girl rather than a caregiver. Even if they are responsible and are doing all the "right" things, they may find themselves lacking in the heart's resources of genuine concern and compassion, the kind that animate growth in relationships and arise only from experiences of giving and receiving unselfish love. They may lack the ability to make themselves emotionally vulnerable, as relationships in the more advanced spheres of love call for. This is the guilt-driven wife and mother who demands perfection in herself and everyone around her. This is a father working 16-hour days for his wife and sons who nevertheless cannot emotionally connect with them.

Unless someone or something intervenes, the pattern of relationally immature people relating to relationally immature people tends to multiply, causing unnecessary heartbreak and moral difficulty. Families tend to perpetuate negative patterns of relationship if they are

not in the process of consciously constructing positive ones.

Education can help. The character education movement is one response to youths' needs in the child's and sibling's spheres, helping to support parental efforts to inculcate respect and responsibility. Marriage enrichment and education are productive as well. Groups such as Marriage Encounter, Marriage Savers and Relationship Enhancement, among many others, allow couples to repair and correct their shortcomings from the earlier spheres of love and thus bring greater wisdom and compassion to the marital relationship. The growing men's movement, represented by groups such as the ManKind Project, holds programs that bring deep self-renewal to men whose scars from early lives have hindered them from being responsible and loving husbands and fathers.

Ethicist James Q. Wilson makes the point that the family "is a continuous locus of reciprocal obligations that constitutes an unending school for moral instruction."[24] Through family roles in the spheres of love, the individual expands his or her heart and conscience. Each sphere is a potential gold mine of inner enrichment. Understanding of the four spheres of love and the life tasks intrinsic to each can guide parents and educators about what virtues and social skills are best to encourage at each particular phase of life.

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The Child's Sphere of Love

THE WORLD A SON OR DAUGHTER INHABITS WITH HIS OR her parents is the matrix of moral growth, the context out of which homo sapiens fashion much of what makes them human. The dynamics of this world constitute the child's sphere of love. From the earliest moments of life a child needs, yearns for and expects her parents' loving care. As she musters all her resources to bond with her parents—to imitate as well as captivate her sources of life and love—she is building an internal foundation for relating empathetically and responsibly to others for the rest of her life.[1] The moral influence of the father and mother never ceases, but becomes more internalized and indirect as the son or daughter grows.[2]

Other significant adults also exert influence within the child's mind and heart. Grandparents, aunts, uncles, neighbors and especially teachers are luminaries in the child's universe. Words of praise or rebuke fall from such persons' lips with thunderous impact. To a child, a teacher is someone to be adored and emulated. This yearning upward toward mentoring adults, although sometimes disconcerting to them, is a natural endowment of the child's sphere of love and facilitates moral growth. Better understanding of the heart of a son or daughter can deepen educators' appreciation of their role in loco parentis in the moral upbringing of youth.

Development in the child's sphere of love is not limited to early parent-child interactions. The old saying, "A son is a son till he takes a wife, a daughter's a daughter the rest of her life" is only half true. A son is a son for the rest of his life, too. The child's sphere of love extends throughout adulthood, offering new horizons as a child's wisdom and understanding of his parents' hearts deepens. What is more, the son or daughter's relationship to the parents colors his or her adult relationships with all authority figures and elders.

Moral Growth in the Child's Sphere

Eye contact, physical handling and caressing, tone of voice, laughter and gentleness on the part of the parents, especially the mother, give the infant reams of information about what other human beings are like. When his or her needs are met, the infant is reassured that the universe is a benevolent place. Psychologist Erik Erikson eloquently describes the importance of trustworthiness in the child's relational world and its impact throughout life.[3] From the foundational experience of trust, a worldview begins to emerge: "Others are good and loving. I am safe." This sets the stage for the individual to express goodness, hope and love in response.[4] The child's sphere of love begins the process, step by step, of the growth of other-centered love. It is the dawn of relationships and morality.

It is widely accepted among researchers that a warm, caring parent-child relationship aids in young people's moral development.[5] Secure attachment relationships are associated with healthy development,[6] empathy,[7] intelligence[8] and social-perspective taking.[9] James Q. Wilson describes the growth of conscience thus: "Conscience, like sympathy, fairness, and self-control, arises...out of our innate desire for attachment.... People with the strongest conscience will be...those with the most powerfully developed affiliation."[10] As the child's first attachments are to his parents, the parent-child bond is key to moral development.

Attachment also enhances the growth of heart. Dierdre Lovechy found that "developing the capacity to follow the parent's lead allows the child to experience empathy."[11] The ability to empathize—to recognize and feel another person's pain, suffering or joy as one's own—is the basis of the capacity to give love, take responsibility and have fulfilling relationships with others. Empathy emerges even in very young

children who have a warm bond of attachment with a parent. Often, these are the children seen comforting others in day care or kindergarten situations. They are able to identify with and sympathize with a playmate's loneliness, and take steps to alleviate it.

Modern Psychology Affirms Ancient Wisdom

In Confucian philosophy, responsiveness to one's parents is considered the "root" or "fountainhead" of human-heartedness or *jen*. *Jen* is often defined as the ability to relate to others in a kindly, benevolent, altruistic and compassionate way. Having *jen* is crucial to being a fully realized human being. Mencius taught that if a person loves his parents, he would be kind to people in general and caring toward everything in the world.[12]

From Responding to Responsibility

Over time, the young child's responsiveness to the parents ripens into taking responsibility. Out of love for the parents, the child obeys. He or she learns to control impulses, especially aggressive ones, because this pleases the parents.[13] Researcher Selma Fraiberg writes, "There are obligations in love even for little children. Love is a given, but it is also earned. At every step of the way in development, a child is obliged to give up territories of his self-love in order to earn parental love and approval."[14] To continue to earn the parents' highly desired approbation, the child must take increasingly age-appropriate responsibility, such as taking care of her things, cleaning up and preventing messes, dressing herself, doing her schoolwork, and behaving respectfully toward others and property. These are legitimate claims parents can make on their children's love. In turn, as parents become confident of their child's character and trustworthiness, they feel free to give them greater responsibility.

Inch by inch, step by step, year by year, the parents' voices and instructions transmute from something outside of the child to some-

thing within. In increasingly independent situations from the parents, the child is able to say, "Inside of me, I know it is right (or wrong)." The child is now on her way to becoming an autonomous moral person. This development has been described as a five-stage process. First, the emotional bond with the child's parents pairs his sense of security and empathic responsiveness with a sense of moral obligation; next, he incorporates parental rules; then he develops an understanding of how empathy modifies strict rule following; he chooses ideals and idols that reflect earlier learning in primary relationships; and finally, he comes to visualize himself as a moral standard-bearer or teacher.[15]

Lessons learned in the child's sphere of love are the foundation for relationships in the next sphere of love—the sibling's sphere. Social and moral competencies will be further developed in relating with siblings and peers as the child practices truthfulness, sharing, taking turns, playing fair, learning not to hit, and respecting others' property. Moreover, children in the sibling's sphere do not "leave" the children's sphere; they still need the guidance and assistance of parents, mentors and other elders.[16]

Delayed Moral Growth

The sad histories of neglected and abandoned children have testified to the impairment that can result from an impoverished relationship with parents. In the 1940s, psychologist William Goldfarb did a study of seventy children who had been raised for the first three years of their lives in institutions. He found that they were inordinately cruel to one another and to animals and were severely lacking in impulse control.[17] Fraiberg, who studied abandoned babies, children raised in institutions, children shifted from foster home to foster home, and children torn from their families by war, remarks, "These children who had never experienced love, who had never belonged to anyone, and were never bonded to anyone except on the most primitive basis...were unable in later years to bind themselves to other people, to love deeply, to feel deeply, to experience tenderness, grief or shame."[18]

Yet even when parents are unable to provide the nurturing love needed for the child's moral growth, other adults can and do figure prominently in constructing or reconstructing a child's inner universe. The care of a responsible adult—a concerned teacher or coach, for

instance—can repair a child's injured heart, helping even an at-risk child to rise to the occasion and succeed.

The Child's Sphere in Later Life

When the pull of peers becomes strong, when a marriage prospect comes into focus, when a baby of their own stakes a claim on their heart—these are challenging moments when older sons and daughters have to negotiate new ways of relating to their parents, based on deeper understanding and appreciation. The young child's accommodation to parental authority gives way to stormy and difficult relations as youth seek to define their identity, emotional boundaries and ideological vistas.[19] Socially, young adults are forging their own relationship to the larger society and world. As family moorings loosen, individuals may become emotionally tossed at sea, experiencing great dips and heights. Early positive bonds with parents can remain influential throughout adulthood, offering a secure base from which to make other significant relationships,[20] but the process of differentiation from parents is fraught with perils.

"Where do I belong? How do I fit in? What part of me is my parents and what part is me? Who am I anyway?"—these are the crucial questions of adolescence. Having attained what Piaget termed "formal operational thinking," teenagers search for meaning and imagine different ways of being.[21] Hence, adolescents may question the values his or her parents and society have taught and be quick to point out inconsistencies and hypocrisies.[22]

It is only too easy for individuals to separate from the parents too reactively, distancing themselves too far in order to prove their independence, as Jacob, a Kansas insurance agent, did with his father. "I didn't even realize what I was doing until the old man had a heart attack," confides Jacob. "I pretty much cut him off after college. Never communicated much. But really I was always playing to him in my head, trying to get his respect. I was afraid of how connected to him I still was, so I kept pretending I didn't care. When he almost died, I realized I'd gone too far. To really be my own man, I realized, I had to acknowledge how much I cared what he thought but not be totally driven by it."

Appropriate differentiation from the parents—meanwhile retaining and expanding the deep and special bond of child's love—is a major life task. It especially affects a person's marriage, where loyalty to the new bond with someone outside of the family of origin compels artful negotiation of the relationship with parents, with the parents of the spouse, and in accordance with the needs of the new family being formed.

Mature Devotion

The moral content of a child's love for the parents becomes more evident as the son or daughter gets older. Adult sons and daughters are moved to demonstrate filial love by acts of gratitude and service: the daughter who names her firstborn after her father, the son who builds a house for his mother, the brother and sister who take turns caring for the aging parents.

"We never know the love of the parent till we become parents ourselves." This observation by Henry Ward Beecher highlights how filial love evolves through growing and facing the responsibilities of an adult. New comprehension and sympathy for the parents may come as the son or daughter becomes a spouse, a breadwinner, a parent, a middle-aged caretaker of others, and a responsible community member. When children express their gratitude in later life for the good values and investment of time and loving effort that helped them build their character, parents feel the greatest pride. This mature heart of filial devotion says, "Thank you for giving me the foundation to create myself as a good person."

The moment may come when the grown-up child may have to literally change the diapers of the infirm parent, clear up old debts, settle the estate, and take on the role of patriarch or matriarch of the family while urging the parent to rest and do less. At such times, the son or daughter assumes an almost parental heart to his or her own parent. The child's sphere of love has come full circle.

Mature filial devotion is displayed by sons and daughters who seek to preserve and augment their parents' legacy. Sculptor Korczak Ziolkowski, who created the portraits on Mt. Rushmore, accepted a commission in 1947 to carve a massive tribute to the great Native American chief, Crazy Horse, out of a mountain in South Dakota. He devoted decades to the project but was able to complete only a por-

tion before he died in 1982. However, his family comforted him before his death by committing their lives to carry out his promise. Seven of his 10 sons and daughters, and some of his grandchildren, now labor to bring this formidable project to completion.[23]

A child brings his parents pleasure even when he or she surpasses their accomplishments. At the time when Martin Luther King, Jr. was the rising star of the civil rights movement, an old friend of the family wrote an exuberant letter to King's father, who was a civic leader in his own right in Atlanta's black community: "I've heard you've got a son who can preach circles around you every time he mounts the pulpit. If so, it's an honor to you."[24] King, Sr. did see his son's accomplishments that way and was overwhelmed with joy when his son won the Nobel Peace Prize.

This is child's love in its optimal form—becoming a person who makes his or her parents proud. The Eastern tradition as taught by Confucius calls such child's love "filial piety." Confucius said, "True filial piety consists in successfully carrying out the unfinished work of our forefathers and transmitting their achievements to posterity." This was echoed in the Western poetic tradition by Thomas Macaulay when he wrote:

> And how can man die better than facing fearful odds
> For the ashes of his fathers and the temples of his gods.

The Child's Sphere in Society

Experiences as a son or daughter have a bearing on performing well in societal roles where one is in the position of a subordinate. A person's ability to follow instructions, humble himself, receive guidance, and support legitimate authority was first learned through his relationship with his parents. Conversely, the employee with "a chip on his shoulder" is likely to have residual resentment and mistrust towards his parents, and he projects it upon any authority he encounters.

Those who have developed a trusting rapport with their parents do not fear that supporting and serving will diminish them. They are the ones who often bring out the best in their teachers, bosses and other superiors. They may even come to inherit their positions. When Charles, a university student, realized that his microbiology professor had

authored the college textbook, he became a fixture at his lab, auditing classes, asking questions, even staying after class to clean up. At first the cantankerous professor rebuffed him, but he persisted. "He scares people away so he can stick to his research, but I felt at home with him," says Charles. "He reminded me of my cranky uncle whom I won over as a kid." The two men spent more and more time together. When his professor needed a research assistant for a major project, Charles was a natural choice. His skill in establishing rapport with his professor in a father-son type of relationship stemmed from his successful experiences in the child's sphere of love.

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The Sibling's Sphere of Love

THROWN TOGETHER BY FATE, SIBLINGS CAN BE THE BEST OF FRIENDS and the worst of enemies during the rough and tumble years of growing up together. In this intimate yet involuntary relationship, siblings are both allies and rivals, bound by the joys and sorrows of a shared family experience. Yet as time goes by, many siblings honor their relationships by labeling them relationships of choice: "You're my sister but also my friend," they tell each other; or they compare relationships of choice with this obligatory relationship: "I love my friend like a brother." In later life the very existence of a sibling, even if geographically far away, is a comfort and a boon.[1]

Daniel, a man from Michigan who is now in his 50s, recounted typical features of a sibling relationship: "When we were kids, my older brother Lance decided that if I wanted to tag along with him and his friends to the lake, I would have to know how to swim. They said they'd teach me when we got there. Well, they took me up high on the rocks and then, laughing, threw me in the lake. It was deep and cold and I had to swim or drown! I started dog paddling like crazy, and from there I taught myself." Surprisingly, the none-too-gentle ministrations of his older brother left no sense of acrimony. Daniel said, "Oh, heck, I knew he'd rescue me if I really got in trouble down there. Lance was always there for me. In fact, if there's anyone in the world I'd want to be in a tough situation with, it would be Lance." Most siblings feel similarly.

Like Daniel, they know they can count on each other in an emergency.[2]

Yet sibling relationships are among the most neglected areas of people's lives, and adults often long for improved relationships with their siblings. Like all relationships, sibling relationships require effort. They do not happen automatically; nor are they immune to the principles that govern all good relationships. By consciously investing in this significant relationship, people can be deeply enriched. Competence in the sibling's sphere provides essential foundations to enhance all subsequent relationships, and the sibling bond itself can take on increasing significance as time goes by.

Growth in Other-Centered Love

From the moment a sibling arrives on the scene, the dynamic of a family changes dramatically and forever. The child who used to be the sole focus of his parents' attention must share his or her parents' time, resources and affection with another. He or she may have to share a room, toys, games and activities. Thus, when the sibling sphere of love opens, it naturally pulls the older child toward greater other-centeredness.[3]

The older child has shed degrees of self-centeredness all along to respond to and keep the approbation of the most significant others—the parents. Now he or she is called upon to not only look upward toward the approval of the parents but to look to the side at the person next to him or her—the new little brother or sister.[4] It is an advance in other-centered love. Studies show that a warm and supportive sibling relationship fosters empathy[5] and prosocial behavior.[6]

Conversely, a younger sibling is born sharing. The older sibling has had a head start on garnering the attention of the parents and has greater command of the physical resources of the home. A younger sibling necessarily sheds degrees of self-centeredness in order to form an affiliation with the more powerful older one. He or she naturally looks to the older sibling for guidance on ways to be.

Parents help an older child become more other-centered by showing him continued affection while including him in the care of the new sibling. Many children respond to this with alacrity, eager to be of service. Older children who successfully manage the transition from only child to sibling are those who see the little interloper as someone who

needs their care. They can experience pride, praise from their parents and a sense of accomplishment by helping out with younger brothers and sisters, even in little ways.

The sibling's sphere of love thus constructs the foundation for the future sphere of parental love. Pediatrician Benjamin Spock said, "One of the ways in which a young child tries to get over the pain of having a younger rival is to act as if he himself were no longer a child, competing in the same league as the baby, but as if he were a third parent." By encouraging the older child in this, "the parents can help a child to actually transform resentful feelings into cooperativeness and genuine altruism."[7] Many older children go on to the "helping" professions because of their benevolent experiences in caring for younger siblings. Such family experiences help people relate well to juniors and subordinates in other professions as well.

Mediating Sibling Rivalry

Young siblings often perceive each other as rivals in the central love relationship of their lives—their relationship with their parents. Parents are thus key in mediating sibling relationships.[8] It is not enough for parents to shower affection on each child. They have to understand how to affirm each child's value in a manner consistent with their naturally unequal positions as elder and younger. They see to it that while the older siblings command more respect and have more privileges, they also have more responsibilities.

There is already a hint of pride in the term "my older brother," and older siblings can enjoy this added respect as well as the extra "perks" that come with their position. They have the confidence and ear of the parents, for they share more in the parents' concerns. They may have considerably more freedom, a larger allowance, and may be in charge of their own study and recreation time. They may be allowed to go more places alone or accompanied by friends.

At the same time, older siblings shoulder more responsibility. Their parents ask them to watch the younger ones when they would rather be doing something else. Then, if things go wrong with a younger sibling, it is they who bear the brunt of their parents' disapproval. Older siblings also teach the younger ones how to swim, ride a bike or swing a bat. Studies confirm that older siblings are effective role models for younger ones, because they are often viewed as a respected source of

knowledge.[9] If the older sibling takes on duties commensurate with his status, the younger ones feel protected and secure.[10] They are likely to respond with the adoration only a younger sibling can bestow.

Traditional societies emphasize family cooperation in shared tasks and tend to have less sibling rivalry than affluent societies where the prevailing ethic is one of equality, individualism and competition.[11] This norm continues with adult siblings, as they participate in the thick net of village relationships. When the cultural norms stress interdependence and loyalty, children feel natural about admonishing, protecting and helping one another. When Jim Barrall was in Ponce, Ecuador, he bought ice cream for a needy child named Heidi. But Heidi ate only half of the small dish. "I thought she either was full or didn't like the flavor," Jim thought. "But she told me she was saving the other half to give to her brother. Here was a child who had so little and yet could carry half a cup of melting ice cream home to her brother because she had something to give and share with him."[12]

In Asia, this distinction between the roles of elder and younger siblings is codified in the norms of the culture. The eldest son receives a greater share of the inheritance, but he is also expected to bear greater responsibility for the family's welfare. Younger children are expected to show deference to their elder brothers and sisters, but they can expect guidance, care and leadership from them. Such family norms create a context for harmony.

Sharon Goodman, the principal of a small private school in New York State, once worked overseas at a middle school for the arts in Seoul, Korea, where she served as a houseparent in a dormitory that mixed Asian and Western youngsters. The performing arts being what they are, there was a great deal of jealousy and competition. The staff recognized the need to instill a "brother-sister" mentality in the children. They adopted a policy that all students had to address each other based on age, using the honorific titles for older brothers and sisters embedded in the Korean language and used in Korean households. The Korean language provides a more formal way of addressing an elder than addressing a peer, even if the age difference is only slight. Elder boys are called "Oppa," which means "respected older brother," and elder girls are called "Onni," which means "respected older sister." The policy worked almost as soon as it was instituted. Peace came to the dorms. Rather than needing to lord it over their younger classmates, the older students felt secure in the respect shown to them. They began

to coach and protect their juniors, even acting as mediators for them. Feeling protected and cared for, the younger students felt less need to assert themselves aggressively.

By successfully mirroring family traditions, this school improved peer relationships and elevated the moral atmosphere. Schools that encourage mentoring of younger students by older students are mirroring this positive family tradition. For their part, families can recover the lost tradition of a subtle hierarchy between siblings that balances privilege with responsibility.

Life Lessons from the Sibling's Sphere

The sibling sphere of love is relationship training for life. Moral development takes place through settling the issues of right and wrong that frequently arise between siblings—disputes over the use of possessions, taking turns, physical and verbal aggression and other moral issues. Even a bad older role model can help a younger sibling decide to go about life differently, and a good older role model will usually have a positive effect.[13]

Sibling relationships are also training for living in a world of diversity. Though born of the same parents, siblings often differ from one another widely in temperament, personality, tastes, preferences, talents and even political leanings. Living amidst a large or extended family provides training in tolerance, charity and acceptance of differences. It helps engrain the lesson that although people differ, they are fundamentally related and may still treat one another with respect and appreciation.

Cora, a woman in her thirties, says, "I'm a conservative and my sister is a liberal. We vote entirely differently and are on the opposite sides of the fence on most issues.... One time when we had an argument over politics, my sister called me up later and said in a choking voice, 'No matter what, you're still my sister.' That pledge of loyalty meant a lot to me. I've even come to see the other side as a necessary part of our nation's conversation."

Perhaps the most important lessons learned in the sibling's sphere of love are those that will aid in the later spheres of marriage and parenting. The care of younger siblings obviously develops parenting skills, yet living with siblings is an all-around humanizing experience and an

asset for future marriage as well. Opposite-sex siblings see one another in a different light than they see their peers, whom they may romanticize. Brothers see sisters in their dishabille, in their tempers, when they are sick and when they are struggling with homework. Sisters see brothers in defeat at sports, vulnerable to other girls, and after they have messed up the bathroom. It is good practice for living on a day-to-day basis with someone in marriage.

Carl, a 21-year-old man from Kingston, New York, said that he learned a lot about women from his sisters. "Especially, I learned the chocolate trick. When one of them is really being cranky and nasty, I know it's her time of the month. I also know that chocolate helps get rid of cramps. When one of them starts acting that way, I go out and buy a box of chocolates for her. That wins her over and makes her feel good. My sisters say the girl who marries me is going to be a lucky girl. 'We trained you real good,' they tell me."

Sharing is a crucial lesson of the sibling's sphere of love that is invaluable practice for marriage. Marriage experts comment upon the amount of anger that is generated in marriage due to the incessant need to share. Like living with a sibling, living with a spouse requires constant sharing of the family's resources—allocating time, negotiating the family budget, using the same bedroom, bathroom, and taking turns with the family car. Some degree of privacy and autonomy is always sacrificed; some degree of self-centeredness has to be given over through sheer necessity. Learning to share with and accommodate the needs of siblings can help one have a tolerance for the day in and day out sharing of marriage.

Siblings teach deeper lessons, too. Jack, a man from Kentucky who had been a pest of a younger brother to his two older sisters said, "My sisters taught me what unconditional love was. Sometimes they were so kind, even after I'd done something awful to them, like put a frog in their room or read their diaries. Oh, they complained to my parents a lot, but when you've done that many bad things to someone and then the next Christmas they give you a super present signed 'Love, your sister,' you sort of melt. They taught me what forgiveness is."

A Bridge to the World of Friends

From the age of about eight years old, the race is on between parents and peers for influence. Parents are still prime movers in the preadolescent's universe, and their influence will be lasting and strongly felt. But by age twelve, peers rival and begin to overtake parental influences. By the time the child has reached puberty, friends are the greatest interest and greatest challenge.

The adolescent tasks of differentiation and integration require that the old affiliation with parents and the family of origin change in order to define the new person. New bonds with peers must be forged. Yet the old connections still call for allegiance and the new ones are sometimes problematic. Both yearnings—to be independent and yet included—are hitting teenagers at the same time, with magnum force. Add sexual awakening and the complexities of dealing with the opposite sex, and they have their hands full. No wonder they sometimes slam doors, sass back to their parents, storm out of the house and spend hours talking to one another on the phone.

Siblings serve as a bridge between the protective vertical relationship with parents and the need to explore horizontal relationships with peers. Sibling relationships, as an interim step, retain some slight vertical structure yet resemble peer relationships in many ways and serve many of the same functions. As sibling relationships are directly mediated by the parents, they are less risky than peer relationships and good practice for them. Without this practice, young people may be hard put to graduate from the strongly vertical, protective relationship of parent and child to the strongly horizontal and independent relationships of friendships and eventual marriage. The sibling's sphere of love, segueing into friendships and good peer relationships, is an important intermediate step that prepares a young person for relationships outside the family.

Siblings can provide needed familial support for venturing out into the world. Having a sibling in the same school can take some of the painful edge off peer relationships and their risks of rejection. "Even though I always acted like my brother was a total pain, it was good to see him at his locker and feel like our family was part of the school," says Jean, from Arizona. "When my friends started asking about him and saying how cool he was, I even started feeling proud and more confident myself. In addition, when I made the honor roll, he said, 'Well,

now they know everyone in our family isn't stupid,' because his grades really weren't that great. It helped us both feel like we belonged."

Friendships

Friendships are an extension of sibling relationships, only they involve more choice, independence and equality. Friends take over where siblings leave off. Like sibling relationships, they offer ample opportunities for conflict and the building of conflict-resolving skills. Willard Hartup writes: "Peer relations contribute substantially to both social and cognitive development and to the effectiveness with which we function as adults. Indeed, the single best childhood predictor of adult adaptation is not school grades, and not classroom behavior, but rather the adequacy with which the child gets along with other children. Children who... cannot establish a place for themselves in the peer culture are seriously at risk."[14]

Friendships in childhood have at least four functions that strongly resemble sibling relationships. They provide: 1) emotional resources for having fun and adapting to stress; 2) cognitive resources for problem-solving and knowledge acquisition; 3) contexts in which the basic social skills of communication, cooperation and group entry are acquired or elaborated; and 4) they are forerunners of adult relationships, including relationships in the workplace and marriage—the "passionate friendship."[15]

Living with a roommate, creating camaraderie on the job, joining teams and group activities are all extensions of the sibling's sphere of love. Joining a club or service group can lead to friendships and foster cooperative skills. The club or group serves rather like a "parent"—it is the overarching context for the peer relationships and directs their growth. People working for a common purpose form special bonds that resemble those of siblings. Such experiences may even connect them to the interrelatedness of all people—a sense of the brotherhood of humankind.

Good friendships also provide surrogate sibling experiences for those who had negative ones in their families of origin, or few sibling experiences at all. Joey, a 15-year-old from Arkansas who had no sisters, recounted an experience during a service project in Guatemala: "We were all so tired, we would fall asleep in the bus that took us back to where we were staying each night. I saw this one girl's—Tracy's—face

in the moonlight. She had a boy's haircut and she was very short and not pretty at all. But she looked so innocent sleeping, like a little kid. All she needed was a teddy bear. I felt my heart move and I felt so close to her. Watching the girls sweat and work so hard and get dysentery and go through all we went through on that project, I really discovered something. Girls are human, too." Because of this surrogate sibling experience, Joey gained a new perspective and respect for members of the opposite sex that ordinarily would have come through living with opposite-sex siblings.

Wrongful peer relationships, however, hamper development in this important sphere of love. The unfortunate trend of modern times is to jump from the child's sphere of love right into a physical relationship that more properly characterizes the spouse's sphere of love—a sexual relationship—without reaping the benefits of the sibling's sphere of love and its extension, peer friendships. The onset of sexual relations is occurring at ever younger ages, among children as young as ten, eleven and twelve. However, such sexual love is by definition love between two undeveloped people who are constitutionally unable to answer one another's needs. By skipping spheres of development, people do themselves no service. Unprepared for the emotional depths unleashed by a sexual relationship, underdeveloped children and teenagers flounder, hurting themselves and others. (See Chapter 24) Pre-teens and teens who understand the value of the sibling's sphere and its non-sexual friendships improve their chances of enjoying an intimate and rewarding marriage in later life.

The Sibling's Sphere in Later Life

Pursuing education, marriage and a career often pulls brothers and sisters out of contact with each other. Sometimes parents provide the main link, giving news about the siblings to each other and facilitating reunions. More fortunate are siblings who stay close geographically and maintain warm friendships. They provide invaluable support, extra financial reserves, and the kinds of allegiances and alliances that make responsible adulthood easier. Being part of a network of giving and receiving among siblings gives people pride, a sense of connection, and challenges them to meet the needs of others in unique adult ways. Research affirms that a link with siblings preserves a sense of

well-being in middle and late life, even if actual contact is infrequent. Strong feelings and shared memories remain emotionally significant.[16]

For instance, adult siblings are the aunts and uncles of one another's children—important if underrated roles. Anyone with teenage children can attest to the need for good avuncular figures in their sons and daughters' lives to do what they cannot do. They are grateful to their siblings who play this valuable role in their children's upbringing. Avuncular roles thus naturally enhance relationships among adult siblings. They are another way for adult siblings to invest in their relationship, and to cultivate their heart and character in the process.

Taking an avuncular position to one's nephew or niece is itself a growth-enhancing and rewarding role in its own right. Uncles and aunts can help adolescents fulfill their particular need to differentiate from their parents and assess them objectively, weighing their opinions against those of other trusted adults. Frank Pittman observes, "Aunts and uncles are called to offer alternate realities to children."[17] Because they do not have the full burden of the parents' responsibility, uncles and aunts have less anxiety about outcomes. They can be freer about their honest feelings and thoughts. "With my nieces and nephews I could be myself rather than try to be whatever I thought a parent should be," notes Pittman. "At times I have liked them better than I have my own children; I've often felt I was a better friend to them."

The task of caring for aging parents usually falls to siblings later in life as well, calling for planning, assessment and sharing. Caring for and burying parents, and settling the parental estate often bring siblings into close contact to accomplish common goals,[18] and revitalizes the unique bonds they share. They are the longest survivors of the childhood family, the corroborators and keepers of family memories.[19] Loretta, a woman from Florida in her sixties, recounted: "In the end, it was just my brother Glen and I who placed the headstone on my father's property. Glen's wife had broken her hip; the kids had a gas leak in their car; someone else had a crisis at work they couldn't leave. It was just us, brother and sister, all alone on the property of our parents, where we'd grown up. It seemed very fitting somehow." After years of geographical separation and hardly seeing each other during the busy years of raising their own families, these siblings determined over their father's gravestone to start seeing each other several times a year. They felt, with their parents gone, they were each other's last link to their origins.

Brothers and sisters offer challenges and support that foster the growth of heart and character. Sibling relationships are foundational for peer relationships in the larger world; at the same time they form a particular bond that can increase in meaning and significance over a lifetime and serves as an important repository of a family's emotional legacy. The sibling's sphere of love is an important stage in life's journey, providing important lessons in relationships and heart that stand one in good stead in marriage, parenting and relating to the world at large.

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The Spouse's Sphere of Love

THE SPOUSE'S SPHERE OF LOVE IS A UNIQUE REALM OF HEART AND and intimacy, distinctly different from any other kind of relationship. The relationship between spouses has dynamics, expectations and responsibilities that foster a specific kind of growth in other-centered love that is unattainable through other means. No other relationship has the same potential for human oneness, and thus no other relationship entails the same demands for surrender and entrusting of the self to another.

Marriage involves risk—the uncovering of deep relational fears, hopes and expectations. This is why it is often so difficult. To skirt these difficulties and risks, many couples opt to avoid marriage by merely living together. Yet the depth, breadth and tremendous potential for fulfillment in deep, satisfying interaction with one's complementary partner—in mind, heart and body—make the marital relationship unique and irreplaceable. It is worthy of honor and ceremony, as well as community support.

Marriage is a "form," says Elizabeth McAlister in her defense of traditional marriage. It is comparable to the poetic forms of the sonnet or haiku.[1] No one can doubt the power of haiku poetry, which is due in large part to the brevity of its form. The restrictions the form imposes unleash great forces and bestow great meaning on the few words that are said. The poet's artistic power is magnified because of the limits of

the form. Likewise, the mutuality and strength of love is enhanced and deepened by the form of marriage. Its seeming constraints create the conditions for creativity, freedom and emotion that are without equal.

Success in the conjugal sphere of love is predicated in part upon experiences in the child and sibling's spheres of love. Marriage ideally takes place between two mature people, schooled through the challenges of the previous spheres in increasingly other-centered love. Character, moral values[2] and the habit of altruism are basic pillars of a successful and happy marriage. Character education in the younger years can thus help young people prepare for their marital journey.

Growing towards Unconditional Love

The traditional wedding vows reflect the unconditional aspirations of marital love and recognize that it is a lifelong commitment and process: "To have and to hold from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, till death do us part." If a person can love another person day in and day out, under good conditions and bad, in all aspects of the other's being, the love they live out becomes unconditional. Lori Gordon, founder of PAIRS (Practical Application of Intimate Relationship Skills), describes conjugal love as "to feel that you can trust another person with your whole being, your laughter, your tears, your rage, your joy.... Its essence lies in total certainty that your partner is... open to you in body, heart and mind—and knowing that you are accepted and loved for what you really are, and knowing that you don't have to pretend."[3]

Loving a spouse in good times and in bad stretches one's character and capacity to love. As one husband in a long-term marriage said, "You've seen each other in every possible light, the very ugliest and worst and the most evil as well as the most divine and compassionate."[4] This does not mean that the spouse is acceptable no matter how he or she acts. It means that, barring any severe violation, the couple is willing to keep working on becoming closer and more understanding and caring toward one another as time goes by. Indeed, this is the definition of a good marriage endorsed by Marriage Encounter, a successful marriage enrichment program. A marriage is good if the partners are willing to keep working on it. Unconditional love is love that continues to try.

Sociologist Robert Bellah has noted that Americans are "torn between love as an expression of spontaneous inner freedom...and the image of love as a firmly planted, permanent commitment, embodying obligations that transcend the immediate feelings or wishes of the partners."[5] In successful marriages, couples' expectations incline towards the latter ideal. As marriage researcher Blaine J. Fowers points out, all the best techniques for improving marriages "have an ineluctable moral core."[6] It is this moral core that prepares couples for the challenges of parenting, where one is not only voluntarily bound up in another's life and well-being, one is eminently responsible for both.

Thus, the marital partnership is a shared journey that implicitly or explicitly holds before it an ideal of family love. Investment in the relationship and the other person's character growth as mate and parent pays off in increased love and understanding. This is important practice for the parent's sphere of love, when parental investment in a child may not reap visible fruits for many years.

The Challenge of Marital Love

With its thrust towards the unconditional, love in the conjugal sphere is far more genuine and true than its first appearance in the initial phases of dating and courtship. On dates, people put their best foot forward. They are usually freshly showered, dressed in attractive clothes and well-groomed. They have planned to spend money on a fun and interesting event; they are together for a limited amount of time and are on their best behavior. Often, they are still supported by their parents and thus are free of many worries and responsibilities.

In day-to-day married life, however, things are very different. The partners are financially independent and may have to struggle to make ends meet. They are not always at their best: tired and grumpy in the morning or exhausted after a long day at work. They may rarely find time to go out together on fun events; sometimes they cannot afford to. Marriage strips away the dating mask inexorably, and couples are sometimes quite disappointed when they begin to see the other person as a human being full of needs, vulnerabilities, faults, frailties and limitations. They may yearn for the romance of dating again, when everything seemed so perfect.

Nevertheless, a phase of disappointment and disillusionment is natural in the evolution of a marriage. Marital relationships are known

to go through several predictable phrases.[7] Far from signaling that a marriage is in trouble, the disillusionment phase presents the opportunity to create a more authentic relationship and expand the couple's capacities in caring and giving. When couples understand this in advance, they can anticipate these phases and appreciate how these phases can contribute to a distinctive kind of personal growth toward a more highly evolved marital love.

First Phase—Romance or Infatuation

The initial phase of spouse's love has the sweet illusion of blissful oneness and mutual perfection. It is believed that these feelings will last, but they are only a temporary foretaste of the depth of love that becomes possible after the hard work of continual investment in one another and the marriage.

Second Phase—Conflict

With the passage of time, the realities of mutual immaturity and differences invariably break through the initial illusion of perfection. Both sides then have to adjust to each other and to the inevitable conflict, disappointment and anxiety. This phase presents an opportunity for spouses to know each other stripped of all illusions and to love each other as real, flawed human beings.

Immaturity and ignorance can cause couples in this phase to resign themselves to a marriage lacking in intimacy and escape into work, hobbies or their children. Some have an affair or decide to divorce, hoping to regain and sustain that initial phase of romantic love with someone else. The reality is that, should they marry again, such second unions have even higher percentages of divorce than first unions.[8] The way forward for couples in this phase is to make a new commitment to the marriage and labor to realize its initial promise on a higher level.

Third Phase—Recommitment and Cooperation

Wise spouses come to the realization that they must make real personal sacrifices for the sake of each other and the marriage. In this phase they begin to look within to take responsibility for their personal limitations—what they need to change, what they need to heal, and how they need to grow. Over time, a deep, secure intimacy emerges between them, even as they wrestle with old patterns of thought and behavior.

Fourth Phase—Creativity and Service

As their capacity to love grows and develops, couples are often moved from within to share with the world around them, which in turn enriches their relationship. Love in this phase has come to express the authenticity that Fromm described when he said, "Love is an attitude, an orientation of character which determines the relatedness of a person to the world as a whole, not toward one object of love... If I truly love one person, I love all persons, I love the world."[9]

It is due to the very exigencies of living with and for another person in the intensely close conjugal relationship that people can evolve into this higher level of concern and service. One husband of over thirty years described marriage as touching the "love that includes everything and everybody, the love that's universal... everything that is good about connectedness and caring for others."[10]

Gateway to Mature Relationships

A spouse is the gateway to mature relationships with the opposite sex. Since the husband or wife has all the qualities of masculinity or femininity, each spouse can understand the masculine or feminine world from an insider's point of view. Relationships with the opposite sex parent, opposite sex siblings, friends and associates may become easier and clearer as one gets to know and appreciate a spouse. Spouses begin to see each other in the light of many types of male-female relationships, not just that of husband and wife. They sometimes feel like brother and sister, parent and child, best friends, or colleagues. Multifaceted, the marital relationship becomes a source of endless fascination and learning.

Because of the mature character of conjugal love, spouses find themselves on a sympathetic new level with their own parents, who have tasted the joys and sorrows of marriage long before they did. Often, a new frankness and companionship grow up between parents and their sons and daughters once they are married. They sometimes even begin to enjoy each other socially, couple to couple, as if they were friends. A new sympathy also grows up between siblings, whose marriages borrow some of their flavor from, yet are distinct from, the family life they once shared.

Lack of Growth in the Previous Spheres

The foundations of mature love in the conjugal sphere are in the earlier spheres of love. A person whose heart and conscience has been nurtured through good parenting in the child's sphere has had ample opportunity to develop a trusting, responsive heart. The husband and wife relationship of his parents serves as a powerful model from which to draw lessons.[11] Living with siblings, especially when they are sick or struggling, is a humanizing experience and prepares a child for dealing with the vagaries of intimate life with another human being. Spouses who have had fulfilling experiences in the earlier spheres know the joys of living, breathing, eating together and bumping up against one another in the push-and-pull of family life. They know the happiness of everyday intimacy and are well acquainted with the sacrifices it entails. They are better prepared for married life.

Yet in reality, most people come to marriage with incomplete and unfulfilled experiences in the previous spheres and hence their abilities in love are limited. They may want to be mothered or fathered; succored or made excuses for, as if they were children. "He was so irresponsible—sometimes with not showing up for work, not paying his bills and not keeping his promises to me," says Susan, an aerobics instructor, of her former fiancé. "He seemed to be begging me to yell at him and lay down ultimatums, like a kid daring his dad to ground him and keep him out of trouble." Not having matured sufficiently through the previous spheres of love lies in the background of many relationship woes.

Several marriage counselors agree that the single most important factor in marital break-up is self-centeredness—expecting to receive love from the other rather than to give it. Gordon says, "Chronological adults who remain emotionally infants are basically self-centered. They expect to be taken care of and to get what they want when they want it, without having to give in return. They know only what they need, see others primarily as objects to meet their needs and are incapable of empathizing with the needs of others."[12] When the spouses have not matured through the child's and sibling's spheres to become capable of true love—living to be of service to others —they will unfortunately lack the depth of heart and relational skills required for building a successful and fulfilling marriage.

Unfinished business of the earlier spheres may also haunt spous-

es who see the commitment of marriage as an effort to take away their independence. Such people rebel against their spouses as a teenager rebels against his or her parents.

Deficiencies in the child's sphere of love can sometimes be remedied in the spouse's sphere through surrogate parental figures. Marriage mentoring is an excellent way to achieve this. Through a church or community group, younger couples are connected to older couples who have strong and lasting marriages. The couples meet and discuss typical issues that come up in marriage, and the older couple guides the younger couple over the rough spots they themselves have overcome. The mentoring couples act as parental figures to provide the kind of support the younger couples need.

Marriage itself is often restorative of previous spheres' deficiencies. Harville Hendrix believes that spouses choose each other based upon unconscious but potent needs to complete the unfinished business in their relationship with their parents. They tend to choose people who have the same qualities as their parents, in an inexorable cycle of history repeating itself. If the partners consciously apply themselves to understand one another and serve as healers for one another, they are able to break up negative cycles and fill in the gaps in their personalities, thus placing their marriage on a better footing where love can blossom.[13]

Strong attractions to persons other than one's spouse are often signals of deficiencies in the heart's development from an earlier sphere. People in such situations may assume that a new and different partner can heal the unsettled issues they sense but cannot articulate. Some are looking for a father or mother figure. Others are hurting in the sibling's sphere, with unfulfilled longings left over from adolescence.

Desmond, a man in his thirties, says, "I first saw Dana leading a demonstration at city hall. She looked so noble and fearless out there. I became extremely attracted to her and we began seeing each other, to the point where I was worried about my marriage. As it turned out, Dana steered me to join an environmental organization. Working with them has been great, the fulfillment of ambitions I've had since high school. I still bump into Dana once in a while but there's no big spark anymore. Now I realize my thing about Dana was more of a need within me."

Sex and the Spheres of Love

Each sphere of love has its unique expressions of physical affection. Breastfeeding, diapering, continual holding, lifting, dressing and bathing augment the emotional bond between mother and child. Parents continue to show physical affection for their growing children: a pat on the back, a quick squeeze, a gentle elbowing into laughter, etc. Siblings and peers express physical affection through sports, sleepovers, grooming one another or playful wrestling and tussling; this is peer-appropriate physical bonding.

Sex is the unique province of the conjugal sphere of love, its unique form of physical intimacy. On the basis of relationship skills and the growth of the heart attained in the earlier spheres, marriage can bear the intensity of sex without the partners' growth of heart in other-centered love being curtailed or damaged. This is something the other spheres are not equipped to do.

The painful results of sexualizing the child's sphere of love are demonstrated in cases of child sexual abuse. The plethora of books about sexual abuse by parents, family members, neighbors and caretakers depict the lifelong agony of the victims when the basic trust and innocence of the child's sphere is violated. John Sullivan, an expert on child safety, says, "The child who has been sexually molested is robbed of some of the basic psychological components of childhood."[14] Sex in the child's sphere of love damages the heart and can destroy a life.

Sexual relationships between siblings are known to be traumatizing—as well as genetically harmful for any ensuing children—but sexual relations between friends and other peers in adolescence are not so clearly prohibited. Yet the emotional and psychological consequences of uncommitted sexual relationships are legion. (See Chapter 24) Regardless of the partners' intentions, the heart's growth toward true and satisfying love is adversely affected when sex takes place outside of the conjugal sphere of love.

In marriage, a man and woman entrust themselves completely to one another. The sexual union between them is thus the physical manifestation of this openness and trust. It is the embodied pact of their commitment to utterly share with and be close to one another on all levels and for a lifetime. Sex outside of this commitment nevertheless implies this same message, leaving unmarried sexual partners with expectations, guilt feelings and attachments to one another they did

not anticipate but which are psychologically very real. Because of its special bonding quality, sex is meant to be reserved exclusively for the spouse's sphere of love.

Throughout the Lifetime

Fulfillment in the spouse's sphere of love is a lifelong endeavor that grows and deepens over time into an irreplaceable richness of shared experiences. Over its lifetime, a marriage goes through many changes. Raging hormones give way to endorphins. Romantic delusions fall by the wayside. There are ups and downs, illness and wellness, temptations, financial plenty and financial woes. There are scintillating moments of soulful fusion; there are times when the two feel like strangers. There are the joys of having and raising children as well as the sense of overwhelming responsibility that it brings. Fine features and figures sooner or later go the way of all flesh. Beloved parents are dead and buried. Perhaps a child is, too. If a couple withstands all that and still stays together, it is clear that they have built a very special kind of love along the way.

In the musical *Fiddler on the Roof*, Tevya watches bemusedly as his daughters follow their passions and marry the men they choose. He has been married to his wife for a quarter of a century. It was an arranged marriage; they met for the first time on their wedding day. He asks his wife in song, "Do You Love Me?"[15] His wife hedges, thinking it a foolish question, but she answers. For twenty-five years, she says, she has cooked for him, cleaned for him, washed his clothes, shared his bed and borne his children. "If that's not love, what is?" she wants to know. The rich and soulful life they share is proof enough. The love between a married couple, increasing incrementally over time through mutual sacrifice, concern and caring, is a creative endeavor that successful couples can rightly be proud of.

In a marriage where the couple is committed to mutual understanding and intimacy, personal maturity and healing, and service to others, a lifetime is hardly enough to explore all the possibilities of love. The human psyche is vast, complex and profound. To know and truly love another human being in his or her entirety is an endeavor worthy of—indeed requiring—a lifetime of investment. As love advances toward the unconditional through the special growth available in the spouse's

sphere of love, it provides the basis for launching into the most advanced sphere: the love of parents for their children.

18

The Parent's Sphere of Love

"I SAW THIS LITTLE BOY WALKING ALONG THE TRAIL. Suddenly I was overcome and just started to cry. I want one of those, I said to myself.... It was like I suddenly realized that I was no longer a child. I was an adult and I needed to have children."[1] After five years of an exemplary marriage, Nelson was overwhelmed by the sense that a new vista of love was calling to him. The parent's sphere of love beckoned to him as a compelling life need.

The need and desire to have children is more than a fact of biology. It arises from the heart's deep yearning to extend and multiply love. Instinctively, people know they need this life experience for the greatest fulfillment. They have a built-in need to give love on this level, and they will experience some frustration and emptiness if they do not. Those who cannot or do not have children will often adopt them. Connie, a woman in her fifties, explained why she and her husband had adopted four children: "We came to a point in our marriage where we knew we needed children to keep on growing." Others may mentor a young person through a community service program or "parent" surrogates, such as the youngsters who live in their neighborhood or a pet. They need an outlet for their maternal or paternal yearnings—their drive to give parental love.

The parent's sphere of love is the fullest, most profound and encompassing expression of the true love that has been developing

throughout the previous spheres. It includes the special joys of grandparental love. As the greatest of all loves, parental love serves as a good model for all moral love in society. This would include educators, social workers, those in the helping professions, and all those who contribute to the welfare of others.

An Other-Centered Life

Becoming a parent is probably the most life-altering event most people ever experience. Many feel themselves to be in a whole new world. "The birth of our first child was one of the high points of my life. There was something about Jack's birth and the things that happened around it that was really a passage," said one young father.[2] A young mother said that she felt she had been given the keys to an exclusive club, one she had not known existed until parenthood made her a member.

Whether in stores, on the streets or in neighborhoods, parents find common ground based upon their love for their children. Elizabeth, a 30-year-old mother from Michigan, says, "It is so much easier to strike up conversations with people now that I'm a parent. Other parents are more than willing to talk in the park and compare notes or even exchange phone numbers so our kids can get together. There's a lot of mistrust in society today because of all the things you read about in the papers, but parents seem to trust each other because we care about the same things."

Parents even constitute a kind of sub-culture all their own. One survey found that the most marked differences of attitudes on cultural issues are between those who have children and those who do not. These differences transcend economic, political, racial and other demographic factors.[3] Parents' attitudes on social issues take into account how those matters will affect the lives of the next generation, specifically their children, for whom they want the very best. This illustrates that parenthood marks a passage into a new way of looking at things that is powerfully focused on the welfare of another—significantly centered on true love.

Parental love calls forth the noblest and most unselfish emotions and actions from otherwise ordinary people. After Brian Volck, a successful pediatrician, adopted a Central American girl besides his own

two healthy children, he began to reflect on his motivation for so doing. Children, he finds, "present me with opportunities to love when I would rather be alone, to be gentle when I would rather be efficient and to surrender when I would rather be in control."[4]

The highest level of human morality is to be willing to give one's life for the sake of others, and rare is the parent who would not sacrifice his or her life for the sake of the child. Travis, a father from Georgia, said that when he got a clean bill of health on a cancer test, he didn't care so much for himself. "If I had it, I had it, I figured. The only thing that concerned me was I didn't want my kids growing up without a dad."

Besides being insouciant about their own lives in comparison to those of their children, becoming a parent can help people find the moral strength to change a destructive lifestyle. A well-known actor gave up alcohol when he came in to his home drunk one morning and found his infant staring at him in pure amazement. He realized that he was out of sync with himself, with his child, and with any natural state of being. He roused himself up to start taking more responsibility.

In this way, parenthood can serve as a remedial influence on mistakes made in other phases of life. Many a spouse has been spurred to make more effort to make her marriage work for the sake of the children. Barbara, a woman in her sixties, found out in the first years of their marriage that her husband was extremely immature, but she stayed with him for her children's sake. "By today's standards," she remarked, "I probably would have divorced him long ago. But look what I got out of it. Harry and I have two good sets of relatives, financial stability, education and travel. The kids turned out well. When we talked about it together, we both wound up saying, 'Not such a bad deal!'" A good life was forged out of a problematic marriage held together by parental instincts to stay together "for the sake of the kids."

Because of this other-centered nature, the parent's sphere of love is most conducive to moral growth. No other role in life expands the heart and strengthens character like the experience of being a parent. Every step in raising children brings new challenges, demands more investment, and thus opens up new dimensions of heart and love. This is why the experience of parenting is crucial for a person's overall growth as a human being.

Challenges as Children Grow

Many parents find that caring for an infant is easier than caring for an older child.[5] An infant cannot walk, talk, assert his or her will, get into the china cabinet or chew on batteries left lying around. A toddler can, thus demanding more vigilance and teaching on the part of the parent. Many parents adore their babies but find themselves frustrated in dealing with older children. Yet if parents can stretch their love beyond the initial ease of bonding in the child's infancy, they will be infinitely rewarded as they witness and nurture the unfolding of a fully-fledged human being.

Parents are able to share more deeply with older children as their powers of understanding, reason and empathy grow. Their children listen as they explain what they believe and why, and impart a sense of who they are.[6] It is truly satisfying to parents when their child fully ingests a lesson. Sharing what they have realized, enjoyed and treasured, and seeing their child respond in kind creates a deep sense of unity on the path of life. It helps validate the parents' life experiences, enriching their sense of their own journey and legacy. On the other hand, a child's growing ability to notice and comment upon his parents' lapses and inconsistencies challenges parents to examine their own values and whether they are living up to their own preachments. Robert Coles points out that moral guidance is often a mutual experience between parent and child, one helping the other in different situations.[7] When parents raise their moral antennae and notice moral education moments in everyday living, children are likely to follow suit.

Parenting pre-teens and teenagers is often an emotional high-wire act. Parents strive to accommodate the child's needs for peer approval and independence while protecting their child from harm. Particularly in today's culture—which many conscientious people see as adversarial to good parenting—parents no longer feel at ease letting their children have the freedom they clamor for. A fast-paced, competitive, individualistic, highly sexualized consumer society sends many negative messages to youth. Parents feel they cannot let their children watch television unsupervised; they must monitor popular music and now the Internet. With drug use and other negative behaviors penetrating to the middle school and even elementary school, parents need to know their children's friends well. They must be aware of where their children are and what they are doing at all times.

On the other hand, parents also have to deal with their teenage children's growing sense of identity as independent persons. They want to feel trusted as well as protected. One father confides, "When I asked my teenage son what we should improve in our efforts to lead him to adulthood, he replied without hesitation: 'You should trust me more that I am able to make the right decisions for my life and that I am ready to take on more responsibilities.'" The rueful father concedes, "Looking back, I have to admit that knowing the right measure for granting independence remains one of the more difficult tasks."[8]

This balancing act requires a lot of parents. It takes strength and discernment to set and enforce limits in a fair and growth-promoting way. It demands moral courage sometimes to say, "Why don't you stay home this evening?" It takes wisdom to guide a child to relate with peers who are upright or different rather than peers who are "cool." It requires a sacrifice of time to spend hours in joint activities with teenage children and to create a socially-rich family environment—two factors that have been shown to facilitate their moral growth.[9] Yet, with both parents working all day and facing home responsibilities all evening, it is all too easy to surrender the child to the culture in the form of video games, television, or over-reliance on peers to keep the child busy and happy while the parents catch up on sleep and precious time together.[10] These are challenges that try a parent's wherewithal.

While today's concerns may seem unique, parenting has probably always been an upstream swim. In less affluent days, parents had to worry how to feed, clothe and shelter their children, and in many parts of the world, they still do. No matter where and when fathers and mothers do their parenting, they face anxiety over their children's welfare and make courageous sacrifices to provide them with the opportunity for a better life.

Parenting is, as one mother said in Hillary Clinton's *It Takes a Village*, the decision to "have your heart go walking around outside your body."[11] To love as a parent loves carries risk, for there is always the possibility of loss. With each new step in the child's maturation, parents must brace for new risks. The parental heart aches the first time their child is out and about alone; the first time their teenage daughter goes on a date; the first time their son uses the car; the first year she is away from home at college. Most parents are hard put to control their emotions when their child marries, as they release the hand they have held for so long while another takes it. In all these ways, the heart of a parent beats for another.

Parents continue to guide, aid and advise their adult children as well as they can, yet they must exercise greater wisdom and caution as to when to hang on, when to let go, when to advise and intervene, and when they must honor their adult child's decisions whether they agree with them or not. Wise parents are accessible, yet they let their children lead their own lives. Less skillful parents either intervene too much or are consistently unavailable. The most effective and loving parents find that however far the umbilical cord stretches, it never really breaks, and the child comes back and back into the parents' orbits—a source of increasing affirmation, comfort and support.

Foundations in the Earlier Spheres

Parental love has its basis in social and emotional competencies developed in the earlier spheres of love. A good parent often was once a good child. Remembering when he was a child, he can identify with his own children's experiences and empathize with their feelings. Remembering the love he received in the child's sphere from his own parents, he imitates what they did for him. Christopher, a father in his thirties, says, "My mother always remembered from day to day whether I'd had a headache or stomach ache. She knew if I had a test that day in school and always asked how it had gone. I wanted to be as attentive a parent as she was, so I practiced remembering those little things about my kids' lives and asking about them. They were amazed that I remembered, and I think they felt cared for because of it."

Parenting teenagers commonly brings up difficult emotions, memories and feelings for mid-life adults. Their child's talents, intellectual prowess, physical energy and sexuality may confront them with their own inadequacies.[12] Observing how their own son or daughter fashions his or her life's goals and dreams, they may find themselves in a crisis of meaning as they recall unmet goals from their own childhood.

The sibling's sphere of love also provides invaluable lessons for parenthood. Andrea, a mother of two from Vermont, had been a "big sister" to a developmentally disabled child when she was a teenager. Michael was a crippled and sickly child who was always off by himself, unresponsive to everyone around him. Every day Andrea would

hold Michael in her lap, press her cheek on his and rock him, but he showed no interest. One day as she was rocking him in her lap and absent-mindedly lifted her cheek from his, Michael's hand reached up and pressed her cheek back where it was. He smiled for the first time. Andrea realized that her care was reaching him. From then on Michael began to change. His face grew full of expression. As he laughed and played with other children, Andrea felt she had witnessed a miracle. "Sometimes now, when my own little boys are driving me crazy, I think about Michael and how persistent love changed him. Then I'm able to be more patient and loving with them," Andrea said. Those experiences in the sibling's sphere of love helped make her a better mother.

Strife in the spouse's sphere usually reduces parents' abilities to give to their children, as the parents' hearts and minds are embroiled in their own pain.[13] The son or daughter's neediness can be felt as an onerous burden rather than a call for compassion. Marital harmony, on the other hand, is one of the most effective parenting tools there is. Raising children brings many crises—a new baby, a serious illness, a teenager in trouble—when spouses need to draw on their deep well of character and good will toward each other. Success in the conjugal sphere of love brings strength and stability for dealing with the challenges of raising children, while successful parenthood affirms and augments the joys of marital love.

The lack of emotional and social development in the previous phases of life is key to understanding disabilities in the parental sphere. Parents well-schooled in other-centered love, who are sensitive, patient and psychologically mature, are more apt to meet their children's needs.[14] Many a parent has tiptoed into their child's bedroom and felt sorrowful when they looked down at the small, sleeping face after a conflict-ridden day. They may regret yelling at or punishing the child, realizing that they acted more out of their own fears, frustrations, ignorance and lack of experience than any serious fault in the child, and they begin to reflect on their own emotional stability and inner life. A reflective moment such as this often spurs a renewed sense of determination to invest and give more, thus expanding the reservoir of the parental sphere of love.

Grandparent's Love

An extension of parental love is the love of grandparents for their grandchildren. Although in the Western industrialized world the family has been reduced steadily down to the nuclear family, character is formed more completely and securely when three generations interact.

Grandparents are an invaluable source of rootedness for a child. Children who have relationships with their grandparents are more trusting, calmer and quieter than those who do not.[15] Grandparents are the link to all that has gone before and they give a sense of continuity and reassurance. They represent the past, while the parents represent the present, and the children represent the future. Grandparents help children to know what life was like long before they were born—where they have come from and the kind of people they have sprung from. They are the family's link to the chain of human history.

Having experienced the challenges of creating a family themselves, grandparents are a source of wisdom and a reassuring presence. "My grandparents gave me a deep sense that things would turn out right in the end," says one husband.[16] Grandparents can provide a "safe haven" when their children and grandchildren are experiencing turbulence in their relationships. Certain of who they are, grandparents stand for verities of the human experience that go beyond current fashions. The perspective of another generation, given with wit and candor, enriches and enlivens all.

The grandparental heart has an innate need to give from their lifetime storehouse of knowledge and experience to nurture and enrich the younger generations. Erikson and his colleagues have characterized the primary challenge in old age as one of "integrity versus despair," with the possibility of culminating in a profound awareness or higher sense of self.[17] In this last stage of physical life, individuals have the capacity to experience their personhood as that which "transcends time-bound identities."[18]

"The real point of having kids is to get the grandchildren," jokes Martin, 78, a retired restaurant proprietor in the Southwest. "Half the time I find myself thinking about how I can either help them or see them." Grandparents' hearts go out without reservation to their grandchildren, whom they commonly describe as "wonderful" and "perfect."[19] As they watch their grown children shoulder the responsibilities of adulthood, most are moved to help as much as they can. It is not unusu-

al for grandparents to provide hours of free childcare, help with meals and laundry, monetary loans or gifts. It is their joy to give to their children and their grandchildren and to aid them in life's journey.

To fulfill their growth potential in this sphere of love, grandparents need and want opportunities to give. Teresa, a mother of two in Nebraska, met an elderly widow, Belinda, in her small town. Belinda was lonely and delighted to get to know Teresa and her two young children. She brought over jars of homemade jellies and jams and fresh vegetables from her garden. She gave the mother her phone number and told her to call any time she needed to. Belinda babysat for free and even offered to help Teresa clean house. One day Teresa couldn't help asking the elderly widow, "Why do you give us so much?" Belinda replied, "You give to me by letting me give to you."

For what they give, grandfathers and grandmothers in turn receive affirmation and comfort that their legacy will live on. The curious grandchild who absorbs their stories, their insights and their values becomes a keeper of the family's—and the community's—flame. In that way, they know they have made a difference and left some influence on the world. This is their link to immortality, and it is deeply gratifying.

Parental Heart in Society

Parental love is the prototype of mature love for others, and love in its fullest, deepest and broadest form resembles the love of a parent. It is evident in the best teachers and managers. Indeed, many historical figures whose lives have deeply affected others in a moral way came to be called "Father" or "Mother," signifying the parental quality of their leadership. Gandhi's followers called him "Bapu" (Papa) because of his great concern for them and for his nation. Abraham Lincoln became "Father Abraham" as he guided America through the darkness of the Civil War. "Mother" Teresa helped the poor and disenfranchised of India with a boundless compassion. "Mother" Cabrini became well-known for her charitable work in Chicago.

Regardless of his title or position, a person with a parental heart toward others is the true leader of any group or organization, the real embodiment of what the organization stands for. An exceptional teacher becomes more than an instructor in academics; he or she becomes like a second parent. Lydia, a 42-year-old woman who teaches in the inner-

city schools of Newark, New Jersey, tells the story: "Mark had a real problem when he came to my class. He right away thought because I was blond I had to be a racist. I used to talk to him a lot after class, and after a while he started liking me. When he graduated from high school and went into the army, he would call me for encouragement and support. When he was on leave, he stayed at my house. If you look on my mantle at our family portrait, you see seven white faces and one black face—that's Mark! He calls me 'Mom.'" This teacher's maternal heart toward him changed Mark's life.

Nurturing a child from infancy to adulthood entails tremendous sacrifice and skill; it is an exercise of the heart second to none. Therefore, it is conducive to the most expansive moral growth. The parental sphere of love is the summit of the moral growth dynamic embodied in the family—the four spheres of love. Since this family-based dynamic is so central to education of the entire human being, character educators do well to be aware of it—to support, facilitate, learn about and cooperate with this powerful natural vehicle of human moral development.